



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

December, 2006



Environmental Assessment

Sisters Admin Site Land Conveyance

Sisters Ranger District, Deschutes National Forest
Deschutes County, Oregon

T15S, R10E, Sec 5, SE

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SUMMARY

This Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluates a proposal to convey approximately 68 acres of National Forest System land out of federal ownership, and build a new Ranger Station on the remaining 12 acre portion of the 80 acre Administrative Site, north of Barclay Avenue. The properties would be conveyed into private ownership by direct or competitive sale. The Forest Service is presenting this proposal under the authority of the Pilot Program Authorizing Conveyance of Excess Forest Service Structures, in Interior and Related Appropriations Act of 2002, P.L. 107-63, 329 (Pilot) and/or the Forest Service Facilities Realignment and Enhancement Act of 2005 (FSFREA). The project has been approved by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees as a pilot conveyance.

In addition to the proposed action, the Forest Service also evaluated the following alternatives:

- *Alternative 1 is the No Action Alternative. No lands would be sold and a new Ranger Station would not be constructed.*
- *In Alternative 3, the new Ranger Station would be constructed on approximately 12 acres at the southeast corner of the intersection of Barclay Drive and Highway 20. The remaining 68 acres north and south of Barclay would be sold.*

The decision to be made by the **Forest Supervisor** is: 1) whether or not to convey any or all of the described 80 acres of land out of federal ownership, and 2) what site for a new Ranger Station best serves the visiting public, the District employees and the community. The decision will consider whether the benefits of conveyance outweigh the benefits of retaining the lands as part of the National Forest System. Other reasonable and feasible alternatives that meet the purpose and need for the project may be considered. The decision will be based on the findings in the environmental document, and public comments will be considered in reaching the decision.

The decision also includes a small land exchange of 2 parcels on either side of Barclay Avenue from each other. Both parcels are approximately .05 acres in size.

The decision also includes a Forest Plan Amendment to change the LRMP allocation on the property that will become the site of the new Ranger Station from Scenic Views to Administrative Site, and to remove the Scenic Views allocation from the land to be sold.

The decision to be made will not include any decisions about future uses of the property, as use of private land is within city, county and state jurisdiction and beyond Forest Service jurisdiction or control. The EA and decision also will not consider or address the appraisal, valuation of the federal lands, or the sale process, as each of these are future administrative actions or decisions to be considered later to implement the Regional Forester's decision.

Document Structure

The Forest Service has prepared this Environmental Assessment in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This Environmental Assessment discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts that would result from the proposed action and alternatives. The document is organized into four parts:

- *Introduction:* The section includes information on the history of the project proposal, the purpose of and need for the project, and the agency's proposal for achieving that purpose and need. This section also details how the Forest Service informed the public of the proposal and how the public responded.
- *Comparison of Alternatives, including the Proposed Action:* This section provides a more detailed description of the agency's proposed action as well as alternative methods for achieving the stated purpose. These alternatives were developed based on significant issues raised by the public and other agencies. This discussion also includes possible mitigation measures. Finally, this section provides a summary table of the environmental consequences associated with each alternative.
- *Environmental Consequences:* This section describes the environmental effects of implementing the proposed action and other alternatives. This analysis is organized by resource area or type, i.e., land use and wildlife. Within each section, the affected environment is described first, followed by the effects of the No Action Alternative that provide a baseline for comparison of the other alternatives that follow.
- *Agencies and Persons Consulted:* This section provides a list of preparers and agencies consulted during the development of the environmental assessment.

Additional documentation, including more detailed analyses of project-area resources, may be found in the project planning record located at the Sisters Ranger District Office in Sisters, Oregon.

Background

The property was acquired from Brooks Scanlon in 1947 as part of a land for timber exchange. The site consists of 80 acres inside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) of Sisters, Oregon. Approximately 50 acres are designated as an administrative site. The remaining 30 acres are contiguous to the administrative site. This portion of the property has been managed as part of the administrative site rather than as resource property. The entire 80 acres is bounded on three sides by urban development and has lost its forest character when compared to the adjacent resource lands outside the UGB.

Twenty one USFS structures dating back to the 1950's occupy the site. They include office buildings, dwellings, and a warehouse complex. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) occupies 6 acres under special use permit with a maintenance shop and sand shed. The site is bisected north-south by Hwy 20 and east-west by Barclay Avenue, a major cross arterial, further degrading the forest character.

The Deschutes National Forest Facilities Master Plan (FMP, 10/04) determined that a USFS presence will need to remain within Sisters. Both the FMP and a follow-up Value

Analysis specific to Sisters Ranger District (11/04) noted that the existing facilities do not adequately serve the public or the FS mission and recommended that new facilities be obtained that will meet the following objectives:

- 1) Consolidate the current three offices into one building,
- 2) Eliminate the residential housing,
- 3) Expand and upgrade affordable seasonal employee housing,
- 4) Modernize and consolidate the work center,
- 5) Update all facilities to be more energy efficient and accessible, and
- 6) Shrink the USFS foot print within the City of Sisters from 80 to less than 20 acres.

Currently, most of the District employees are housed in the main office building. The Fire, Fuels, and part of the Silviculture departments are housed in a residence next to the office. During the summer season, when the number of employees is greatly increased, some wildlife and botany employees have used a second residence as an office. Finally, most of the fire, fuels, presale, and silviculture field crews have work stations in the warehouse. Having all employees under one roof reduces costs for infrastructure such as phones, computers, printers, and restrooms. It also significantly aids in communication among co-workers, and between employees and the public.

There are currently seven residences, constructed nearly 50 years ago. In the past these provided housing for employees, and later were made available to private renters at competitive rates. As the city of Sisters grew, better housing in the private sector became available to employees, and the residences were less attractive. In the mid 1990's rules for renting the houses changed, and the USFS was no longer able to rent the houses to private parties. Without rent, there were no funds available for basic upkeep and improvements, so the condition of most of the houses has greatly deteriorated.

There are currently two bunkhouses built in the late 50's and moved to Sisters from other locations in the early 80's. Each bunkhouse was designed to accommodate four employees, but often housed up to six. Both buildings are badly in need of repairs, one building is currently uninhabitable. Sisters Ranger District typically needs seasonal housing for 16 to 20 employees, and often provides temporary housing for other USFS units. In the past, some residences have been used for seasonal housing, but the rental receipts are not large or consistent enough to provide for basic maintenance and upkeep.

The work center is a hodge-podge of buildings constructed at various times over the past 50 years. Some structures were moved to Sisters from other locations. Others have been extensively remodeled or altered as needs changed. None of the buildings meet codes for fire protection, structure, or health and safety. There are not adequate restroom or office facilities for the number of employees that use the work center on a daily basis.

Because all of the buildings on the Sisters Ranger District are at least 40 years old, they do not meet current codes for energy conservation, especially insulation, heating, and lighting. Heating and cooling systems are badly in need of replacement. Current utility costs are much higher than what would be the case for newer more efficient buildings.

Funds spent on utilities directly reduce the funding available for land management activities.

Construction of a new, more efficient facility would result in considerable savings to the agency over time. Annual maintenance and energy costs would be significantly reduced. Nearly \$170,000 dollars of annual deferred maintenance will be eliminated. The deferred maintenance backlog is reflection of the national situation for federal facilities. Sale of the property should generate more than enough funds to build a new Sisters Ranger Station. Any excess funds will help construct other new facilities in Central Oregon such as a new Bend Fort Rock Ranger Station, and a new Deschutes National Forest headquarters. Currently, these two offices operate out of leased facilities that cost nearly \$1 million dollars per year. That lease cost represents over 3% of the total annual operating budget for the Deschutes National Forest, or an amount equivalent to nearly the entire recreation program.

Relocation will allow the agency to provide better customer service to the local and visiting public by moving out of the extremely congested area adjacent to downtown. Recreational vehicle as well as passenger car access to and from the Ranger Station is difficult during the height of the tourist season due to the bumper to bumper traffic on the highway in front of the current station.

Moving the current Ranger Station complex will help with solutions to the chronic traffic gridlock that plagues Sisters. The traffic issues are caused by the main commercial street also being one of the busiest highways in the state. The only solution under serious consideration, a three street couplet, would bisect the current administrative site to add a connection to Hwy 20.

The City of Sisters is largely land-locked by federal lands and large developing subdivisions. There are few opportunities for expansion, and the population and need for services are growing rapidly. Conveyance will make available up to 80 acres of developable land within the UGB which will help meet the city's 20 year projected buildable lands need for residential, commercial, and light industrial uses, thus reducing the near-term need to annex additional land and expand the UGB. Opening up this area to private development will add a significant amount of land to the local tax base.

The city has grown around this site in the past 20 years. Moving the Ranger Station and ODOT maintenance facility will eliminate a use and activities that are incompatible with the surrounding development.

