

12. SOCIAL

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Access

1. People should be prepared to make sacrifices if they value having a healthy earth. If people want to experience Wilderness, they should be prepared to get there without the convenience of roads.

Response: The prohibition alternatives would not alter existing means of access to inventoried roadless areas, and therefore would impose no additional inconveniences on people wishing to visit them. However, they would prevent new roaded access to inventoried roadless areas from being developed in the future. Decisions about whether to build new roads or trails in unroaded areas would be made at the local level with public participation.

2. Restricting access to the national forests could have negative impacts on many private and commercial uses.

Response: None of the prohibition alternatives considered in the DEIS would reduce access to the national forests or grasslands from current levels. They would not close any roads, nor would they prohibit motorized use where it is currently allowed. Future decisions on off-highway vehicle (OHV) access to inventoried roadless areas would be made at the local level with public involvement. Future decisions about motorized access and road construction in unroaded areas would also be made at the local level, with public involvement under the new 36 CFR 219 Planning Regulations. Future

decisions on road closures will be made independent of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, under the proposed Roads Policy.

The DEIS disclosed the potential positive and negative impacts of the prohibition alternatives on many private and commercial uses, such as timber harvest, recreation, grazing, and mineral development (see especially the Human Uses section and the Social and Economic Factors section of the DEIS on pp. 3-112 through 3-222). These impacts would largely accrue from prohibiting additional roaded access to inventoried roadless areas in the future, which represent roughly 58.5 million acres of the 192 million acres of NFS lands.

Civil Rights and Environmental Justice

3. The proposed rule should comply with the Civil Rights Act.

Response: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, or sex in employment, Federally assisted programs, public accommodations, public facilities, public education, and voting. The Secretary of Agriculture has issued a Departmental regulation to implement Federal civil rights laws and policies. This regulation states that no person or group shall be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, or marital or familial status in employment practices or programs conducted or assisted by the Department of Agriculture.

In order to comply with these mandates, the Forest Service prepared a Civil Rights Impact Analysis and Environmental Justice Issues Document that accompanied the proposed rule. This document found that the proposed rule would have no disproportionate national level negative impacts on protected populations. The main findings of the Civil Rights Impact Analysis and Environmental Justice Issues Document are presented in the Civil Rights and Environmental Justice section of the FEIS. Individual Forest Service units work to comply with the Civil Rights Act when undertaking local-level management actions.

4. The Forest Service's study on multi-cultural jobs is meaningless.

Response: The Forest Service undertook a study on Work Force Planning during 1999 (U. S. Forest Service Workforce Plan). That study showed that women and minorities are under-represented in many job series and grade levels of the Forest Service. It also found that the Forest Service lacks some of the skills it needs in the work force to be prepared for the future. The Forest Service is developing a strategy for recruiting the kinds of employees it needs to address these shortcomings, and to effectively implement policies such as this Roadless Area Conservation Rule at the forest and grassland level.

The purpose and need for the Roadless Area Conservation Rule is not based on a multicultural study. The purpose of the rule is to prohibit activities that have the greatest likelihood of degrading the desirable social and economic characteristics of inventoried roadless areas. The Civil Rights and Environmental Justice section of the DEIS (pp. 3-201 through 3-208) did evaluate how the alternatives might affect subsets of the general population identified through Civil Rights legislation and policies, and Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice. Refer to the Civil Rights Impact Analysis and Environmental Justice Issues document that accompanied the Proposed Rule for more detailed discussion of these topics.

5. The Forest Service should disclose the reasons for writing the Civil Rights Impact Analysis on February 18, 2000, before the public comment period started.

Response: The Forest Service prepared a draft Civil Rights Impact Analysis and Environmental Justice Issues document (CRIA) to accompany the proposed rule, as required by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to comply with Civil Rights and Environmental Justice legislation and policies. The Department of Agriculture requires that a CRIA be prepared and reviewed before it grants clearance on a proposed rule to ensure that the rule will not adversely and disproportionately affect protected populations. Before the proposed rule could be made available to the public for review and comment, it had to be cleared by the Department of Agriculture, and the CRIA was integral to that clearance process. Like the DEIS, the draft CRIA was available to the public for review and comment between May 9 and July 17, 2000. Public comment on the CRIA will be used to make revisions and

prepare the final CRIA that will accompany the final rule.

6. The DEIS should comply with the Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898 and disclose the economic effects of the rule on low income and minority communities that depend on logging.

Response: Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice requires the Forest Service to determine whether its programs, policies, and activities have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations. The Civil Rights Impact Analysis and Environmental Justice Issues document found that the proposed rule would have no disparate high and adverse health or environmental effects on minority and low income groups at the national level.

Adverse economic effects of the rule on forest-dependent communities, including those that are low income, are disclosed in the Forest Dependent Communities section of the FEIS. This section includes a list of communities that could be potentially affected by the rule, and a list of Counties containing potentially affected communities and their resilience. The decision-maker can take this analysis into account when making a decision on the final rule.

Commodity Values

7. The Forest Service should not develop current policies as a response to the destructive extractive practices of the past.

Response: The Roadless Area Conservation Proposed Rule is not designed to be a response to past extractive practices. Rather, it is designed to prohibit activities that have the greatest likelihood of degrading the desirable social and ecological characteristics of inventoried roadless areas. The alternatives in the DEIS do not prohibit extractive practices in roadless areas. Some of these practices, however, will be limited to the extent that they require road construction or reconstruction. Others are permitted by laws such as the 1872 Mining Law. Timber harvest and the exploration for saleable and leasable minerals are the extractive activities that are expected to be limited the most. Any additional limitations on extractive activities in unroaded areas

would be decided upon at the local level in forest and grassland planning.

8. The Forest Service should also consider people who use paper and/or live in wooden houses as “stakeholders” in the document.

Response: The DEIS did not contain a separate section that explicitly considers the effects of the alternatives on consumers of wood products. However, the Social and Economic Factors/Timber Harvest section of the DEIS (pp. 3-182 through 3-191) estimated that the prohibition action alternatives would reduce the average annual timber volume offered for harvest on the national forests by a maximum of 7%, depending on the alternative chosen. This represents a total affected volume of less than 0.5% of total U.S. production across all ownerships. These reductions would be compensated for by substitute harvests from non-Federal ownerships, and/or increased imports, mainly from Canada. The reductions in NFS harvests resulting from the prohibitions are not likely to affect prices, and therefore are not likely to affect consumers.

9. Local interests, especially commercial and extractive interests, have a disproportionate influence over the use of public lands.

Response: The rule attempts to balance national and local interests in the management of roadless areas. The prohibition alternatives, which apply on a national scale, are a response to a need for national-level direction to conserve roadless area characteristics. The new 36 CFR 219 Planning Regulations provide direction on evaluating inventoried roadless areas and unroaded areas during forest and grassland plan revisions. This process would encourage public involvement, which does not preclude the involvement of local and national non-extractive and non-commercial interests in decision-making.

10. Residential and commercial building should be banned.

Response: Banning residential and commercial building is beyond the scope of this proposed rule and beyond the authority of the Forest Service. The Social and Economic Factors/Timber Harvest section of the FEIS finds that the action alternatives would have no effect on the national supply of wood for construction.

11. The Forest Service should consider that demand for commodity uses of roadless areas will increase in the future.

Pages 3-6 through 3-11 of the DEIS discussed population growth and how it will increase the demands on NFS lands in the future. While population growth creates increased demand for commodity resources, it also creates demand for more open space, naturally appearing areas, clean water, abundant fish and wildlife populations, opportunities for personal renewal, and escape from urban environments. The FEIS contains an expanded discussion of increasing demand for commodities available from roadless areas, what this implies for balancing commodity and non-commodity uses of roadless areas, and the displacement effects of relying on other lands for these commodities.

Communities

12. The Forest Service cited effects on communities with strong natural resource affiliations as a major issue. The DEIS does not do an adequate job of documenting these effects;

13. The Forest Service should address the social and economic impacts of the proposed rule on rural communities; and

14. A moratorium should be established until the Forest Service can do an impact study on communities dependent on natural resources.

Response: The Forest Dependent Communities section of the DEIS (pp. 3-209 through 3-222) discussed the social and economic impacts of the alternatives on rural communities. The DEIS identified a list of communities that may be affected by reductions in timber harvest (Tables 3-54 and 3-55). Potential job losses were estimated by national forest, but it was not possible to determine in what specific communities those job losses would actually occur because of other factors, such as the specific financial circumstances of individual companies. The FEIS contains a revised list of potentially affected communities, based on updated forest-level data and on public comments that identified additional communities that could be affected by the range of alternatives.

15. A national education program should be established to educate the public about the various forest values; and

16. The proposed rule should include a public education component.

Response: This proposal is specifically about the conservation of roadless areas on NFS lands. The Forest Service did not identify a need through the scoping and public comment processes for a public education component to the roadless proposal in order to achieve the purpose and need for action described in Chapter 1 of the FEIS. The Forest Service promotes environmental education about national forests and grasslands and their values through a variety of programs, which are independent of this proposal.