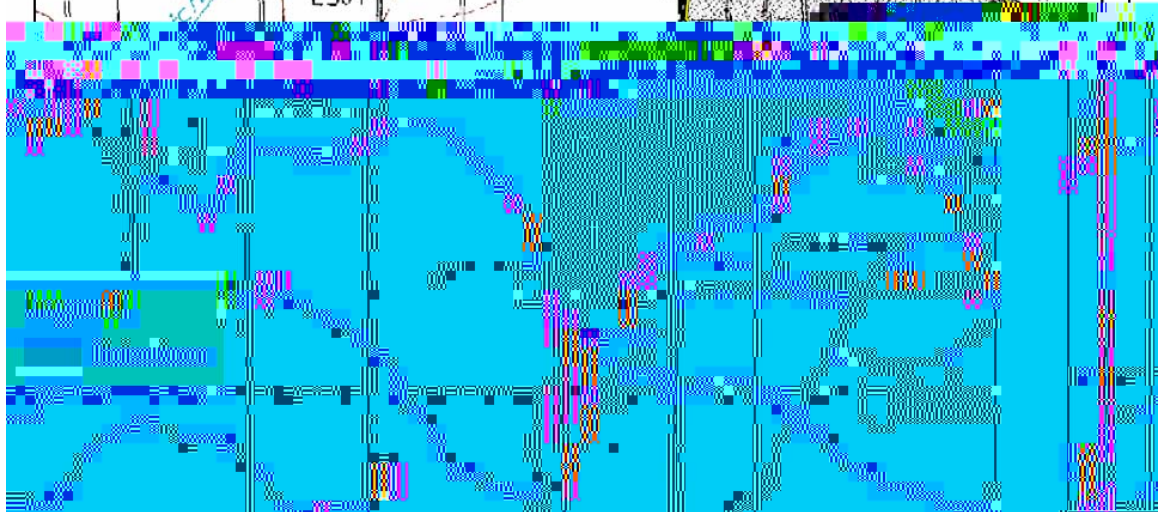
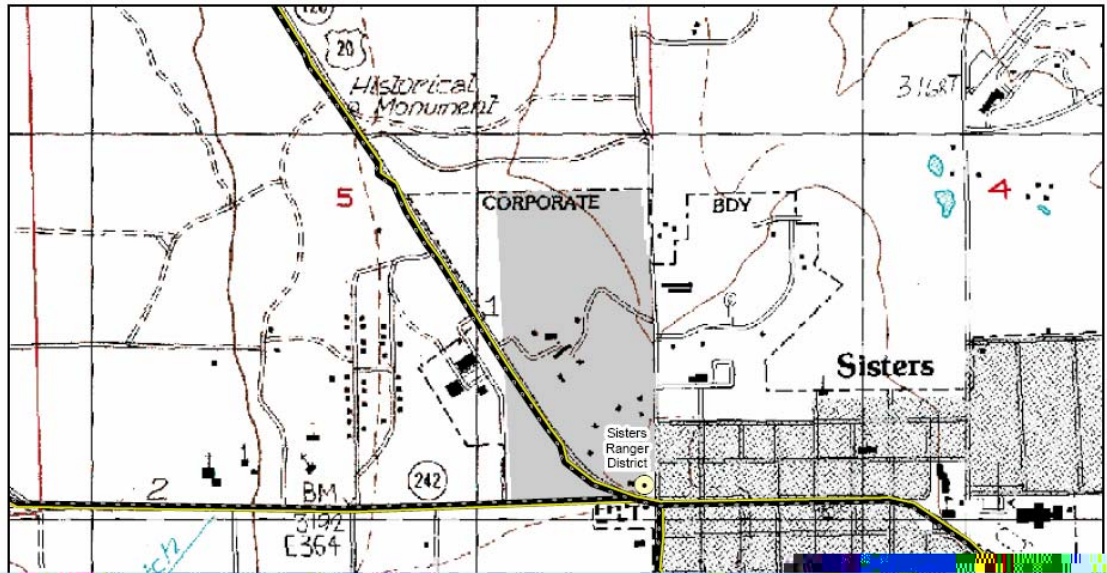
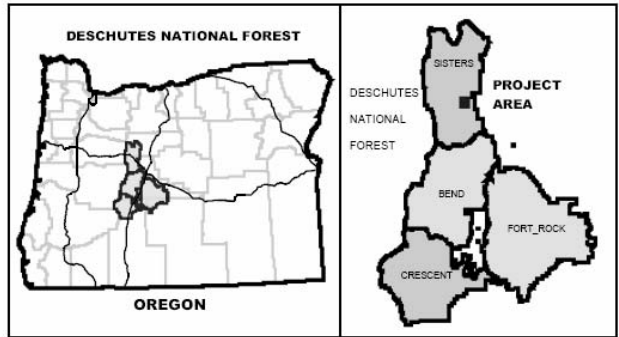
The project is supported by the community, community groups, and elected officials. Local land use groups support the idea because developing lands already within the city reduces the need for annexation of open lands adjacent to the city, thus reducing urban sprawl. Some community members have expressed concern about the potential loss of open forested space within the city and others are concerned about the character of any new development. The new Comprehensive Plan favors a mixed use development for the site, providing a combination of commercial, light industry, and various densities of housing.

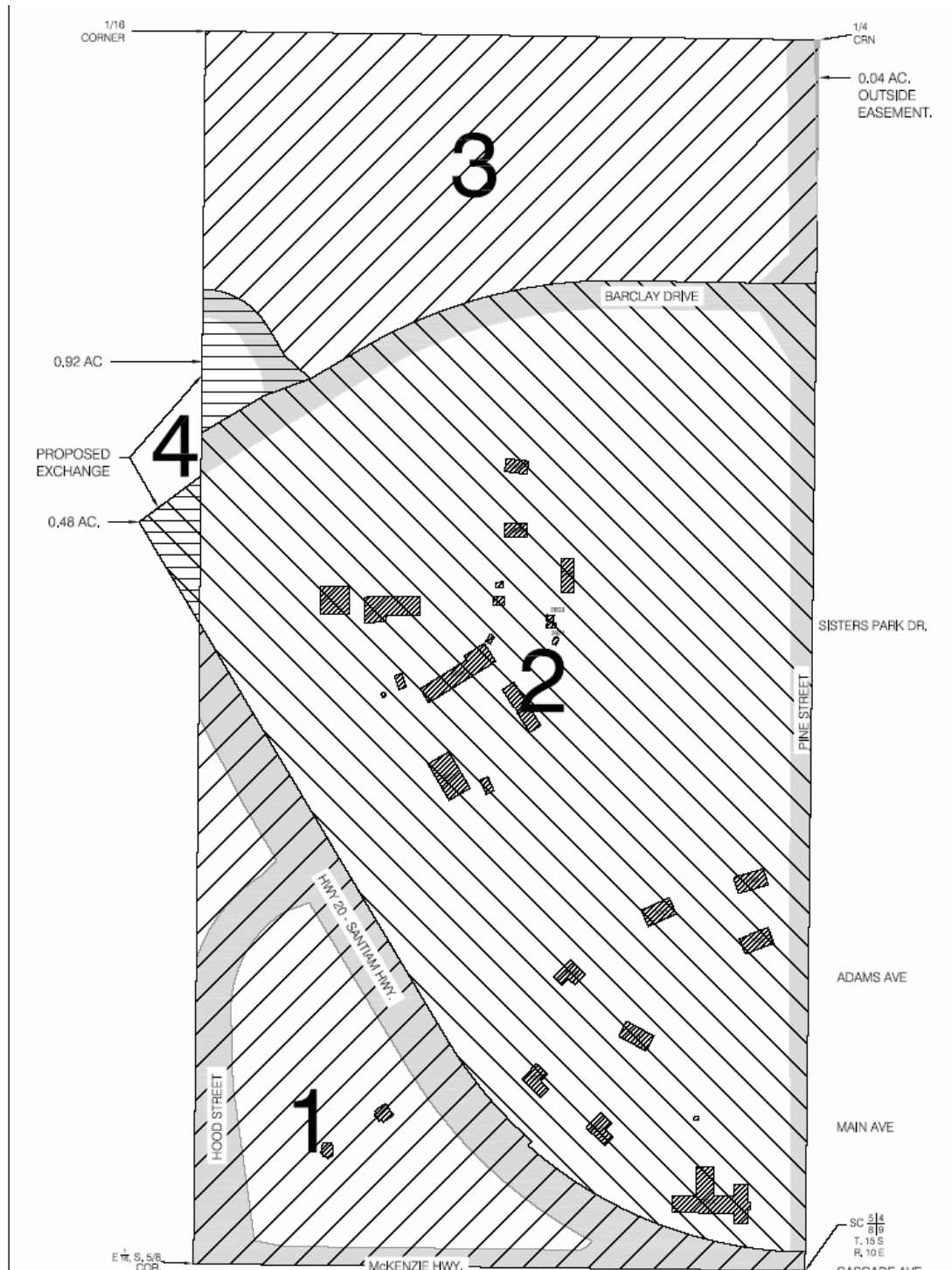
Sisters Administrative Site Project Location

**Sisters Ranger District
Deschutes NF**

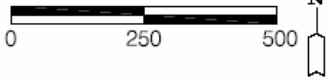


VICINITY MAPS





PARCELS	#	NAME	TOTAL ACRES	R/W ACRES	COLOR
	1	TRIANGLE	14.5	7.0	
	2	SOUTH BARCLAY	47.3	4.1	
	3	NORTH BARCLAY	17.4	0.8	
	4	EXCHANGE		0.4	
		HWY/STREET EASEMENTS			



Printed 11-2-06

PROJECT NO. 0 SHEET 1 of 1	SISTERS RANGER STATION ADMINISTRATIVE SITE	DESIGNER CHECKER DRAWN BY DATE	U. S. Department of Agriculture FOREST SERVICE Northwest Region DESCHUTES NATIONAL FOREST
	CONVEYANCE PARCELS	APPROVED: _____ DATE _____	

Purpose and Need for Action

The primary *purpose* for conveying these lands out of federal ownership is to dispose of lands that have lost their National Forest character and are no longer needed to meet the objectives of the Forest Service, and to procure funding for the construction of a new Ranger Station, as provided for in the Pilot Program Authorizing Conveyance of Excess Forest Service Structures, in Interior and Related Appropriations Act of 2002, P.L. 107-63, 329 (Pilot) and/or the Forest Service Facilities Realignment and Enhancement Act of 2005 (FSFREA).

There is a *need* to procure funding to build a new Ranger Station that better meets the needs of the public, the Community, and the employees. There is a *need* to reduce operating costs spent on managing easements and Special Use permits on federal lands as well as reducing operating costs for forest facilities such as energy and lease expenditures. Saved funds can then be used to better address other Forest management operations.

Proposed Action

The action proposed by the Forest Service to meet the purpose and need is to 1) sell a portion of the property to raise funds to 2) build a new Ranger Station on the remaining portion of the property, 3) complete a small land exchange, and 4) amend the Forest Plan allocation designations.

Applicable Laws and Executive Orders

The following laws and executive orders, with implementing regulations as appropriate, apply to the analysis and implementation of the Project.

- Pilot Program Authorizing Conveyance of Excess Forest Service Structures, in Interior and Related Appropriations Act of 2002, P.L. 107-63, 329 (Pilot)
- Forest Service Facilities Realignment and Enhancement Act of 2005 (FSFREA)
- American Antiquities Act of 1906
- Migratory Bird Act of 1918
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended)
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (as amended)
- Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (as amended)
- Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) of 1974 (as amended)
- National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 (as amended)
- Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1977 and 1982 (as amended)
- Clean Air Act of 1990
- Executive Order 13186 (migratory birds)
- Executive Order 13112 (invasive plants)
- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (as amended)
- Federal Noxious Weed Control Act of 1974 (as amended)

- American Indian Religious Protection Act of 1980
- Archaeological Resource Protection Act of 1980
- Executive Order 11593 (cultural resources)
- Executive Order 11988 (flood plains)
- Executive Order 11990 (wetlands)
- Executive Order 12898 (environmental justice)

Decision Framework

Given the purpose and need, the deciding official reviews the proposed action and the other alternatives in order to make the following decisions:

What lands, if any will be sold,

What lands, if any, will be retained for a new Ranger Station site.

Whether or not an exchange will be completed, and

Whether or not the Forest Plan will be amended.

Public Involvement

A “Notice of Public Scoping” was sent to 140 addresses on February 17, 2005.

Recipients included landowners near the parcels proposed for sale; known interested parties; tribal representatives; local, state, and federal agencies and elected officials; the current “All Projects” mailing list; and Forest Service specialists. Information about the proposal was also available on the Forest website and included in the Schedule of Projects published by the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and Prineville District Bureau of Land Management. The scoping process allowed the public the opportunity to help identify issues and items to be considered in the environmental analysis.

The District Ranger and ID Team Leader have met with local service groups including Kiwanis, Rotary, Sisters Chamber of Commerce, Habitat for Humanity, and the Community Action Team of Sisters. The Ranger and Team Leader have also had many discussions with the City Council, Deschutes County Planning Staff, and Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). Many informal discussions have occurred with local residents and prospective developers. Both the Bend Bulletin and the Sisters Nugget Newspaper have covered the proposal, the Bulletin most recently on October 23, 2006, and the Nugget on May 24, 2006. The proposal has been a consistent topic at recent City Council meetings and the ongoing Community Visioning process

The Deschutes National Forest Supervisor maintains government-to-government relationships with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, the Burns Paiute Tribe, and the Klamath Tribes. Contacts were made with these tribes to ensure their involvement and awareness of the proposed conveyance.

The potential land exchange was an idea that came to light during scoping. The District Ranger and Team Leader have discussed the potential exchange with city officials and service groups. No issues have been raised regarding the exchange.

As a result of the scoping efforts, three letters were received. Two, from the City of Sisters and the Chamber of Commerce, expressed support for the project and a willingness to be partners. A letter from the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs did not express a position on the project, but noted that conversion of NFS lands that were ceded by the Tribes in the Treaty of 1855 to private lands would remove these lands from management by both federal and tribal managers. Follow-up discussions with Tribal representatives have not resulted in a position from the Tribes, or any proposed mitigation or alteration of alternatives. In some informal discussions with local citizens, comments reflected concern that the NFS properties would be changed from open space to developed areas, as well as uncertainty about future uses. Some were in favor of a sale or exchange, while others offered suggestions for future uses.

Using the comments from the public, other agencies, and the Confederated Tribes, (see *Issues* section), the interdisciplinary team developed a list of issues to address.

Issues

The Forest Service separated the issues into three groups: (1) **Key Issues** – which are used to design alternatives to the Proposed Action; and are directly or indirectly caused by implementing the proposed action (2) **Analysis Issues** – which are used to address environmental effects and to compare alternatives; and (3) **Issues Not Addressed in Detail** – issues or concerns that are addressed through alternative design and/or mitigation, or already decided by law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision; or are irrelevant to the decision to be made; or are conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations require this delineation in Sec. 1501.7, “...identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (Sec. 1506.3).”

Key Issues

During internal and external scoping, the Forest Service identified 2 Key Issues that were used to design the Proposed Action and alternatives.

Public Visibility and Access: The Facilities Master Plan and the Value Analysis both highlight the need to make any new Ranger Station visible and easily accessible to the traveling public on the two major highways passing through Sisters. The Ranger Station needs to be easily found by visitors unfamiliar with the area and easily identified as a source of visitor information. Safe and convenient access must be provided to and from the Ranger Station. It is desirable for both visitor and employees that the Ranger Station be within walking distance of downtown Sisters. This issue was used to design and evaluate various locations for the new Ranger Station.

Measures used to evaluate how alternatives responded to the issue included:

- Relationship of a potential new site to an existing highway access point
- Distance of a potential new site from downtown

Property Values: A major part of the Purpose and Need for this project is to generate funding for a new Ranger Station as well as for other high priority facilities projects on

the Forest and in the Region. Selection of a new Ranger Station site can be influenced by the value of the property that it is constructed on, and thus, not sold. The new site can also potentially affect the value of adjacent lands that are sold and eventually developed.

Measures used to evaluate how alternatives responded to the issue included:

- Comparative estimated property values between land sold and land retained for a new Ranger Station.
- Relationship/compatibility between the new Ranger Station site and potential adjacent development.

Analysis Issues

Analysis issues were identified by the IDT and collaborating agencies. No analysis issues or resource concerns were raised by the public during scoping. These issues, together with applicable laws, regulations, and policies, were used to evaluate the Proposed Action and a second action alternative. These issues are specific to the affected planning area – the lands to be sold and the site of the new Ranger Station.

Timber and Vegetation – Will the sale of these lands and/or the new construction result in the loss of any important forest habitat or sensitive plants species? What will be the effects on unwanted vegetation populations?

Heritage and Cultural Resources – Will any historic, prehistoric, or cultural resources be affected by the project?

Wildlife – Will wildlife species be affected? Will important habitats be altered or lost?

Fuels and Fire Risk – Will fuels and fire risk change on the affected lands?

Hazardous Materials – What hazardous materials currently exist on the site and how will they be rendered safe or the hazard mitigated?

Land Use – What will happen to the existing easements and other public uses that are permitted on the property? How would the properties be used by a purchaser?

Recreation, Social, Esthetic, and Scenic Values – Will the sale of these lands and the new construction affect or alter how people use and view the property?

Roads and Access – Will the sale and new construction affect public road access?

Issues Not Addressed in Detail

These are issues that did not drive alternative development because they are not materially affected or changed by either action alternative.

Surface Water and Wetlands – Will land sales or new construction affect any surface water or wetlands?

Geology and Minerals – What mineral rights exist on the site?

Ground water – What water rights exist and how will the project affect groundwater?

ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

This chapter describes and compares the alternatives considered for the Sisters Admin Site Conveyance project. It includes a description and map of each alternative considered. This section also presents the alternatives in comparative form, sharply defining the differences between each alternative and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decision maker and the public.

Alternatives

Alternative 1 - No Action

Under the No Action alternative, current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area. Under this alternative, the described properties would not be conveyed by sale under the authority of the Pilot Program Authorizing Conveyance of Excess Forest Service Structures, in Interior and Related Appropriations Act of 2002, P.L. 107-63, 329 (Pilot), and would remain in federal ownership. The Deschutes National Forest would continue to manage the land in accordance with current management direction under the 1990 Land and Resource Management Plan. No land exchange would occur under this decision, and the Forest Plan would not be amended. The No Action alternative would not meet the Purpose and Need, but is described as a basis for comparing Alternative 2, the Proposed Action.