Controversy

17. Competing interests in use of our National Forests should be addressed.

Response: The Human Uses section and the Social and Economic Factors section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS on pp. 3-112 through 3-222 addressed the effects of the alternatives on a variety of human uses of and interests in roadless areas, which are sometimes competing. These include timber harvest, the harvest of non-timber forest products, recreation, heritage, minerals development, wildland values, hunting and fishing, and grazing. The DEIS concluded that the action alternatives would have a number of positive effects for wildland values, dispersed recreation, hunting and fishing, and heritage resources. The effects on non-timber forest products harvesting and on grazing would be mixed. The action alternatives would have negative effects on the potential for increased developed or road-based recreation, timber harvest, and some minerals development in roadless areas. These conclusions still apply and are documented in the FEIS.

18. The Forest Service should not adopt the proposed rule because it will create serious public conflict.

Response: The management of public lands generally takes place within a context of competing interests and values related to their use. Thus it is difficult for land managers to avoid public conflict. Conflict already exists regarding the management of

roadless areas as is demonstrated by the frequent appeals and litigation associated with decisions to harvest timber and/or build roads into these areas. Chapter 1 of the DEIS noted that the management of roadless areas has been one of the largest points of conflict in adopting the national forest and grassland plans. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule is in part a response to the need to address the conflict over roadless area management, which to date has not been successfully resolved at the local level.

One intent of this rule is to reduce, not increase, public conflict over the management of roadless areas. The Forest Service has undertaken consultation and solicited public comment during the rulemaking process (described in Chapters 1 and 4 of the FEIS) in an effort to formulate a rule that is responsive to public concerns regarding roadless area management. The Human Uses section and the Social and Economic Factors section of Chapter 3 of the FEIS disclose how the alternatives will likely affect different uses and values associated with roadless areas.

19. The Forest Service should note that the roadless proposal, in conjunction with other environmental initiatives, will eventually lead to rebellion.

Response: The cumulative social effects of the roadless and other recent and current environmental initiatives are discussed in the Social and Economic Factors section of Chapter 3 of the FEIS. That section finds that one cumulative effect of these initiatives should be reduced public controversy over the management of roads and roadless areas. The initiatives could, however, increase public controversy over fire management in roadless areas.

The Roadless Area Conservation Rule itself is also expected to reduce social controversy over roadless area management, as described in Response 18.

Culture And Heritage

20. The Forest Service should not deny the public their relationship to the woods, culture, traditions, and heritage.

Response: The prohibition alternatives do not close existing roads or trails; nor do they prohibit motorized access where such access is currently allowed. Two of the prohibition alternatives would limit or prohibit future timber harvest in inventoried

roadless areas in addition to road construction; however, no other existing uses of inventoried roadless areas that are currently allowed would be prohibited. With the possible exception of some timber harvest (depending on the alternative chosen), all activities dependent on existing roads and motorized access would continue under the prohibition alternatives. Consequently, the relationship that currently exists between the public and the inventoried roadless areas of national forests and grasslands would not be altered, or would be altered slightly, by the prohibitions. Any further protection of roadless characteristics entailing restrictions on activities in inventoried roadless and unroaded areas would be determined locally under the new 36 CFR 219 Planning Regulations, with public involvement. The effects of such future protections or restrictions would be considered and disclosed at that time.

21. The Forest Service should prevent new road construction in, and limit access to, roadless areas to prevent discovery of and damage to cultural and historical sites.

Response: The Heritage Resources section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS (pp. 3-134 through 3-136) analyzed the effects of the prohibition alternatives on heritage resources. This section concluded that the prohibition action alternatives, which would prohibit road construction in inventoried roadless areas and reduce timber harvest activity there, would help to protect cultural heritage sites in several ways. By prohibiting future roaded access to inventoried roadless areas, the potential for disturbance, vandalism, and looting would be minimized; the current character of heritage resources would be better maintained; and there would be reduced risk of destruction from project-related activity.

22. Roads that are historic trails and represent European cultural artifacts should be valued and protected as much as American Indian cultural artifacts.

Response: The National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act both require Federal agencies to take into account the effects of any management actions on historic and cultural properties, which are protected under these laws, regardless of whose culture and history they represent. The Forest Service complies with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which

provides a process for assessing a site's historic significance, minimizing impacts to the site and determining the appropriate mitigation measures necessary, should a decision be made to undertake a ground disturbing activity that affects a site, such as an historic trail. The alternatives would not affect the management of roads that are historic trails because they would not close roads or trails. The prohibition alternatives do not place any restrictions on trails. However, under the action alternatives, reconstruction of historic roads would not be allowed in inventoried roadless areas unless the reconstruction is to mitigate environmental damage or for reasons of public health and safety.

23. The Forest Service should not eliminate humans from environmental studies. They should explain what effect road removal will have on traditional practices.

Response: The Forest Service has not eliminated humans from the environmental analysis contained in the DEIS for Roadless Area Conservation the Proposed Rule. Chapter 3 of the DEIS analyzed the potential effects of the action alternatives on humans and on a variety of human activities (see the Human Uses and the Social and Economic Factors sections). These include recreation, hunting and fishing, livestock grazing, non-timber forest products harvesting, and timber harvest, which may be traditional practices for many participants.

The proposed rule does not eliminate humans from roadless areas. It would not close or remove existing roads, or prohibit motorized access where such access is currently allowed. The proposed rule, therefore, would not alter existing access to NFS lands including access for traditional practices. Depending on which alternative is chosen, the rule may prohibit road construction and reconstruction as well as some or all future timber harvest in roadless areas. The Timber Harvest section of the Social and Economic Factors portion of Chapter 3 of the FEIS explains these potential effects.

24. The Forest Service should consider that humans are part of the ecosystem.

Response: The DEIS did consider the role of humans as a part of ecosystems. Humans both affect and are affected by the ecosystems that are found on National Forest System lands, as is described throughout the DEIS. The Ecological Factors section

of the DEIS (pp. 3-20 through 3-111) described the effects of human activities associated with the alternatives on ecosystem components and processes. The Human Uses and Social and Economic Factors sections of the DEIS (pp. 3-112 through 3-222) described the potential effects of the alternatives on humans. The rule would not have an effect on human resource consumption. The FEIS contains an expanded discussion of resource consumption at the beginning of Chapter 3.

Limiting certain human activities in some parts of an ecosystem, in this case inventoried roadless areas, does not preclude those activities and their associated benefits from occurring in other parts of the ecosystem.

25. *The Forest Service should address the impact of the proposed rule on the family and family recreation.*

Response: The Roadless Area Conservation Proposed Rule would not close roads or prohibit motorized access where it is currently allowed. The alternatives would conserve the current mix of recreation opportunities available in inventoried roadless areas. Current access to National Forest System lands would not be altered. Different families enjoy different types of recreation, as do individuals within the same family. Conserving the current mix allows families and individuals to continue to have the same opportunities that they have today for road-based and dispersed, and motorized and non-motorized forms of recreation. The prohibition action alternatives would prevent future expansion of developed or road-based recreation opportunities in inventoried roadless areas; however, they would protect primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized, and semi-primitive motorized dispersed recreation opportunities in inventoried roadless areas. Any management decision that would alter the current mix of recreation opportunities for families and individuals in unroaded areas would be made at the local level with public involvement under the new 36 CFR 219 Planning Regulations. Thus, the proposed rule is not expected to have an impact on family recreation.

While it is unlikely that the proposed rule would have an impact on the family as a social institution, it could have an impact on families who are economically dependent on timber harvest and mining on National Forest System lands on certain

national forests. Future opportunities to harvest timber and develop minerals in inventoried roadless areas could be limited by the rule. The timber harvest, energy and non-energy minerals, and forest dependent communities sections of the Social and Economic Factors portion of Chapter 3 of the FEIS disclose the potential impacts of the alternatives on individuals and families who engage in these activities. Families that value the roadless characteristics that would be protected by the rule should benefit from it.

26. *The Forest Service should disclose how the prohibition alternatives comply with Executive Order 11593, which requires Federal agencies to inventory all lands for cultural properties.*

Response: Executive Order 11593 requires Federal agencies to inventory the historic and prehistoric sites located on the lands they manage. The Heritage Resources section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS (pp. 3-134 through 3-136) discussed Executive Order 11593 and other laws relating to cultural and historic properties. The Forest Service complies with Executive Order 11593 by conducting such inventories prior to undertaking projects on the national forests and grasslands. The prohibition alternatives would not alter this requirement. Forest Service archaeologists would continue to conduct inventories for cultural properties in inventoried roadless areas as needed, and would gain access to these areas for this purpose in the same way they do now. The Heritage Resources section of the DEIS disclosed the effects of the prohibition alternatives on heritage resources.