Sisters Administrative Site Alternative 1 (No Action)

Sisters Ranger District
Deschutes National Forest

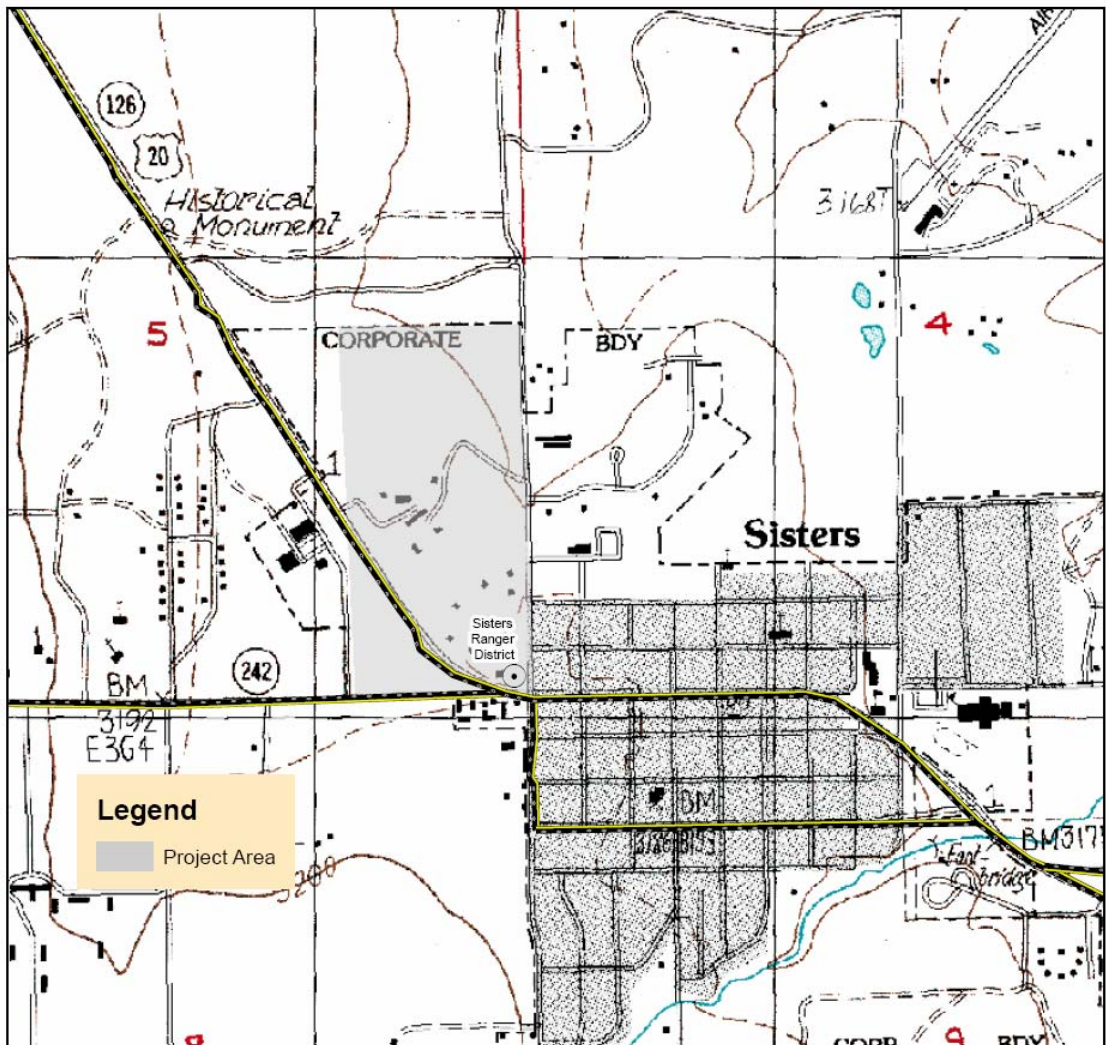


Figure 1. Alternative 1 – No Action

Alternative 2 - The Proposed Action

Under the authority of the Pilot Program Authorizing Conveyance of Excess Forest Service Structures, in Interior and Related Appropriations Act of 2002, P.L. 107-63, 329 (Pilot), the Forest Service proposes to build a new Ranger Station on approximately 12 acres north of Barclay Avenue, between the Ponderosa Hotel and Pine Street, and convey out of federal ownership by sale, two or more tracts of National Forest System land comprising a total of approximately 68 acres.

These lands would be conveyed from federal to private ownership by sale. The actual sale processes would be administrative actions to implement this alternative, and would be executed in full compliance with current Forest Service regulations and policies. The process or other details for completing a sale, therefore, are not part of this alternative.

A small land exchange would be implemented between the Forest Service and the owners of the Ponderosa Hotel. A .05 acre portion of the subject NFS lands north of Barclay Avenue are currently occupied by the Ponderosa Hotel under Special Use Permit. The owners of the hotel also own approximately .05 acres on the southwest corner of Barclay and Highway 20, contiguous to the Forest Service parcel. An exchange would benefit the public by increasing the value of the larger Forest Service parcel when it is sold, and by eliminating the need to manage a Special Use Permit.

Currently the NFS lands are primarily allocated to Scenic Views (MA-9) in the Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP, 1990). The lands to be disposed of would no longer be allocated as resource lands, and the LRMP would be amended in Alternative 2 and 3 to reflect that change and reduction in allocation. The lands to be retained would have their allocation changed to Administrative Site, and managed accordingly.

The Proposed Action represents the lands as being conveyed out of federal ownership. For the purpose of this environmental assessment, likely scenarios for future use or development are considered as part of the description of Alternative 2 in order to better estimate effects of conveyance. City of Sisters zoning ordinances and Oregon land use laws were used as the basis to formulate likely development scenarios.

Sisters Administrative Site Alternative 2

PROPOSED ACTION

Sisters Ranger District
Deschutes National Forest

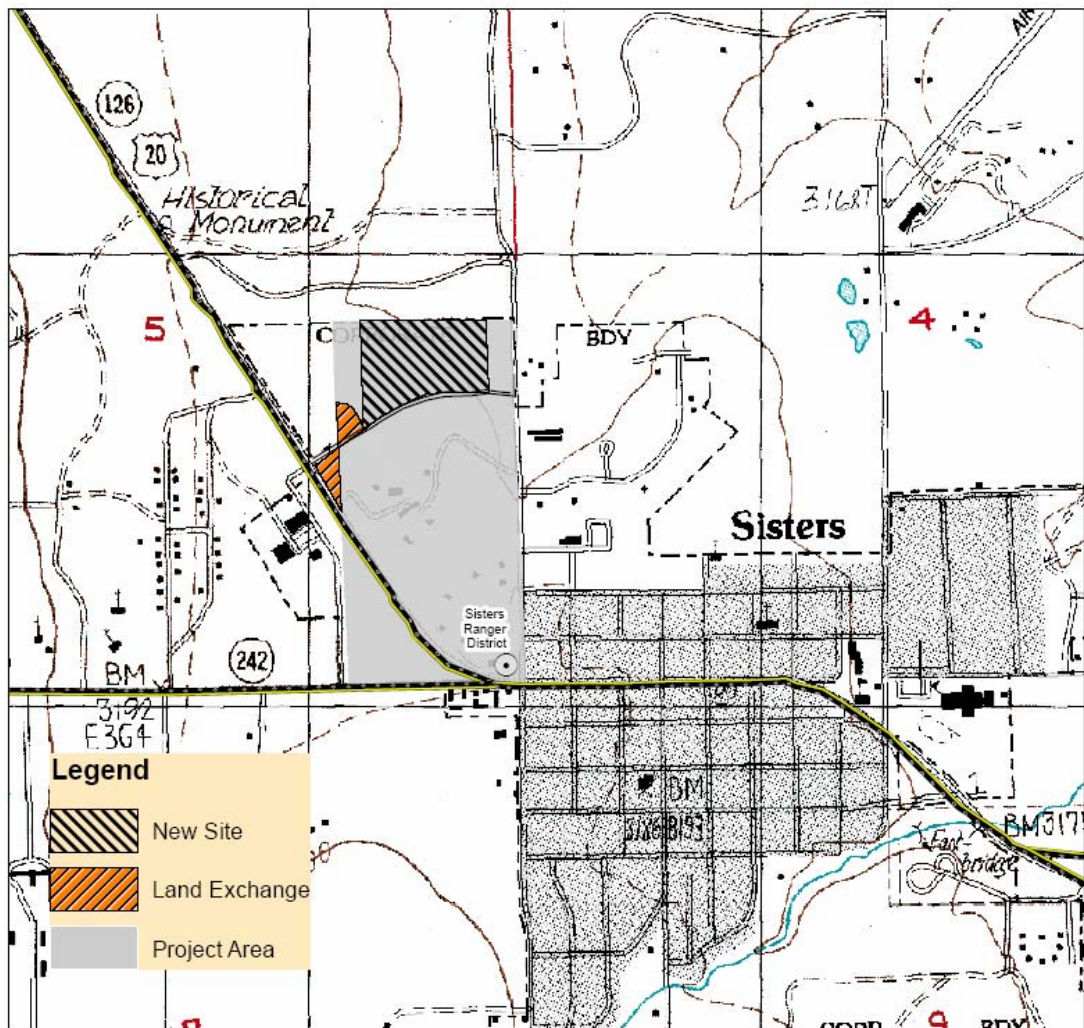


Figure 2. Alternative 2 – Proposed Action.

Alternative 3

Under the authority of the Pilot Program Authorizing Conveyance of Excess Forest Service Structures, in Interior and Related Appropriations Act of 2002, P.L. 107-63, 329 (Pilot), the Forest Service proposes to build a new Ranger Station on approximately 12 acres south of Barclay Avenue, at the intersection with Highway 20, and convey out of federal ownership by sale, two or more tracts of National Forest System land, both north and south of Barclay Avenue, comprising a total of approximately 68 acres.

These lands would be conveyed from federal to private ownership by sale. The actual sale processes would be administrative actions to implement this alternative, and would be executed in full compliance with current Forest Service regulations and policies. The process or other details for completing a sale, therefore, are not part of this alternative.

A small land exchange would be implemented between the Forest Service and the owners of the Ponderosa Hotel as in Alternative 2. An exchange would benefit the public by allowing the Forest Service to include the piece of land at the intersection within the new Administrative Site, and by eliminating the need to manage a Special Use Permit.

The LRMP would be amended as in Alternative 2 to reflect the change from Scenic Views to private land and the resulting reduction in allocation. The lands to be retained would have their allocation changed to Administrative Site, and managed accordingly.

Sisters Administrative Site Alternative 3

Sisters Ranger District
Deschutes National Forest

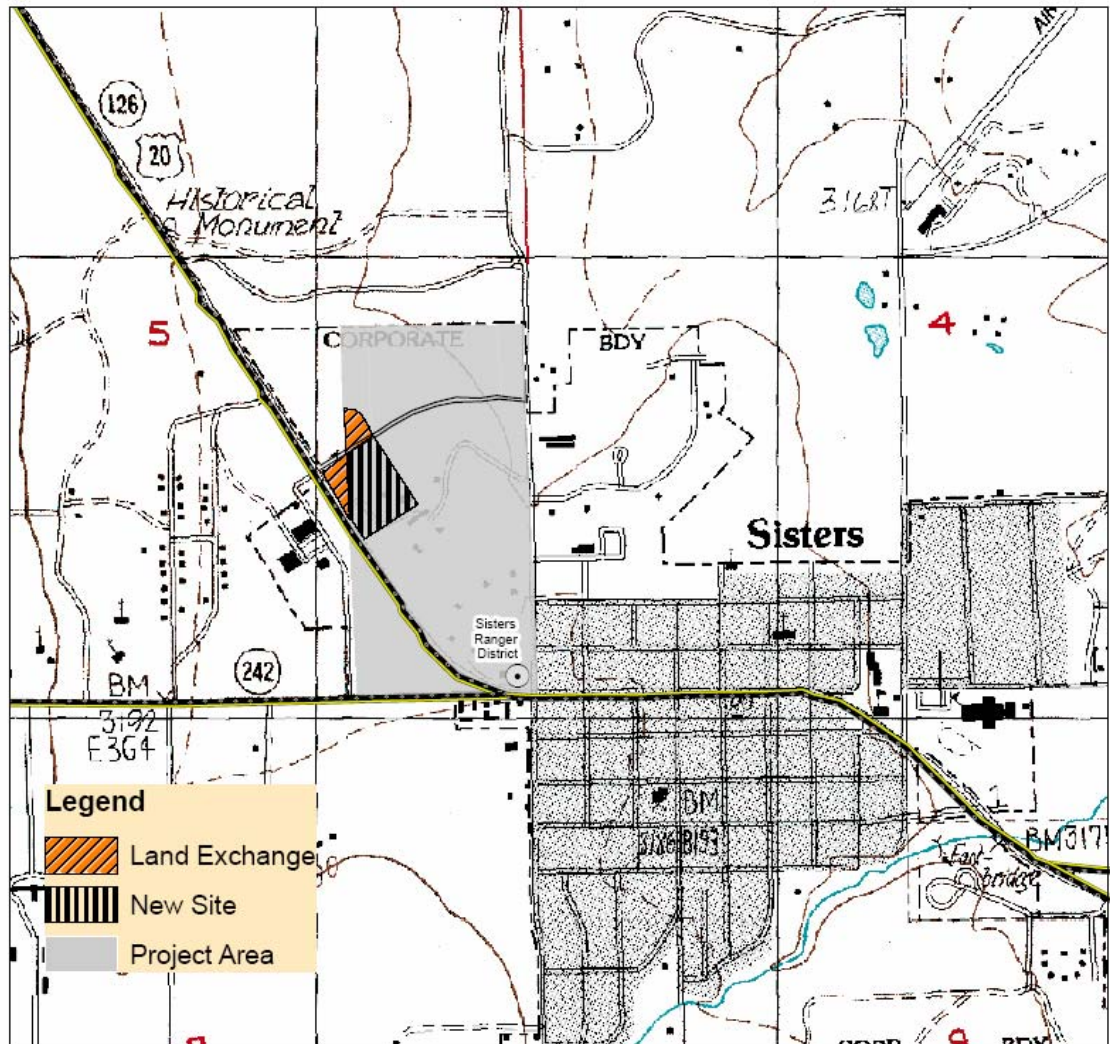


Figure 3. Alternative 3.

Assumptions for Alternative 2, the Proposed Action, and Alternative 3

A number of assumptions regarding future uses of the lands under private ownership have been made in order to focus the analysis and estimate environmental effects.

The basic assumptions used in this analysis are as follows:

- Once the lands are transferred out of federal ownership, they are under the jurisdiction of local, county, and state regulations; Forest Service policies or plans will no longer apply.
- Scenarios are best developed by using information provided by the City of Sisters and Deschutes County Community Development Department.
- Scenarios for future uses are those most reasonably and likely to occur, given the zoning, surrounding land uses, and trends for the area.
- City zoning ordinances will apply to these lands once they are in private ownership; future uses will have to conform to local zoning codes.
- Any future zone changes are subject to city, county and state land use application and approval processes; land use approvals may require a comprehensive plan amendment and zone change, and proof that the change conforms to the statewide land use planning goals.
- The city may impose restrictions or conditions as part of their land use application and approval process; however, future zoning and land use issues are beyond the scope of this EA.
- Any proposed land use changes would involve a public process under local city authority, giving the local public an opportunity to comment, provide input, and influence any land use decisions when, or if, they are being considered.
- The Forest Service will not place deed restrictions or other conditions on the sale or future use of the properties, except in rare occasions if necessary to protect critical federal interests or required by federal law. The Forest Service has no legal authority or responsibility to substitute deed restrictions for local zoning controls.
- Neither scoping nor evaluation by specialists identified any critical resources in need of federal protection on these lands.

ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING FUTURE USE

Several assumptions have been made for this EA regarding how each parcel would be used once in private ownership. These detailed and specific assumptions are based on information provided by Sisters Community Development Department, and are described as follows. The City has proposed to develop a new Overlay District as part of their current Comprehensive Plan review and update. An Overlay Zone or District is a designation that can impose more restrictive regulations than the underlying zoning regulation. An Overlay could provide more detailed guidance to potential purchasers and developers.

The Sisters Admin Site parcel is currently zoned by the City as **Urban Area Reserve** north of Barclay Ave, **Public Facilities** between Barclay, Pine Street and Highway 20, and **Landscape Management** southwest of Highway 20. (Most National Forest parcels in Deschutes County are zoned F-1).

Urban Area Reserve

The Urban Area Reserve Sub-District (City of Sisters Development Code 2.1.400) is intended to serve as “a holding category as urban growth takes place, and to preserve as long as possible as useful open space until needed for orderly residential development.” Uses that are permitted outright include farm uses and single-family dwellings. Uses allowed with a conditional use permit include public and institutional facilities, bed and breakfast inns, and Master Planned Developments (Development Code Table 2.1.400C). The Urban Area Reserve north of Barclay Avenue is further defined in the City of Sisters Comprehensive Plan as intended for a future light industrial/business park with 5 acre minimum lot sizes, or for a relocated Forest Service office (Comp Plan, page 87).

Public Facilities

The Public Facilities District “is intended to provide area for buildings and facilities that are owned and operated by federal, state, or local governments, public utilities, special districts, or non-profit organizations, and which are operated to provide governmental or public services” (Development Code 2.4.100). Uses that are permitted outright include community buildings, public buildings, parks, playing fields, reservoirs, trails, natural areas, and public or private schools. Uses that are allowed under conditional use permit include public utility maintenance facilities, lighted playing fields, transmission sites, and outdoor performance facilities (Development Code Table 2.4.110A). The portion of the Admin Site south of Barclay Avenue and between Pine Street and Highway 20 is zoned Public Facilities.

Landscape Management

The Landscape Management District “is intended to recognize the unique scenic character of the Sisters area by providing tree buffers, or large areas of open spaces without trees, between high density vehicular travel and residential areas, scenic foregrounds for residents and visitors, and as buffers between other conflicting uses” (Development Code 2.5.300). Uses that are permitted outright include parks, golf courses, subsurface sewage disposal sites, commercial forests, and scenic turnouts. Uses allowed under conditional use permit include truck scales, livestock grazing, city parking lots, and public restrooms (Development Code Table 2.5.310A). The East Portal Triangle southwest of Highway 20 and north of West Cascade Avenue is zoned Landscape Management.

DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

For the purpose of this environmental assessment, reasonable and likely development scenarios have been formulated based on the assumptions presented above. A total of **two** scenarios are described below and will be the basis for the effects analysis.

North Barclay Scenario (Proposed Action)

The North Barclay Scenario would include the following elements:

- The area north of Barclay Avenue (approximately 17 acres plus .04 acres in Right-of-Way easements), would be the site of the new Ranger Station. The new Ranger Station, warehouse and appurtenant facilities would occupy approximately 12 acres retained in public ownership as National Forest System lands. The remaining acres could be partitioned and sold as one or two separate lots on either side of the new Office campus. One of these potential parcels would be adjacent to the Ponderosa Hotel. The other potential parcel would border Pine Street. Under current zoning, these parcels could be developed as small business parks (if the 5 acre minimum lot size was changed) or single family residences.
- The East Portal Triangle (approximately 7.5 acres plus 7.0 acres in ROW easements) could be sold to the City and retained as open space. A small portion, approximately 0.9 acres, northwest of the Highway 20/242 intersection could be partitioned and sold. The City has indicated that it would consider a zone change to Highway Commercial for this small parcel as it is physically connected to the existing Highway Commercial District.
- The remaining portion of the Admin Site (approximately 42 acres plus 6.0 acres in ROW easements) would be sold as one parcel. While the current zoning would limit future development to various public service facilities, the City has recognized the potential value of the property if rezoned in a manner consistent with the surrounding zoning. They are currently developing a Zoning Overlay to guide any potential development applications. In a letter dated May 4, 2006, the City outlined some characteristics of a development vision for the property. The City expressed a desire for some sort of mixed use development where different land use categories are accommodated on the site. They noted that due to the proximity to the downtown and highway commercial core, the site would be well suited for an extension of the downtown commercial grid and for highway commercial uses. The City noted that the Comprehensive Plan does not identify either of these categories as being deficient, although there is no current reserve of highway commercial lands. The Comp Plan does note a lack of reserved land for public facilities such as a convention center, community center, performing arts center, medical facilities, or parks. Residential lands, particularly for affordable housing, are also lacking. “Big box” commercial development was specifically mentioned as undesirable.