Only about 25% of all NFS lands have so far been inventoried for heritage sites, and most of the inventories have been conducted outside of roadless areas, where development activities are proposed. The effects of management activities on historic and archaeological resources located in specific roadless areas would be considered at the local level as part of forest and grassland planning and project planning processes with public participation.

27. *As required by CEQ Regulations, the Forest Service should conduct a heritage resources cumulative effects analysis for all alternatives.*

Response: The FEIS contains a cumulative effects analysis for heritage resources.

28. The proposed rule may hamper the Forest Service's ability to protect historic structures and archaeological sites, particularly by increasing the potential for neglect and deterioration. The Forest Service should identify specific historic properties in roadless areas and disclose the effects of the proposal on these properties. Existing access to these properties should be maintained; and

29. The Forest Service should comply with Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act by identifying cultural/historical properties and analyzing what impacts the proposed rule may have on them.

Response: The Heritage Resources section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS indicated that the action alternatives may have both positive and negative effects on heritage resources located in inventoried roadless areas. Positive effects include potential reductions in disturbance, vandalism, and looting by not providing additional roaded access to heritage sites; and, less risk of unintended destruction of heritage resources from development activities. Negative effects include less opportunity to discover, protect, and interpret heritage sites.

Because the action alternatives do not close roads, existing roaded access to historical properties will not be changed by the rule. Moreover, the action alternatives do not prohibit motorized access to roadless areas where such access is currently available. The Forest Service could use OHVs where permitted to maintain sites.

It is beyond the scope of the analysis in the FEIS to identify all of the historic and archaeological properties located in inventoried roadless areas, or to disclose the effects of the alternatives on specific properties. Only about 25% of all NFS lands have so far been inventoried for heritage sites, and most of the inventories have been conducted outside of roadless areas, where development activities are proposed. The effects of management activities on historic and archaeological resources located in specific roadless areas will be considered at the local level as part of the forest and grassland and project planning processes, with public participation.

30. The Forest Service should provide sufficient funding to its field archaeologists so that they can comply with the National Historic Preservation Act.

Response: Decisions regarding funding to support field archaeologists are made at the forest and grassland level. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule addresses the conservation of inventoried roadless areas, and does not aim to address the unit level budget process. Therefore, this concern is outside the scope of this analysis.

Disabled And Elderly Persons Concerns

31. The proposed rule will restrict access for the elderly, very young, and/or disabled; and

32. The Forest Service should preserve public lands even if it does mean limiting access to people with disabilities.

Response: The proposed rule would not change existing access to inventoried roadless areas for recreation or other purposes. No existing roads would be closed by the rule. People would continue to gain access to inventoried roadless areas in the same ways they do now. In those areas where off-highway vehicles and other motorized recreation uses are presently allowed, they will continue to be permitted. Any change in motorized access would be made at the local level with full public participation.

Local Forest Service units work with individuals who have disabilities to assist them in accessing the recreation experiences they are seeking, so long as that access does not conflict with the forest or grassland management plan, Wilderness management plan or policies, or pose a safety threat.

33. The Forest Service should dismiss the "senior citizen access" argument as it is self-centered and irrelevant to the conservation issue.

Response: The Forest Service believes it is important to consider all public concerns, including those related to senior citizen access. Age-related uses of roadless areas and the issue of senior citizen access are discussed in the Civil Rights Impact Analysis and Environmental Justice Issues document that accompanies the rule in the sections that pertain to Recreation Use and Persons With Disabilities. The concerns related to aging are most often akin to those of individuals with physical disabilities, and revolve around the question of access to the national forests. For example, both populations may have a reduced

ability to walk long distances, and difficulty crossing rough terrain.

The proposed rule does not change existing access to inventoried roadless areas for recreation or other purposes. Existing roads would not be closed by the proposed rule. People would continue to gain access to inventoried roadless areas in the same ways they do now. In those areas where off-highway vehicles and other motorized vehicles are presently allowed, they would continue to be permitted. Any change in motorized access would be made at the local level with full public participation. The prohibition action alternatives would have no impact on current access to the national forests by an aging population. However, they would limit possibilities for new roaded access to inventoried roadless areas by people, including the elderly.

34. *There are more than enough existing roads to meet the needs of the elderly and disabled persons and to allow them to experience as best they can the beauty and joy of Forest Service lands.*

Response: The Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Issues document that accompanies the rule analyzes the effects of the alternatives on disabled and elderly persons. The prohibition alternatives would not change existing access to unroaded areas by people with disabilities, the elderly, or anyone else. The prohibition action alternatives would prevent additional future roaded access to inventoried roadless areas by people with disabilities, the elderly, and others. However, no disparate impacts on these sub-populations are anticipated. People with disabilities and the elderly do not necessarily want to build roads in roadless areas, and some may value undeveloped areas in the same ways that other people do. There is no indication that these groups are any less likely than other sub-groups of the American population to value the characteristics of roadless areas.

35. *The Forest Service should develop special permits to issue to disabled individuals so that they can get out into the woods on ATV's etc.*

Response: Because the proposed rule would not change existing motorized access to the national forests and grasslands, disabled individuals would continue to gain access to inventoried roadless areas in the same ways they do now. Therefore, special permits would not be necessary to mitigate a loss of

access. Any person, with or without a disability, may use an ATV (all terrain vehicle) wherever ATV use is permitted on NFS lands. Disabled persons may apply for special use permits for those uses that require them. Local Forest Service units work individually with persons with disabilities to assist them in accessing the recreation experiences they are seeking while also considering resource protection and safety.

36. *The Roadless Area Conservation Rule is a direct violation of the Americans With Disabilities Act because it limits access to the national forests by people with disabilities; and*

37. *The Forest Service should not allow off-road vehicle users to use excuses claiming people with disabilities need more access. Access on Forest Service lands means the legal right for a person to go to and be present on a piece of public land. It has nothing to do with what activities the person may engage in while on that piece of land or the mode of transportation used by the person to get there. These are entirely separate issues that have nothing to do with access.*

Response: The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 does not cover the Executive Branch of the Federal government. The Executive agencies are covered by Title V of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which requires these agencies to make their programs and activities accessible to people with disabilities. Programs include facilities and lands in their natural state. While some of the topography of roadless areas may not be user friendly to some persons with disabilities, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule would not cause the Forest Service to construct any barriers that would prevent people from having an equal opportunity to enjoy roadless areas. All members of the public have an equal opportunity to try to access Forest Service lands, including roadless areas; however, this equal opportunity does not guarantee success. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule applies equally to all members of the public, and therefore is not discriminatory towards persons with disabilities.

Any buildings that the Forest Service constructs on public lands must be accessible to all members of the public, including people with disabilities. The Forest Service strives for universal design in the construction of facilities. Universal design means a design that serves all people well, such as a building

that is constructed to have a level and wide entry, and does not require stairs or a ramp.

38. *The Forest Service should make special efforts to provide Wilderness opportunities for the physically challenged.*

Response: The Forest Service works with the outfitters and guides that operate in Wildernesses to encourage the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their programs. Forest Service managers receive instruction in Wilderness accessibility. All individuals who use wheelchairs are welcome in Wilderness, so long as their wheelchair meets the Americans with Disabilities Act definition of a wheelchair (Americans with Disabilities Act, Title V Section 507(c)).

Forest Management

39. *The Forest Service should consider: just because we can build roads, does not mean we should.*

Response: The Roadless Area Conservation Proposed Rule acknowledges that it is not necessarily appropriate to build roads on all National Forest System (NFS) lands, even if it is physically and fiscally possible. Of the many values derived from NFS lands, some are associated with roads and some with an absence of roads. The Purpose and Need section of the DEIS (pp. 1-10 through 1-12) stated that the main reason for the proposed action is to protect the desirable social and ecological characteristics of inventoried roadless areas by prohibiting road construction there. The social and ecological effects of not building roads in inventoried roadless areas are disclosed in Chapter 3 of the DEIS and FEIS.

40. *The Forest Service should support "The Wise Use Movement." This movement believes in the use of public lands in a responsible and "leave no trace" manner. Public lands can be used wisely while being protected and managed for future generations.*

Response: The Forest Service manages the national forests and grasslands according to the principle of multiple-use. The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 requires the Forest Service to manage for multiple uses on a sustained yield basis, within the constraints of the resource, to meet the needs of

current and future generations. This management approach is consistent with the Wise Use approach as defined in this concern. However, it does not mean that all National Forest System lands can or should be managed for all uses simultaneously. Land managers must decide which uses are most appropriate in which areas. In some parts of the national forests and grasslands, commodity uses are emphasized; in other areas, non-commodity uses are emphasized. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule would prohibit future road construction, and depending on the alternative chosen, may prohibit some or all timber harvest, in inventoried roadless areas. Chapter 2 of the FEIS explains the rationale for deciding to manage inventoried roadless areas in this manner.

41. *The Forest Service should place human needs above the needs of salmon, and apply wise use practices dictated by God; otherwise, resources will be destroyed.*

Response: The Forest Service believes that healthy land and natural resources are important to human well-being, and that ecological, social, and economic sustainability are inter-dependent. Part of the Forest Service mission is to sustain the health, productivity, and diversity of the land to meet the needs of present and future generations (USDA Forest Service Fiscal Year 2000 and Fiscal Year 2001 Annual Performance Plan). The Roadless Area Conservation Rule is intended to support this mission. Chapter 3 of the FEIS analyzes the effects of the alternatives on humans and other animal and plant species. These effects will be weighed in making the final decision.

42. *The Forest Service should consider that human activity benefits ecosystems. Roads are needed to conduct beneficial ecosystem management activities on the national forests and grasslands. They also provide access so that people will visit them, and as a result care about their existence and become good stewards.*

Response: The prohibition action alternatives would preclude human activities in inventoried roadless areas that require new road construction or reconstruction. Management activities that do not require new roaded access could continue to take place there. However, management activities that entail timber harvest could be prohibited or limited, depending on which prohibition alternative is selected. None of the prohibition alternatives would

alter existing access to inventoried roadless areas by visitors.

Chapter 3 of the DEIS did consider that human activity can benefit ecosystems. Alternative 3 explicitly acknowledges that timber harvest can have stewardship purposes, and can have positive environmental effects including reducing excessive forest fuels, improving the vigor of residual trees, and creating desirable wildlife habitat conditions. While human activity can benefit ecosystems, it can also be harmful to them. The Ecological Factors section of Chapter 3 of the FEIS describes the positive and negative ecological effects of human activities associated with road construction and timber harvest. The decision-maker will weigh the ecological and social costs and benefits of the alternatives in making a final decision on the rule.

43. *The Forest Service should not allow the collection of plants, trees, flowers, mushrooms, or berries in roadless areas; and*

45. *The Forest Service should prohibit new human developments and water projects.*

Response: After careful review of public responses to the Notice of Intent, the Forest Service determined it would consider prohibiting only those activities that are likely to significantly alter landscapes and cause habitat fragmentation in roadless areas on a national scale. Therefore the agency decided to analyze alternatives to limit road construction, reconstruction, and timber harvest only. These activities often result in immediate, irretrievable, and long-term loss of roadless characteristics. The decision to focus on roads and timber was described in the Purpose and Need section of the DEIS on pp. 1-10 through 1-12. Any additional restrictions on land and resource use needed to protect the roadless characteristics of roadless areas would be considered at the local level under the new 36 CFR 219 Planning Regulations.

44. *The Forest Service should not adopt the proposed rule because it necessitates the consideration of any roadless area as a future Wilderness area.*

Response: The Roadless Area Conservation Proposed Rule does not result in any requirement for the Forest Service to consider current inventoried roadless areas as future Wildernesses. It does not

create new roadless areas; it conserves inventoried roadless areas that have existed for some time now. Determinations about which areas to recommend for future Wilderness designation are made at the local level through the forest and grassland planning process.

Hunting And Fishing

46. *Hunting and fishing should be prohibited in roadless areas.*

Response: See Response 43. The authority to make hunting and fishing regulations belongs to the States, as expressed in section 36 CFR 261.8 of the Code of Federal Regulations for the Forest Service. Therefore the suggestion lies beyond the scope of this rulemaking and EIS.

47. *Roads have a negative impact on hunting opportunities and therefore should not be built.*

Response: The impact of roads on hunting was addressed in the Hunting and Fishing section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS on pp. 3-175 through 3-177. Hunting is an important use of NFS lands, accounting for 11% of recreational hunting days nationally. NFS lands are also important for subsistence hunting in some places. The DEIS concluded that road construction could have a negative impact on hunting because it could lead to declines in populations of some game species. These declines could be caused by reduced habitat quantity and quality, human disturbance, poaching, and road kills. Roads increase access to hunting sites, which could result in increased crowds, also having a negative impact on hunting. The prohibition action alternatives would prohibit road construction and reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas, and would conserve hunting opportunities in these areas.

48. *The Forest Service should address the impacts of the proposed rule on access for hunting, and on hunting success on National Forest System lands.*

Response: None of the prohibition alternatives close existing roads or trails, nor do they prohibit motorized access where such access is already allowed. Therefore, current access for hunting in inventoried roadless areas would not be affected by any of the prohibitions. Additional roaded access that might have resulted from future road building in

inventoried roadless areas would not be provided if one of the prohibition action alternatives is selected.

Under the new 36 CFR 219 Planning Regulations, local management actions could be proposed that would potentially affect hunting access, such as restrictions on off-highway vehicle use. At the present time, it is not known what might be proposed or decided upon locally. Public involvement, and analysis of the effects of any such proposals, would be a part of the local decision-making process, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act and by the National Forest Management Act .

The Hunting and Fishing section of Chapter 3 of the FEIS, and the Socioeconomic Specialist Report on Hunting and Fishing that supplements the FEIS, discuss in detail how road construction, timber harvest, and the alternatives may affect hunting access and use.

49. The rule would preclude certain road-dependent management actions such as timber harvest that could improve habitat and hunting and fishing opportunities.

Response: While the proposed rule would preclude management actions that require road construction or reconstruction in roadless areas, many management actions that do not require roads would still be possible. For example, prescribed fire would continue to be allowed in roadless areas. Under prohibition Alternative 2, timber harvest would be allowed to the extent that it did not require new road building. Alternative 3 allows timber harvest for stewardship purposes, which could include the purpose of improving wildlife habitat. Only Alternative 4 prohibits timber harvest.

50. The Forest Service should address the behavior of road hunters, including their illegal behaviors, and their impact on wildlife and the environment.

Response: The issue of hunter behavior on existing roads is beyond the scope of the analysis for the Roadless Area Conservation Proposed Rule because the rule only applies to new road construction or reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas of the national forests and grasslands. Hunting regulations are made by States and are outside the authority of the Forest Service. The behavior of hunters who hunt in roadless areas using motorized vehicles, including illegal motorized use outside of approved areas or

routes, is an enforcement issue and is also outside the scope of the analysis for this rule. Limiting motorized use in inventoried roadless and unroaded areas is a topic that may be considered locally.

51. The Forest Service should disclose whether research supports the claim that better quality hunting and fishing is found in roadless areas.

Response: The definition of better quality hunting and fishing is subjective. Good quality hunting and fishing may mean high success rates, easy access to hunting and fishing sites, and/or low congestion and competition with other users in hunting and fishing locations, among other things.

The Ecological Factors section of the FEIS summarizes the results of research regarding the effects of roads and timber harvest on terrestrial and aquatic habitat and species. It concludes that roadless areas provide important habitat for fish and wildlife species, and that roads can have detrimental impacts on many species populations. The potential for human disturbance and degradation of terrestrial and aquatic habitat quality, quantity, and distribution is greater in roaded areas than in roadless areas, with a corresponding greater likelihood of adverse impacts to species that inhabit these areas.

To the extent that quality hunting and fishing depend on healthy populations of fish and game species, research cited in the FEIS supports the claim that roadless areas will directly or indirectly support quality hunting and fishing. The Hunting and Fishing section of Chapter 3 of the FEIS discusses the effects of the prohibition alternatives on other criteria relating to the quality of hunting and fishing on National Forest System lands.

52. The Forest Service should consider that cultural values of Idaho residents are strongly tied with healthy elk herds.

Response: The Forest Service recognizes that healthy herds of elk and other wildlife species are important to some people, and support a number of social, cultural, and economic values. The Hunting and Fishing sections of the DEIS and the Socioeconomic Specialist Report discussed some of these values. The Ecological Factors section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS concluded that the action alternatives would help to protect wildlife species by conserving habitat and minimizing human

disturbance in roadless areas. It also recognized that elk avoid roads if possible, and may benefit from the security and isolation provided by inventoried roadless areas. The discussion of elk has been expanded in the FEIS. By conserving wildlife species, the prohibition action alternatives would support the cultural values of Idaho residents and others who care about healthy wildlife populations, including elk.

53. The Forest Service should delete the discussion of cavity nesting birds and mammals, threatened and endangered species, and carnivorous species from the hunting and fishing discussion on p. 3-176 of the DEIS because they are not germane to the topic.

Response: The Hunting and Fishing discussion on p. 3-176 of the DEIS did not mention threatened and endangered species. Some people hunt carnivorous species that are affected by road construction and/or timber harvest, such as mountain lions, black and grizzly bears, and wolves. Therefore, an analysis of the effects of the alternatives on these species is relevant to the discussion of hunting. Some cavity nesting mammals, such as squirrels and raccoons, are hunted in some parts of the U.S. These species may be disturbed by timber harvest activities. In addition, some cavity nesting birds and mammals may be important prey species for carnivores that are hunted. The FEIS seeks to clarify the effects analysis pertaining to hunting and fishing.

54. The analysis of the effects of the proposed rule on hunting and fishing in the DEIS is inadequate. The analysis should include quantified predictions of effects on user days, a cumulative effects analysis that considers State regulations on hunting and fishing, the fact that big game populations are at or near record highs in the West, and fish and game harvest figures from NFS lands.