South Barclay Scenario (Alternative 3)

The South Barclay Scenario would include these elements:

- The area north of Barclay Avenue (approximately 17.4 acres), would be sold as one or more parcels. Under current zoning, these parcels could be developed as small (5 acre) business parks or single family residences. Under a conditional use permit, the parcel could be developed as a Master Development Plan, either as a stand-alone development, or as part of a larger development in conjunction with the parcel south of Barclay Avenue.
- The East Portal Triangle (approximately 14.5 acres) could be sold to the City and retained as open space. A small portion, less than one acre, northwest of the Highway 20/242 intersection could be partitioned and sold. The City has indicated that it

would consider a zone change to Highway Commercial for this small parcel as it is physically connected to the existing Highway Commercial District.

- Approximately 12 acres of the remaining Admin Site would be retained as National Forest System lands, where the new Ranger Station, warehouse and appurtenant facilities would be constructed. The remaining portion of the Admin Site (approximately 36 acres) would be sold as one parcel. Development scenarios would be as described above, except the Forest Service would occupy one corner of the parcel, which might have some impact on the types of uses adjacent to the Forest Service campus.
- A small land exchange would be implemented as described in Alternative 2. In this case the land exchanged would remain as NFS land rather than being sold as in the Proposed Action.
- The LRMP would be amended to reflect changes in allocations as described in Alternative 2.

Alternatives Considered, But Eliminated From Detailed Study

The Deschutes National Forest Preliminary Project Analysis for Site Development Alternatives (Value Analysis, November 2004) identified and analyzed 12 different locations for a new Ranger Station. One was the no action alternative, one was a relocation of District services to Bend, Oregon, three were on either public or private lands in or near Sisters, and the remaining seven were locations on the 80 acre subject parcel. Of those seven, two are considered in depth in this analysis. The others were dropped because they failed to adequately address one or more of the site and location evaluation criteria in the value analysis.

One alternative considered in some detail, but eventually eliminated would have developed a new Ranger Station on approximately 20 acres north of the Urban Growth Boundary, between Highway 20 and Pine Street, using FS Road 2058-100 as an access to Highway 20. The Forest Service would then have sold two or more tracts of National Forest System land comprising a total of approximately 80 acres. However, because of the expressway designation of Highway 20 and the high traffic speeds in this area, there was no safe way to provide in and out access in all directions. Further, the City of Sisters would have had to annex the property via public vote to allow for connection to city water and sewer system. The City does not support extending the Urban Growth Boundary beyond its current limits on this side of town, and annexation could not be guaranteed.

Another alternative considered but eliminated would have the Forest Service build a new Ranger Station Office on approximately 5 acres south of Barclay Avenue, at the intersection of Barclay and Highway 20, and build a new work center and dormitories on approximately 10 acres either north of the UGB adjacent to Pine Street or north of Barclay Avenue adjacent to Pine Street. The Forest Service would then have sold two or more tracts of National Forest System land comprising a total of approximately 65 acres.

This alternative was eventually eliminated because it could not be designed to meet the Purpose and Need. Having the Administrative Office separated from the Work Center by nearly ½ mile eliminated potential efficiencies and economies in site use. We would need two parking lots and two access road systems. Some employees would be making several trips per day between the two work sites. Potential building energy savings that occur with the work sites in close proximity would be foregone.

Forest Plan Amendment

Alternatives 2 and 3 would require a Forest Plan Amendment. The lands proposed for sale and lands to be retained for a new Ranger Station are all currently allocated to Scenic Views (MA-9), and are part of a scenic corridor that runs along both sides of Highway 20 from Sisters to Indian Ford Road. The lands to be sold would be removed from the allocation land base altogether. The lands to be retained would have their allocation changed from Scenic Views to Administrative Site.

Comparison of Alternatives

This section provides a summary of the effects of implementing each alternative. Information in the table is focused on activities and effects where different levels of effects or outputs can be distinguished quantitatively or qualitatively among alternatives.

Table 1. Comparison of Alternatives.

	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Acres of Land Sold	None	Triangle parcel – 14.5 acres South Barclay parcel – 48 acres North Barclay parcel – 0 to 5 acres	Triangle parcel – 14.5 acres South Barclay parcel – 36 acres North Barclay parcel – 17.5 acres
Key Issue #1 – Public Access and Visibility	No change	New Station is slightly less visible than in Alt 3 from either direction on Highway 20. Access via Barclay intersection.	New Station is very visible from the southeast on Highway 20, slightly less visible from the northwest. Access via Barclay intersection
Key Issue #1 – Distance to Downtown (City Hall)	Current office is 2400 feet from City Hall	3900 feet	3900 feet
Key Issue #2 – Relative value of lands sold to lands retained	No change	Sell 48 acres of the land with the highest potential value, and 0 to 5 acres of land with moderate potential value. Sell 14.5 acres with low potential value. Retain 12 acres of land with moderate potential value. This alternative has the potential for the highest total sale value.	Sell 36 acres of the land with the highest potential value, and 17 acres of land with moderate potential value. Sell 14.5 acres with low potential value. Retain 12 acres of land with high potential value. This alternative has a slightly lower potential for sale value because some of the highest potential value lands are retained..
Key Issue #2 – Relationship between new Ranger Station and adjacent new development	No change	New Ranger Station site north of Barclay will have undeveloped NFS lands to the north, light industrial or commercial development to the east and west, and mixed use development across the road to the south.	New Ranger Station on the corner of Barclay and Highway 20 will have existing (Ponderosa Hotel and highway commercial) new mixed use developments on all four sides. Forest Service Work Center and warehouse activities may not be compatible with some forms of new development.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This section summarizes the physical, biological, social and economic environments of the affected project area and the potential changes to those environments due to implementation of the alternatives. It also presents the scientific and analytical basis for comparison of alternatives presented in the chart above.

Predicted effects of conveyance of the parcels are described in this section. Under Alternative 2 or 3, most of the lands would no longer be in federal ownership and would no longer be managed by the Forest Service. The lands would be privately owned. Effects are estimated using assumptions and development scenarios described in the Alternatives Section. Actual development may occur in a different manner, but this analysis uses the best information available at this time to predict, evaluate, and disclose environmental effects. This will provide the public and the decision maker the best and most reasonable information possible, with the understanding that the Forest Service will not have a future role in managing or determining the use of the lands.

Both Alternative 2 and 3 would meet the Purpose and Need because they would dispose of tracts of lands that have lost their National Forest character and are difficult to manage; and they would allow the Forest Service to use proceeds from a sale to help fund new local administrative offices and other high priority facility needs in Central Oregon and regionally if sufficient receipts are generated.

Alternative 2 is the Proposed Action because it allows the sale of all of the more valuable property south of Barclay, thus potentially providing higher income. It also provides for more orderly development of the future private lands by removing a potentially non-conforming use (the new Ranger Station and work center) from the midst of any new development. Finally, it allows the USFS to remain adjacent to the contiguous NFS lands outside the UGB, rather than being surrounded by development.

Alternative 3 would also meet the Purpose and Need. Other than the exceptions discussed below, the effects of Alternative 3 on natural, social, and cultural resources are essentially the same as in the Proposed Action. They just occur on a different portion of the 80 acre parcel. Alternative 3 probably generates less income due to the new Ranger Station being built on some of the potentially highest value lands. Having the new Ranger Station and work center as neighbors could also alter development patterns and potentially reduce values on the adjacent properties.

The following describes projected effects of conveying the property under Alternative 2, the Proposed Action, and Alternative 3. Effects are described for the two alternatives, in the same sequence used for describing effects of Alternative 1. No mitigation measures or monitoring needs have been identified as a condition of conveyance, as the Forest Service would have no legal authority to impose mitigation or monitoring on private lands.

Land Use

The Admin Site parcel is approximately 80 acres in Section 5 of Township 15 S, Range 10 E, NE and SE quarter corners of the SE corner, W.M. The parcel is a rectangle, bordered by Pine Street on the east, and the City UGB on the north. East of Highway 20, Barclay Avenue, running west to Pine Street, divides the parcel into approximately a 17.5 acre piece north of Barclay, and a 62.5 acre piece to the south. Highway 20 runs through the southwest corner of this parcel from SE to NW, separating approximately seven acres from the rest of the parcel. The west, east, and south are all bordered by private lands; the north is contiguous to other National Forest System (NFS) lands within the Forest boundary.

The parcel has “reserved public domain” status as federal land, is under federal jurisdiction, and is managed under National Forest regulations. As such, no property taxes are assessed and local or county zoning ordinances are not generally applicable. The parcel was acquired in a timber-for-land exchange with Brooks Scanlon Lumber Company in 1947.