Response: The Hunting and Fishing section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS stated that many complex variables influence fish and wildlife species populations. The Ecological Factors section of the DEIS analyzed the effects of the alternatives on fish and wildlife populations in terms of qualitative trends rather than quantitative changes due to data limitations. In the absence of a quantitative analysis of the effects of the alternatives on species populations, it is not possible to make a quantitative prediction of the effects of the alternatives on

hunting and fishing user days. Therefore, these effects are discussed in terms of trends. Moreover, species populations are only one of the many variables that influence hunting and fishing behavior. For example, States set harvest limits and the length of seasons, which also influence hunting and fishing user days. For these reasons, a quantitative prediction of how the alternatives will affect hunting and fishing user days is not practical.

Hunting and fishing regulations vary by State, and are reasonably foreseen as unchanged and not affected in the cumulative effects analysis.

Some large game species populations in the West may be at or near record highs. The rule would help to sustain existing species populations in roadless areas, and would have indirect benefits to areas outside roadless areas as well.

Fish and game harvest figures from NFS lands are not available.

55. The Forest Service should protect Montana's five-week hunting season and high quality trout fishing.

Response: The length of Montana's hunting season is determined by the State of Montana, not by the Forest Service, and is therefore beyond the scope of this analysis and rulemaking. The Ecological Factors section of FEIS Chapter 3 concludes that by prohibiting road construction and reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas, and decreasing timber harvest activity there, the potential for degradation of terrestrial and aquatic habitat quality, quantity, and distribution would be reduced compared to the no action alternative. This should help to protect hunting and trout fishing.

56. The Forest Service should address the impacts of timber harvest, road building, and recreation on subsistence resources.

Response: The Hunting and Fishing section, the Non-Timber Forest Products section, and the Tongass National Forest section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS described the effects of the alternatives on activities related to subsistence. The Hunting and Fishing section of the *Socioeconomic Specialist Report (May 2000)* that accompanied the DEIS also described the impacts of timber harvest and road building on subsistence. The Civil Rights Impact

Analysis and Environmental Justice Issues document that accompanied the proposed rule described the impacts of the alternatives on subsistence as well.

Non-Commodity Values

57. *A legacy of healthy ecosystems should be left for future generations so they can be studied in the future using advanced technology not available today.*

Response: The Forest Service recognizes the importance of protecting roadless areas for the benefit of future generations. The Ecological Factors section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS discussed the value of roadless areas as reference landscapes for future research (pp. 3-110 through 3-111). The Wildland Values section of the DEIS considered the value of protecting roadless areas for research and teaching (p. 3-164). A concern for protecting roadless areas so that they can be studied in the future is consistent with the action alternatives. The DEIS found that the action alternatives would contribute toward protection of ecosystems that would provide many benefits to future generations.

58. *Consider the impacts of this proposal on future generations.*

Response: Some commentators who support the proposed rule indicate an interest in providing roadless areas for future generations because they value the clean air and water, habitat, species diversity, and other social and ecological characteristics these areas provide. This concern is directly addressed by the proposed rule. Some commentators who are against the proposed rule also indicate a concern for future generations. Their concern is that future generations will not be able to participate in their current way of life which is dependent on resource use, and that future generations will not have access to public land and, therefore, will not care about it.

Chapter 3 of the DEIS disclosed the likely short and long-term effects of the alternatives on access to and use of inventoried roadless areas. The alternatives preserve options for future generations by protecting the inventoried roadless areas that currently exist. The rule is not binding in perpetuity; however, future generations could change it through rulemaking or Congressional action to accommodate future needs.

59. *National forests should be protected as a place for people to escape from mechanization, motorized vehicles, and the urban environment.*

Response: The Wildland Values section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS (pp. 3-161 through 3-166) discussed some of the values associated with this concern. The prohibition action alternatives aim to conserve the characteristics of inventoried roadless areas, which provide many of these wildland values. They would help to ensure that inventoried roadless areas would continue to provide a haven for some to escape the urban environment and elements of civilization. However, the prohibition alternatives would not prevent motorized and mechanized uses in those areas where they are currently permitted. Decisions on whether or not to allow such uses in roadless areas would be made at the local level with public involvement under the new 36 CFR 219 Planning Regulations.

60. *The national forests should be protected for the contribution they make to the quality of life.*

Response: The action alternatives are designed to prohibit activities that have the greatest likelihood of degrading the desirable social and ecological characteristics of inventoried roadless areas. Some people would view this as protecting their quality of life by protecting such things as air and water quality, biological diversity, and opportunities for dispersed recreation and personal renewal. Others would view this as diminishing their quality of life because it would reduce the potential for future roadless access to parts of the NFS, and limit future uses of some natural resources. The sections of Chapter 3 of the DEIS concerning Human Uses and Social and Economic Factors (pp. 3-112 through 3-222) disclosed in detail the effects of the alternatives on various groups, including potential effects on quality of life.

61. *There is intrinsic value in the existence of roadless areas.*

Response: The existence value of roadless areas is considered in the Wildland Values section of the DEIS as a type of passive use value of national forests and grasslands (pp. 3-164 through 3-165). Passive use values are independent of any active or consumptive use of a natural area. A place has existence value when it is valued simply because it exists, without any intent to use it. Holding such

values does not depend on living near roadless areas, on receiving direct benefits from them, or on ever visiting them. Because the prohibition action alternatives conserve the roadless characteristics of inventoried roadless areas, they enhance and protect the existence values of those areas. The FEIS concludes that the action alternatives would have a positive effect on people who value the existence of inventoried roadless areas.

62. *The Forest Service should acknowledge the educational value of roadless areas.*

Response: The Forest Service acknowledged the educational value of roadless areas in the Wildland Values section (p. 3-164) and in the Reference Landscapes section (pp. 3-10 through 3-11) of Chapter 3 of the DEIS. These sections indicate that, because they are large-scale, intact ecosystems, roadless areas serve as important training grounds for numerous scientific and resource management disciplines. They also serve as natural laboratories for monitoring and experimentation to increase knowledge of large-scale ecological patterns, processes, and management activities. The DEIS concluded that people who care about the educational values of roadless areas would benefit from the action alternatives because they would help maintain the undisturbed character of these areas, while also maintaining current access to them for a variety of educational purposes.

63. *The proposed rule should be designed to best preserve our national heritage of wild land.*

Response: A number of people believe that wild lands, and their associated value, are a part of our national heritage, are increasingly threatened by development, and should be protected on public land. The Forest Service recognizes that the inherent values and characteristics of wild lands, such as roadless areas, are becoming scarce in an increasingly developed landscape. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule seeks to protect inventoried roadless areas in order to conserve their values and characteristics. The Wildland Values section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS (pp. 3-161 through 3-166) addressed this concern. It concluded that the action alternatives would enhance the wildland values associated with these areas, and help to preserve our national heritage of wild lands.

64. *The Forest Service should address the claimed potential benefits of the proposed rule by explaining how much acreage is needed to achieve the "good feeling" of knowing that there are roadless areas.*

Response: The amount of roadless area needed for people to achieve the “good feeling” of knowing that roadless areas exist is highly subjective. Moreover, the size of a roadless area in relation to how well it functions to conserve the ecological and social characteristics associated with it depends on its location, context, and relationship to other lands surrounding it.

For those people who place existence value on roadless areas, the action alternatives should have positive effects, as described in the Non-Commodity Values section of Chapter 3 of the FEIS. However, the FEIS does not correlate these positive effects with specific acreages of roadless area protected. Again, this would be highly variable and subjective.

65. *The need to provide people with opportunities to experience solitude is not a valid justification for this rule. The Forest Service should consider that there are few people who really want solitude. Those who do can find it by walking into Wilderness areas.*

Response: The Forest Service proposed the Roadless Area Conservation Rule to achieve a number of benefits described in Chapter 1 of the DEIS and FEIS. These include watershed protection, wildlife and fish habitat protection, protection of native plant and animal communities, and protection of semi-primitive and primitive recreation opportunities. The economic wisdom of constructing new roads in roadless areas is also a concern, especially given the \$8.4 billion backlog in maintenance for existing roads. Providing opportunities for solitude was not an explicit part of the purpose and need for the proposed action. However, roadless areas and protection of semi-primitive and primitive recreation do provide people who value solitude with possible opportunities to experience it.

While the Forest Service lacks quantitative data regarding the number of people in the United States who want to experience solitude in relatively wild, undisturbed landscapes, public comment on the Notice of Intent and on the DEIS for the Roadless Area Conservation Rule indicated that this experience is one of the things people value about

roadless areas. Current opportunities for solitude in inventoried roadless areas would be conserved by the prohibition action alternatives.

66. *The natural beauty of this country is our most precious resource. The Forest Service should not allow those with power, but no vision or understanding of this beauty, to speak for us all.*

Response: The Roadless Area Conservation Proposed Rule, by prohibiting road construction and, under certain alternatives, curtailing timber harvest in inventoried roadless areas, would help preserve the natural and scenic values associated with these areas. Scenic quality is one of the roadless area characteristics the rule seeks to protect. The Scenic Quality section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS (pp. 3-132 through 3-133) states that the action alternatives would maintain high levels of scenic quality in inventoried roadless areas relative to the no action alternative.

67. *The Forest Service should emphasize the importance and social benefits of natural areas. Some members of the public would be willing to pay extra to protect these areas, and to assist those members of the public adversely affected by the proposal.*

Response: A central purpose of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule is to protect the ecological and social characteristics and values of these inventoried roadless areas. The FEIS discusses these characteristics and values in detail throughout the document. The FEIS also discusses the adverse effects of the alternatives on members of the public. Those people who are dependent on timber harvest from roadless areas would experience the greatest adverse effects. The Mitigation Options section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS (pp. 3-243 through 3-244) described various measures that could be taken to offset these negative economic and social effects. Implementation of these measures would depend on a Forest Service budget request to Congress and subsequent funding. The FEIS contains an expanded discussion of mitigation options.

68. *The Forest Service should consider the spiritual qualities the public finds in National Forests.*

Response: Spiritual qualities and values are highly subjective. The Forest Service recognizes that some people value National Forest System lands as places

where they can experience personal and spiritual renewal, and as places that contain sacred or religious sites. In addition, the Forest Service recognizes that roadless areas that contain relatively undisturbed forests have spiritual qualities in the eyes of some members of the public. The wildland values discussed on pp. 3-161 through 3-166 of the DEIS may or may not have their roots in various spiritual or religious beliefs and values. By conserving inventoried roadless areas and protecting the roadless characteristics and values associated with them, the proposal would also conserve the spiritual qualities of those areas.

69. *The Forest Service should not refer to spiritual renewal in a NEPA document.*

Response: People use the national forests and grasslands in many different ways for many different purposes, and have a wide range of values relating to these lands. Chapter 3 of the DEIS disclosed the effects of the alternatives on public uses and values of roadless areas. Spiritual renewal is one of these uses and values. While not all members of the public experience spiritual renewal in roadless areas, some people do, and this value is valid as are other values. Therefore, the effects of the alternatives on spiritual renewal are disclosed in the DEIS and FEIS.

70. *The Forest Service claims that one justification for the Roadless Area Conservation Rule is that roadless areas serve as a “spiritual and psychological resource” for nature worshippers, as though existing Wilderness areas were not sufficient to serve this purpose. This is not a valid justification for setting aside 60 million acres of National Forest System lands.*

Response: The purpose and need for the proposed action outlined in Chapter 1 of the DEIS does not cite the role of roadless areas as a spiritual and psychological resource for people as part of its justification. Rather, the Forest Service has the Roadless Area Conservation Proposed Rule for several reasons, described in Chapter 1 of the DEIS. These include a need to conserve the desirable characteristics of roadless areas, such as watershed protection, wildlife and fish habitat, native plant and animal communities, and roadless recreation opportunities. The economic wisdom of constructing new roads in roadless areas is also a concern, especially given the \$8.4 billion backlog in maintenance for existing roads. In addition, the rule

seeks to address the problems of costly and time-consuming litigation and controversy that have characterized local-level roadless area management decision-making for the last two decades.

Chapter 3 of the DEIS described the ecological and social effects of the alternatives. Positive effects of the action alternatives include conserving opportunities for people who wish to experience solitude, and spiritual and psychological renewal, in roadless areas. These effects are disclosed as consequences and considered in decision-making under the National Environmental Policy Act, but are not justifications for the proposed action. The Record of Decision will discuss the rationale for the final decision.

71. Environmentalists are trying to establish “environmentalist spiritualism” as a State religion by complaining about the effects of ORVs on their personal spiritual beliefs. If environmentalists want more land protected as Wilderness, they should go and buy it themselves and preserve it as they see fit.

Response: None of the alternatives propose to manage inventoried roadless areas as Wilderness. The alternatives would not alter existing access to inventoried roadless areas by OHVs. The only activities that would be prohibited in inventoried roadless areas under the action alternatives would be future road construction and reconstruction, and some or nearly all timber harvest, depending on the alternative. See also Response 70.

Non-Timber Forest Products

72. The Forest Service should protect natural areas and national forests as a source of medicines and for raw materials that could be used as the genetic base for improved agricultural crops.

Response: As noted in the Introduction to the FEIS, one of the values of roadless areas that the proposed rule seeks to protect is biodiversity, including a diversity of plant species. The Non-Timber Forest Products section of Chapter 3 of the FEIS notes that NFS lands contain several plant species that have medicinal value. Roadless areas are more likely to have intact native plant and animal communities than roaded areas. The Ecological Factors section of Chapter 3 of the FEIS discusses the positive effects of the action alternatives on biological diversity and on terrestrial and aquatic plant species. By

conserving biodiversity in roadless areas, medicinal plants that occur there would also be conserved.

73. The Forest Service should preserve forests because they may hold pharmaceutical and other values that we are unaware of now, but that will be discovered in the future once new technologies are available. If we destroy this habitat now, any potential long-term future benefits will be lost forever.

Response: Part of the mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, productivity, and diversity of the land to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Forest Service recognizes the importance of protecting the national forests and grasslands for future generations so that the nation may benefit from the values these lands contain. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule supports this objective. The Ecological Factors section of the DEIS found that the action alternatives will help to conserve biodiversity and intact plant and animal communities in roadless areas, and could result in a legacy of healthy ecosystems in roadless areas that would provide many benefits to future generations. This could lead to pharmaceutical discoveries, and discoveries of other valuable products.

74. Address the effects of this proposal on access to and use of non-timber forest products.

Response: The effects of the action alternatives on access to and use of non-timber forest products were addressed in the Non-Timber Forest Products section of the DEIS (see also *Socioeconomic Specialist Report on Non-Timber Forest Products (May 2000)*, which supports the DEIS). Depending on the species of interest, roads and timber harvest may have positive or negative effects for gatherers of non-timber forest products. The action alternatives would not alter current access conditions for the harvest of these products in inventoried roadless areas, but would alter the potential for future roaded access to them. By prohibiting new road construction and reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas, the action alternatives would not be as advantageous as no action for those who are limited by physical condition, or by the weight of their product (for example, firewood), to roadside gathering.

75. The Forest Service should alter the proposed ban on new road building to allow for maintenance and construction of simple, low impact roads and

trails that are compatible with the needs of non-timber forest product commercial and non-commercial harvesting.

Response: Pages 3-179 through 3-181 of the DEIS described the effects of the prohibition alternatives on the harvesting of non-timber forest products. A prohibition on road construction and reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas would not alter current access conditions for the harvest of non-timber forest products there. Such a prohibition would limit future roaded access to inventoried roadless areas, and therefore limit future access by those who depend on gathering non-timber forest products close to roads.

The alternatives do not preclude off-highway vehicle use, or the future construction of foot or off-highway vehicle trails that could be used to access non-timber forest products in inventoried roadless areas. Moreover, the alternatives do not prohibit future road construction in unroaded areas. Such decisions would be made locally with public involvement under the new 36 CFR 219 Planning Regulations. Roads can have both positive and negative effects on non-timber forest products, and gatherers of those products, as described on pp. 3-179 through 3-181 of the DEIS, and in the *Non-Timber Forest Products Socioeconomic Specialist Report (May 2000)* that supports the DEIS.

76. *The Forest Service should ensure protection of mushrooms by managing forests.*

Response: The purpose of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule is to prohibit activities that have the greatest likelihood of degrading the desirable social and ecological characteristics of inventoried roadless areas. It is not a strategy for managing individual species or classes of resources. The Non-Timber Forest Products section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS (pp. 3-179 through 3-181) described the impacts of the alternatives on non-timber forest products, including mushrooms.

Polls and Surveys

77. *Polls show that most people are against closing public land;*

78. *Polls show most people support protection of roadless areas;*

79. *Polls show that most people support protection over commercial use;*

80. *Do not rely on questionable public opinion surveys of Americans and local postcard campaigns to formulate this policy; and*

81. *The Forest Service should use objective surveys with non-leading questions, rather than existing surveys of questionable applicability to support their hidden agenda.*

Response: When undertaken in a scientifically rigorous and objective way, polls can provide valuable information regarding public attitudes and values as they relate to public lands and how they should be managed. The Forest Service initiated rulemaking to provide long-term protection of roadless areas and their characteristics in response to a directive issued by President Clinton on October 13, 1999. Poll results were not used to develop the alternatives considered or the proposed action in the DEIS. The Forest Service did undertake a public scoping process following publication of the Notice of Intent to undertake this rulemaking effort, as described on pp. 1-5 through 1-9 of the DEIS. The public comments received were used to identify issues and to determine what alternatives should be considered in detail (see Chapter 2 of the DEIS). Following publication of the DEIS, the public had 60 days to comment on the alternatives, including the preferred alternative. These comments were considered in preparing the FEIS and drafting the final rule. See also the Public Involvement section on pp. 4-1 through 4-3 of the DEIS for a description of the public involvement process used to develop the proposed rule.