The parcel is managed in accordance with the LRMP, and is not within the area addressed in the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan. As described in the LRMP, the entire Admin Site parcel and the adjacent NFS lands up to Forest Road 2058-100 fall within Management Area 9 (Scenic Views). The goal of the scenic view designation is to provide Forest visitors with high quality scenery (in this case along the Highway 20 corridor) that represents the natural character of central Oregon.

The Forest’s Land Adjustment Plan, which is part of the LRMP, places the Admin Site parcel entirely within one category for land ownership adjustment – Group 2, which is defined as “lands having a need for a special type of management,” in this case, as an Administrative Site. The area immediately north of the UGB is within Group 3, Subgroup C, defined as “areas of mixed private and federal ownership where rearrangement of ownership of these lands is permitted to benefit production goals and for the mutual benefit of landowners.”

There are several special use permits and road easements issued by the Forest Service that affect the subject property. Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) occupies about two acres of a six acre site under a Special Use Permit for a cinder shed and maintenance garage. An access road to the maintenance yard is under separate permit. The City of Sisters holds a permit for a sewage transmission line, sewage pump station, and buried water pipeline that cross the property. The City also holds a permit for a small park and welcome sign along Highway 20. Central Electric Cooperative Inc. operates and maintains an overhead powerline on the property. Qwest Communications Inc. operates and maintains a buried telephone line and a buried fiber optics cable. William Reed holds a permit for improvements adjacent to the Ponderosa Hotel, including a sign, streetlights, landscaping, sprinklers and buried pipe. Road easements are in place with ODOT for a portion of the Santiam Highway (Highway 20), with Dept of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration for a portion of the McKenzie Highway (Highway 242), and with the City of Sisters for Barclay Drive, the access road to the Ponderosa Hotel,

and Pine Street. There are no other existing contracts, agreements, Memoranda of Understanding, grazing permits, mineral claims, or oil, gas or geothermal leases.

There are no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on land use under the No Action alternative. All existing permits and easements would continue to be in effect, and all land uses will continue to be managed as they have been by the Forest Service. There would be no change from the existing land use situation with Alternative 1.

Alternative 2 - Ranger Station north of Barclay

Conveyance of the parcel would transfer ownership of approximately 68 acres of National Forest lands that are no longer needed by the agency, and that will contribute to orderly development within the City of Sisters. Forest Service administration would become more efficient, as time or funds would no longer be spent addressing thinning and forest vegetation activities, and administering special use permits and easements. Funds would become available to be used to build a new Ranger Station that would better meet the needs of the community, visitors and employees. The new facility would result in energy savings from using new technology for heating and cooling. Conveyance of the lands would be in compliance with the LRMP and Regional policy and direction.

There would be a reduction in the administration of special use permits and easements, as the Forest Service would no longer manage the authorizations for powerlines, telephone and television lines, or roads on this property. Existing special use permits would be terminated or converted to easements and, along with other existing easements, would be transferred with the property to the new owner.

The federal government is exempt from paying property taxes, but with conveyance and private ownership, property taxes would be assessed and contribute to the City of Sisters and Deschutes County revenues. New home and business construction would provide some short term jobs related to construction, and may also result in more people within the city who would contribute to the local economy. .

The amount of boundary lines between National Forest and private lands to be established or maintained would be reduced by more than 1 mile.

The Triangle would remain as open space to be owned and managed by the City. Their current intent is to retain the Landscape Management zoning and manage the parcel as open space. The parcel on the north end, adjacent to the shopping center, if partitioned and rezoned, would mainly provide access to potential development to the north.

The parcel north of Barclay where the new Ranger Station would be built would be altered by the development of the Ranger Station, access roads, and parking. From Barclay, development and a change in forest character would be evident. The change would be less evident as viewed from Pine Street or as experienced by residents to the north in Trapper Point. The Forest Service will preserve as many of the existing large pine as possible on the developed portions of the site, and will use native landscaping to enhance the appearance of the facility and screen it from the adjacent properties.

Once in private ownership, it is presumed that the property south of Barclay between Pine Street and Hwy 20 would be used for a combination of uses including single-family and multi-family homesites, retail and office commercial space, some public facilities such as a performing arts center, public parking, and/or a medical campus, and some light industrial space. Over time, the public will likely be aware that the ownership of the property has changed as new development occurs. The current forest character would be altered, but some elements such as the large pine and smaller pine and juniper that currently partially screen the roadways would likely remain as valued assets.

Existing county zoning codes and state and local development regulations and processes would guide development. Refer to the City of Sisters planning department for additional information regarding uses that are permitted outright. Any deviations would need city approval, and would be subject to public review and comment. Restrictions or conditions on use or development would be imposed by the city, if needed, in response to a land use application during the review and approval process.

Alternative 3 – Ranger Station south of Barclay

The effects of this Alternative are only slightly different than described above. The general effects to the administrative savings for forest management and administering easements remain the same. Benefits to the local tax base are about the same, although the site that the new Ranger Station would occupy is some of the potentially more valuable land, and the potential tax base may be reduced accordingly when compared to Alternative 2.

The Triangle would remain as open space as described above.

Development of the area north of Barclay would be different than in Alternative 2. Current zoning allows for small business parks or single-family residential development. The city would likely maintain this zoning, but stand-alone Master Plan development or mixed use development as part of the development south of Barclay could be possible.

The property south of Barclay would likely be developed as described above, except that the new Ranger Station would occupy approximately 12 acres in the northwest corner at the intersection of Barclay and Hwy 20. Potential developers may consider the Forest Service facilities to be less than consistent with some development options, so development patterns could be slightly different than described above around the property retained by the Forest Service. Activities that would occur in the new Work Station site are similar to those that would be associated with a Light Industrial use – large truck and fire engine traffic at irregular hours, equipment maintenance, outside storage of construction materials, and tree cooler operations. This level and type of use would not likely be an attractive neighbor to residential or commercial development.

Timber and Vegetation

The 80 acre parcel is dominated by open ponderosa pine forest with a bitterbrush and Idaho fescue understory. The plant association is ponderosa pine/bitterbrush/Idaho fescue (CPS211). Dominant forbs on the site include prairie lupine, aster, lowly penstemon, dwarf purple monkey-flower and common clarkia. Common grasses observed on the site include Columbia brome and squirrel tail.

The forest stands on the parcel do not meet the definition of old growth forests primarily because there are an insufficient number of large trees present. However, there are individual ponderosa pine trees that are greater than 21 inches diameter and more than 150 years old. Although there are less than two or three such large trees per acre on the parcel, these trees add to the diversity and aesthetics of the forest. In order to reduce fire hazards, the stunted pine understory has been thinned over the past three years to remove most of the small juniper and pine thickets. After thinning, the bitterbrush was mowed, and some small areas were underburned.

There are no direct effects to existing vegetation under Alternative 1. Indirect effects would occur from continuing to thin the stands and remove diseased and the least vigorous trees to provide the greatest opportunity to increase individual tree growth rates and to develop a significant large tree component. Future management activities would include thinning and removing dead material to increase tree size and habitat value, reduce the risk of stand replacement fire and insect epidemics, and improve forest diversity.

TES Plants

There are no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to TES plants under Alternative 1. Potential habitat for *pestemon peckii* (Peck's penstemon) was identified during pre-field review. Surveys for Peck's penstemon were conducted and no plants or potential habitat were detected within the administrative site. A Biological Evaluation is on file at the Sisters Ranger District.

Invasive Plants

Spotted and diffuse knapweed was found scattered in 25 locations throughout the site. Most occurrences of knapweed were located adjacent to major roadways and in the large open area between the main administrative building and the housing facilities. The Deschutes National Forest treats invasive plants within the Forest; however, the extensive seed bank in disturbed roadsides pose a high risk of invasive plants. There are no direct or indirect effects to invasive plants under Alternative 1. The Deschutes National Forest would continue to be responsible for treating any invasive plant populations found within these areas in the future.

Alternative 2 - Ranger Station north of Barclay

The Triangle would remain much as it looks today. The City would likely perform some stand management activities to maintain forest health, encourage development of large ponderosa pine trees, and reduce fuel loads and fire risk.

North of Barclay, about eight acres of the twelve acre site would be cleared of forest vegetation for the Ranger Station facilities, including structures, parking lots, access roads and other features. Improvements would be sited to enhance aesthetic values by retaining older and larger trees. Clumps of trees would also be left to provide screening. Uncleared portions of the property would be managed to develop large trees over time, while maintaining other native vegetation and low fuel loads. A small “naturescape” providing wildlife habitat and an example of landscaping with native species would likely be a significant part of the new facility.

South of Barclay, effects to timber and vegetation would be controlled by the level of development and city codes. Currently, the City of Sisters Development Code protects “significant vegetation” including ponderosa pine trees greater than 12” dbh. Residential, industrial, and public facility districts are required to maintain at least 20% of the site in a landscaped condition. Commercial districts require 10%. Natural and native vegetation is favored. There are additional standards for parking areas and “street trees”.

Alternative 3 – Ranger Station south of Barclay

Effects to vegetation would be the same as described above, except that the new Ranger Station and concomitant impacts to vegetation would be in a different location south of Barclay.

TES Plants

There would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to *penstemon peckii* or any other TES plant species under either alternative.

Invasive Plants

Under either alternative, the Deschutes National Forest would continue to be responsible for treating any invasive plant populations found on the site of the new Ranger Station in the future. Invasive plant infestations on private lands are the responsibility of the land owner, and management is governed by city and county ordinances.