82. *The Forest Service should survey people actually using national forest lands for their views.*

Response: The Forest Service conducts some surveys of people who use and live around national forests, such as the Recreation Use Survey, the customer comment card program, and surveys undertaken as a part of social assessments that support Forest Plan revisions. However, the Forest Service did not use survey results to develop the alternatives considered in the FEIS. The Forest Service solicits public opinion and comment when undertaking rulemaking and environmental impact analysis following the public involvement and consultation processes outlined in the National

Environmental Policy Act and the Administrative Procedures Act. Chapters 1 and 4 of the FEIS describe these processes in detail.

83. *The Forest Service should undertake a formal study to determine who is actually using the national forests, and develop a policy that will benefit those users.*

Response: National Forests and grasslands are used by many people for many purposes. Some of these uses lend themselves to the efficient identification of users, such as permit holders, and some do not, such as dispersed recreationists or downstream users of water. In addition, many people who do not use NFS lands still have a valid interest in their management. The absence of a formal study to determine who is actually using NFS lands does not preclude an analysis of the effects of the alternatives; nor does it preclude meaningful and thorough public involvement and consideration of public input in the policy-making process. The Forest Service has undertaken a major public involvement and consultation process in preparing the proposed rule, as described in the DEIS and FEIS in Chapter 1, Public Scoping Process and Issues Considered, and in Chapter 4, Public Involvement sections. The costs and benefits of the proposed action for different groups of forest users and forest stakeholders are disclosed in Chapter 3 of the FEIS, in the Social and Economic Factors section.

Population Growth And Development

84. *The Forest Service should consider the population growth predictions; and*

85. *The Forest Service should address land management in light of the increasing population and demand for outdoor activities.*

Response: The Socioeconomic Specialist Report, which supplements the DEIS and is available on the World Wide Web (roadless.fs.fed.us), contains a section on Demographics that discusses demographic trends in the United States in relation to NFS lands, and how these trends may affect future demands and management on the National Forests. In addition, pp. 3-6 through 3-11 of the DEIS discussed population growth and how it will increase the demand for natural resources, commodities, recreational experiences, and amenity and ecological values available from NFS lands in the future. The FEIS

contains an expanded discussion of population growth projections through the year 2040, and their implications for roadless area management.

Pages 3-117 through 3-132, 3-137 through 3-139, and 3-166 through 3-177 of the DEIS discussed increasing demand for different kinds of recreational opportunities, and the effects of the alternatives on these opportunities. Under the action alternatives, the land base for dispersed recreation in roadless areas would be maintained to meet the increasing demand for dispersed activities. The land base for developed, road-based recreation would not decrease from the existing situation under the action alternatives. However, opportunities for future development of road-based recreational opportunities in inventoried roadless areas in response to growing demand would be precluded by the prohibition action alternatives.

86. *This initiative should focus on the problems of population growth and the encroachment of development on forested lands.*

Response: Between 1992 and 1997, nearly 16 million acres of forest, cropland, and open space in the U.S. were converted to urban and other uses, twice the rate of the previous 10 years (DEIS p. 1-3). This trend is likely to continue in light of projected future population growth in the U.S., discussed on p. 3-6 of the DEIS. The Forest Service has no authority to propose initiatives that limit population growth or development on privately-owned forest lands.

In light of increasing human populations and associated development, the proposed rule is a response to the need to protect roadless areas and the clean water, biological diversity, wildlife habitat, forest health, dispersed recreational opportunities, and other benefits they may provide. As stated in the FEIS, the purpose of the proposed rule is to prohibit activities that have the greatest likelihood of degrading these desirable characteristics of inventoried roadless areas.

87. *Roaded access to National Forests will allow corporations to establish a foothold there and engage in development activities that may pose health and safety risks to people.*

Response: There are health and safety risks associated with various types of development including road construction, timber harvest, and mineral development. There are also health and

safety risks associated with a lack of development. For example, transportation to medical services can be difficult in areas that lack roaded access. The action alternatives would limit the kinds of risks associated with the development activities of corporations, but would maintain the risks associated with a lack of development. However, all of the prohibition action alternatives would allow an exception to the prohibition on road construction when a road is needed to protect public health and safety in the event of floods, fire, or other catastrophic events that might otherwise cause the loss of life or property. Roads could also be built to enable a response action to an environmental hazard under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act. See p. 2-4 of the DEIS for more detail. This list has been expanded in the FEIS.

88. *The Forest Service should lobby for the integration of more green space into urban areas.*

Response: The Roadless Area Conservation Rule addresses only inventoried roadless areas of the national forests and grasslands. The concern for more green space in urban areas is beyond the scope of the current proposed action and analysis. The Forest Service promotes integrating more green space into urban areas through its Urban and Community Forestry Program.

89. *The Forest Service should display quantitatively the relationship between urban areas, populations, and roadless areas in the United States.*

Response: The Overview of Inventoried Roadless Areas in the Introduction to Chapter 3 of the DEIS contained quantitative information on the relationship between urban areas, population, and inventoried roadless areas. It indicated that 192 of the 555 cities with 50,000 or more people (slightly more than 35%) are located within 60 miles of an inventoried roadless area. However, only 10% of the inventoried roadless areas fall within that radius (roughly 283 roadless areas). These 192 cities represent approximately one-third of the urban population of the U.S. Figure 3-3 in the DEIS was a map showing the location of inventoried roadless areas across the U.S. in relation to cities of 50,000 people or more, and which of these cities is within 60 miles of a roadless area. The Demographics section of Chapter 3 of the DEIS (pp. 3-6 through 3-8) also described the relationship between the U.S.

population and inventoried roadless areas. Figure 3-4 showed the distribution of the 1990 U.S. population in relation to inventoried roadless areas. Table 3-2 displayed total population, average population density, and acres of inventoried roadless areas for ten multi-State regions of the U.S. The FEIS contains an expanded discussion of population, development, and inventoried roadless areas.

90. *The Forest Service should re-evaluate statements concerning the loss of open space in Chapter 3.*

Response: While local governments may have programs to preserve open space, and while a number of Federal agencies manage land that could be classified as open space, nevertheless, as reported in the DEIS, nearly 16 million acres of forest, cropland, and open space in the U.S. were converted to urban and other uses between 1992 and 1997. That was twice the rate of the previous 10 years (DEIS p. 1-3). This trend is likely to continue in light of projected future population growth in the U.S. As open space is lost on other ownerships nationally, the importance of roadless areas in providing open space on public lands will continue to increase. The FEIS contains an expanded discussion of land conversion in the U.S. from rural to urban uses, and the relevance of this trend to roadless area protection.

Recreation

91. *Revised forest plans should emphasize locally important sociological and economic values which include preserving and enhancing traditionally established types of recreation.*

Response: Under the National Forest Management Act, land management plan revision takes place with public involvement to ensure that revised plans are sensitive to locally important social and economic values. These values include traditionally established types of recreation. The new 36 CFR 219 Planning Regulations for forest and grassland planning would expand public participation in the forest and grassland plan revision process by emphasizing collaboration. The Planning Regulations, which are separate but related to the Roadless Area Conservation Proposed Rule, would further ensure that locally important social and economic values are considered during forest plan revision. The new Planning Regulations provide direction to local managers at the time of forest plan revision in

deciding how to manage inventoried roadless and unroaded areas.

92. *The Forest Service should keep public land open for recreational use by stock users.*

Response: Because the proposed rule would not close any existing roads or trails, it would not reduce current access to National Forest System lands, including access for users of recreational livestock including horses, mules, llamas, and goats.

Timber Industry Workers

93. *The wording of the document is inappropriate and insensitive to the public.*

Response: The Forest Service did not intentionally use inappropriate or insensitive wording in the DEIS. Public comment specifying which parts of the document reflect a lack of appropriateness or sensitivity to the public has been used in revising the FEIS.

94. *The Forest Service’s description of workers in the forest products industry, on pp. 3-189 to 190, is extremely offensive;*

95. *The Forest Service should strike the text of the Social Effects Related to Timber Harvest in the DEIS (p. 3-190) and issue a public apology to the forestry workers of this country;*

96. *The social analysis of forestry workers in the DEIS is degrading and discriminatory; and*

97. *The Forest Service should apologize and retract offending statements made on p. 3-190, paragraph 3. The Forest Service should offer an explanation as to how and why such a negative characterization of people in rural timber dependent communities was allowed to be printed by the USFS for public consumption.*

Response: Some members of the public have expressed concerns regarding the tone and content of that portion of the DEIS that addresses Social Effects Related to Timber Harvest (pp. 3-189 through 3-190). Forest Service Chief Dombeck apologizes to those members of the public who feel offended by this analysis, or feel that it portrayed a lack of respect for timber workers. This was not the intent.

The purpose of an Environmental Impact Statement is to disclose to decision-makers the range of potential effects associated with implementing different policy alternatives. The National Environmental Policy Act requires Federal agencies to consider and disclose the effects of a proposed action and alternatives, on the human environment. In the social arena, this means predicting not only what the economic impacts of a policy will be, but also what the social effects of that policy will be. In this case, what does the loss of jobs and income caused by reduced timber harvests on public lands mean to people employed in the timber industry, from the social and cultural perspective? It is important for decision-makers to have as thorough an understanding as possible of the social impacts of the Roadless Area Conservation proposal, so that they can make an informed decision. The agency has been criticized for not doing an adequate job of social analysis in the past.

The approach used in the roadless DEIS to disclose the social effects of lost jobs and income associated with reduced timber harvests was to summarize the results of previous research conducted on this topic. This summary, which appeared on pp. 3-189 and 3-190 of the DEIS, is based on the sources cited in each paragraph. The discussion is based on the published literature; none of the statements represent independent assertions on the part of the Forest Service, except where published Forest Service documents are cited. The Forest Service apologizes for any confusion over the citations on these pages.

As noted in the DEIS, there is disagreement in the literature over what the social effects of job loss in the timber industry are. In the interest of providing a balanced analysis, a range of effects were reported, based on existing research findings. The DEIS noted that it is difficult to generalize regarding the social impact of lost timber jobs, and that the actual social effects on individual timber workers will vary. Nevertheless, by undertaking a characterization of timber industry workers, and potential social impacts on them, there is a risk of appearing to generalize about or stereotype people.

The literature summarized in this section of the DEIS reflects a broader debate regarding the nature of individual participants in the timber industry, and therefore, how job loss and/or reduced income from timber work will affect them. On the one hand, research from the Pacific Northwest portrays loggers

as people who are members of an inter-generational, deeply rooted, logging culture, for whom job loss means the loss of a way of life, and a sense of individual and cultural identity (Carroll and Lee 1990, sources discussed and cited in FEMAT – Forest Ecosystem Management Assessment Team – 1993). It may be difficult for these people to diversify into other sectors once timber jobs go away. The FEMAT report summarizes research from the Pacific Northwest that found that mill workers have a less well-developed sense of occupational identity than loggers, and therefore that their individual sense of social and cultural identity would be less threatened by job loss. According to this study, they would accept equivalent jobs in another sector more readily than loggers would.

On the other hand, some researchers reject what they characterize as a romantic myth regarding timber industry workers and their way of life (Power 1996). They counter with the view that timber workers have a relatively short tenure of employment in the industry, and that timber dependent communities are not prosperous, have little social infrastructure, many social problems, and that the industry does not invest in workers or their safety (Power 1996, Drielsma and others 1990). Power (1996) argues that the timber industry provides opportunities for people who lack high levels of formal education (that is, college degrees) to obtain high-paying jobs. According to Power, what is threatened by the downsizing of the wood products industry is not a time-honored profession passed down over the generations, but rather high-paying jobs that make it possible for some people who lack college degrees to make a good living.

The Forest Ecosystem Management Assessment Team (FEMAT) report (1993) stated that one of its important findings in the Pacific Northwest was that no matter what the individual circumstances of a timber worker, uncertainty regarding Federal forest management was a central issue of concern to communities there. High levels of uncertainty make it difficult for communities to cope with change, and produce a number of negative social effects. This study found that in the eyes of communities in the spotted owl region of the Pacific Northwest, any Federal forest policy decision – even if it spelled bad news – would be an improvement over a situation of uncertainty, as this would provide them with a level of certainty on which to base their efforts to adapt.

Because these contrasting views of the social effects of job loss in the timber industry were reported in the literature, and because each may hold true for some participants in the timber industry, the Roadless Area Conservation DEIS presented them as representing a potential range of social effects that might be expected from the alternatives. The purpose of reporting these findings in the DEIS was to help better inform decision-makers about the potential social impacts of those alternatives that would reduce timber harvest from inventoried roadless areas.

The Forest Service believes it is important to portray the range of potential social effects of reduced timber harvest on timber industry workers in the FEIS. In order to do so, an expanded literature search has been conducted in an attempt to better represent this range of social effects. In addition, every effort has been made to cite the sources of these findings clearly, and to present the research findings using language that is not offensive.

98. *The Forest Service should remove insulting and discriminatory language about timber related professionals, motorized users, and former and retired Forest Service employees from the Draft EIS.*

Response: The Forest Service did not intend to insult or discriminate against any groups or individuals with the language or analysis contained in the DEIS. Some statements in the DEIS, such as those regarding motorized users, were paraphrases of statements made by sources outside the Forest Service, including statements made by members of the public in response to the Notice of Intent. The Forest Service attempted to accurately reference the sources of such statements in the DEIS, and regrets any confusion that may have occurred. Descriptions of past Forest Service management of roadless areas were intended to characterize the existing situation, and were not meant to criticize the motives of past managers. See Response 97 to this concern as it relates to timber related professionals.

99. *The studies used in the Draft EIS regarding the consequences of job loss for rural forestry workers are inadequate.*

Response: The FEIS contains the results of an expanded literature search regarding the consequences of job loss for rural forestry workers. Specific studies or references that are recommended

by the public as more adequately representing these consequences were consulted. These studies are listed in the References Cited section of the FEIS.

100. The Forest Service should cease to rely on Power (1996) as a source on the sociology of rural communities, and should strike all references to it from the Draft EIS.

Response: In order to predict the potential impacts of the alternatives on workers in the wood products industry, a literature review was conducted. Power (1996) is one of several sources that addresses this topic, and it was cited in the DEIS. This book was published by Island Press, which is well regarded by many people in the academic community, and by many natural resource and environmental professionals. Island Press submits manuscripts to several subject matter experts for peer review before publishing them.

Page 3-189 of the DEIS noted that there is disagreement in the literature over what the social effects of job loss in the timber industry are, that these effects will vary across the country and among individuals, and that the analysis suggests a range of potential social effects. Some will agree, and some will disagree, with Power’s characterization of rural communities. The DEIS did not state that any one characterization applies to everyone who may be affected by the alternatives. In the interest of providing a balanced analysis, a range of research findings were reported in the DEIS, based on the existing literature. An expanded literature review of the social effects related to timber harvest is presented in the FEIS.

101. The Forest Service should state who the authors and reviewers were of the section in the DEIS which describes forestry workers.

Response: Chapter 4 of the DEIS, pp. 4-4 through 4-8, listed the names of the individuals who were involved in preparing and reviewing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the proposed rule.

102. The Forest Service should address the logging “way of life” or “culture.”

Response: The Timber Harvest sub-section of the Social and Economic Factors section of the DEIS estimates the number of timber jobs that may be lost

as a result of the prohibition alternatives. The social effects of job loss on timber workers were addressed on pp. 3-189 through 3-190 of the DEIS. The logging way of life and logging culture are acknowledged there, and the potential effects of job loss on that way of life and culture are disclosed. See also Response 94.

Tribal Concerns

103. The Forest Service should honor the United States’ treaty obligations with American Indian peoples and respect their feelings of sacredness toward the land.

Response: The Forest Service recognizes the treaty rights of American Indians on NFS lands and the agency’s trust responsibilities. It also recognizes that NFS lands contain American Indian sacred sites (see the Forest Service National Resource Book on American Indian and Alaska Native Relations). Treaty rights and sacred sites were acknowledged and discussed on pp. 3-202 through 3-203 of the DEIS, and in the Civil Rights Impact Analysis and Environmental Justice Issues document that accompanied the proposed rule. None of the alternatives considered in the DEIS would affect existing treaty rights with American Indians. None of the prohibition action alternatives would alter existing access to inventoried roadless areas on NFS lands by American Indians. The FEIS expands this discussion with a new section on American Indian and Alaska Native Issues, and the effects of the alternatives on them.

104. The Forest Service should go to Standing Rock Reservation to consult with the Tribal Government on the DEIS because there are National Forest System lands containing roadless areas within the boundaries of the Reservation.

Response: The proposed rule applies only to National Forest System lands, and does not apply to Reservation lands. There are in-holdings of the Dakota Prairie Grasslands within the boundaries of the Standing Rock Reservation. The proposed rule would apply to these in-holdings, but would not apply to Standing Rock Reservation lands. The Forest Service has consulted with the Tribal Government at Standing Rock Reservation on the Roadless Rule and will continue to do so, as an ongoing process as described on pp. 4-2 and 4-3 of the DEIS.

105. The Forest Service should consider an alternative that returns treaty-ceded lands to traditional native peoples.

Response: The Roadless Area Conservation Rule aims to prohibit activities that have the greatest likelihood of degrading the desirable social and ecological characteristics of inventoried roadless areas. The purpose and need for this rule were described on pp. 1-10 through 1-12 of the DEIS. The issue of returning treaty-ceded lands to Tribes is beyond the scope of this current rulemaking.

End of Social Section