Fuels and Fire Risk

Over the forest as a whole, fire suppression in the last 80 to 90 years has contributed to the accumulation of naturally occurring fuels and increasing proportions of dense thickets of trees. Existing stand conditions increase the risk of bark beetle attacks, and if the densities are not reduced, these stands will become more susceptible to beetle attacks while increasing the risk of wildfire due to fuels accumulation. Heavy fuel loadings and increased tree mortality increase the risk of a catastrophic wildfire and the potential for loss of structures and property on nearby private lands.

The Admin Site parcel is entirely within the Sisters city limits, where wildland and urban areas meet or interface. There are no direct effects to fuel loadings or fire risk resulting from Alternative 1. Given the existing conditions and emphasis on community protection and forest health, management strategies have been implemented to move this area toward a more desirable condition and effectively reduce fuel loading and wildfire risk. Treatments to reduce crown densities, ground fuels, and ladder fuels have helped to make future wildfires less intense and more readily controlled by firefighting forces. Thinning, removal of downed trees and debris, prescribed burning, mowing of shrubs, and handpiling would be all considered and implemented over time if the land stays in federal ownership as described in Alternative 1. An indirect effect of Alternative 1 would be a reduction in fuel loading and fire risk.

Under either action alternative, once the property is conveyed into private hands, fire and fuels management become the responsibility of the new owners and the local fire district. The Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act of 1997 (also known as Senate Bill 360), and administrative rules describe provisions, criteria, and standards for private lands to help minimize and mitigate fire hazards and risks from fire. These rules include the requirement that private landowners provide and maintain primary fuel breaks immediately adjacent to structures for a distance of at least 30 feet, and immediately adjacent to driveways for at least 10 feet from the center of the driveway. Secondary fuel breaks are also required, for a total fuel break distance of up to 50 or 100 feet from structures. These standards are considered to be minimum measures intended to improve the survivability of structures during a wildfire. Without more extensive, proactive, and aggressive forest management on the property, the fire risk to nearby public lands and adjacent private lands would generally begin to increase over time. As the property is developed and forested lands are converted to buildings, parking, and managed landscapes, fire risk will decrease to the same level as currently exists throughout most of the city limits.

Under either action alternative, the lands retained by the Forest Service and developed into the new Ranger Station would have fire and fuels risk permanently reduced. Lands that remain forested would continue to be managed as in Alternative 1 to minimize risk to development within the urban interface.

Heritage and Cultural Resources

In the past, several different Native American tribes used the area now comprising the Deschutes National Forest. It is likely that the Northern Paiute, Klamath, and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs peoples were the dominant cultural groups in this particular area in the recent past. The Klamath Trail passed through this area linking the Klamath Basin with the Columbia River. Seasonally occupied habitation sites along the Deschutes and Little Deschutes rivers were probably used for base camps associated with the use of special areas and resources near the rivers and in upland zones. There was probably a pattern of family groups moving through the area to hunt mammals and upland birds, gather plants, or travel to and from obsidian sources in Newberry Caldera. The archaeological evidence is scant, with the most typical being lithic scatters of broken tools and flaking debris associated with tool manufacturing and maintenance. Ground

stone implements for plant processing may also be present at some sites. Homesteads, transportation corridors, railroad logging, and other remnants from the historic period are also encountered in the general area.

Nine previous projects have been inventoried for cultural resources within the current project analysis area. Six of them were conducted and documented sufficiently to be used as adequate survey. These previous surveys varied in size from one acre to about 35 acres. Total area surveyed is approximately 70 acres of the 120 acre project area, which included a potential new Ranger Station site north of the Urban Growth Boundary.

A survey in July of 2005 covered the remaining 50 acres of the potential project area by pedestrian transects of 30 meter or less intervals.

Through these past and present surveys, six heritage sites have been located and recorded. Sites are defined by having 10 or more artifacts or the presence of features such as a cave, rock art, fire pit remains, structure, ect. Isolates are defined as not having any features and locating less than 10 artifacts. Of the sites; all are historic. One of these sites, the Santiam Wagon Road, passes through this vicinity somewhere, and is considered significant and eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. However, there is no physical evidence remaining within the project area, and this location does not contribute to the significance of the overall route. The other five sites are considered not significant. The site evaluations completed were done by applying the criteria for eligibility in 36CFR60.4.

No tribal use plants are known in the project area. The Warm Springs, Paiute, and Wasco Tribes from The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon are the known tribes with historic associations to this area. The project area is within lands ceded to the Federal Government by The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon under treaty in 1855 and ratified by Congress in 1859.

No heritage resources that are eligible for the National Register are present in the area of the potential land sale or in any of the alternative locations for new facility construction. The route of the Santiam Wagon Road passes through this vicinity somewhere, but no physical remains that can be attributed to the wagon road are present and nothing is there to be affected.

Under this project, no significant or unevaluated resources are present, so no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on any heritage resources will occur.

No mitigation measures or monitoring is needed since no significant resources are present.

The findings, whether significant or not, are inconsequential for Alternative 1 because there would be no conveyance of the land. The identified parcels would remain under Forest Service jurisdiction and no cultural properties or tribal interests would be lost or otherwise affected.

Sale of any portion of the parcel would have no adverse effect on any National Register eligible historic or archaeological sites or any tribal interests. Research results of the

studies have been documented and submitted to Oregon SHPO for review and inclusion into the state inventory. Permanent records will be maintained by the Deschutes National Forest and made available to each of the tribes upon request. In addition, Deschutes County will be provided with the site records and locational data of the eligible and non-eligible sites so that they can be managed under state statute.

Surface Water and Wetlands

There are no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to surface water, floodplains, or wetlands as a result of Alternative 1. There are no natural wetlands, floodplains or surface water bodies on the property. A small pond was constructed in 1991 as part of the office landscaping. The nearest surface water or wetland is Whychus Creek, approximately ½ mile southeast of the property. Trout Creek, a wet-season tributary, flows intermittently approximately ½ mile to the north. It contained water for a short period in the early spring in 1994 and 2006.

Conveyance of the Sisters Admin parcel, and any development associated with the new Ranger Station under either action alternative, would have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effect on any surface water, floodplain, or wetlands. There would be no measurable impacts to Whychus Creek or Trout Creek due to their distance from the land being conveyed, and the fact that these lands are well outside the 100 and 500-year floodplains.

Wildlife

Deschutes National Forest LRMP (Land and Resource Management Plan)

The entire Admin Site parcel occurs within the Scenic Views Allocation (Management Area 9). The goal of the Scenic Views allocation is to provide visitors with high quality scenery that represents the natural character of Central Oregon.

Standards and Guidelines for wildlife within the allocation are:

- M9-79 – In foreground areas, wildlife snags and snag replacement trees will be maintained only where they contribute toward the desired visual condition of the tree species. Where snags and snag replacements do not contribute towards the desired visual condition the number, sizes, and placement of wildlife trees will be changed in the Scenic Views Management Areas.
- M9-80 – Snags determined to be safety hazards in area of concentrated public use will be topped or removed. Grouping snags is generally preferable over even distribution.
- M9-81 – Where consistent with the desired visual condition, wildlife habitat improvements will focus on watchable wildlife.

- M9-82 – When managing vegetation along major highways which have deer migration routes crossing them, consideration will be given to minimizing risks of vehicular-deer collisions.

Eastside Screens

The entire project also occurs within the Eastside Screens (USDA 2003a). The Eastside Screens are direction from the Regional Forester on retaining old-growth attributes at the local scale and moving toward the historic range of variability (HRV) across the landscape. Standards and Guidelines for wildlife within the Eastside Screens apply only to certain types of timber sales, and are not pertinent to this project.

Although the lands proposed for conveyance are a relatively small portion of the landscape, the conveyance and expected development of the parcels would result in alteration of up to approximately 36 acres of wildlife habitat, (80 acres minus the 36 acres currently developed, minus 8 acres that remain as habitat in the Triangle), potentially displacing some birds and animals. Overall, the Proposed Action would result in a reduction of forest habitat within an area that is already decreasing due to urbanization and development on private lands. Depending on zoning and the discretion of the landowner, it would be reasonable to expect that at least a portion of these lands would no longer be suitable as habitat for wildlife. Future use by wildlife would depend upon the amount of forest habitat and open space that are retained and how they are utilized and managed in the future.

Even though the parcels are not presently developed, it is clear that the properties already exhibit a considerable amount of human influence due to their small size, configuration, and isolation from other National Forest lands. Neighboring homes and subdivisions, roads and traffic, utility corridors, recreation use, and other legal and illegal uses all reveal effects from humans on the environment.

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Northern Bald Eagle

The Sisters Administration Site project is not located within any BEMA or essential bald eagle habitat.

During the winter of 2004-05 an adult and immature bald eagle were documented using the East Portal Kiosk area located in between Highway 20 and Highway 242. The immature eagle was also documented near the Sisters Ranger District Warehouse area on one occasion. However, the eagles were only observed in the area for a short period of time.

Use of the project area by bald eagles has been determined to be incidental due to the lack of primary foraging habitat (i.e. rivers and large lakes) and the amount of human use. There are also no known nests or communal roosts located within three and a half miles

of the project area. Therefore, there will be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to bald eagles or their habitats associated with this project.

Use of the project area by bald eagles has been determined to be incidental due to the lack of primary foraging habitat (i.e. rivers and large lakes) and the amount of human use. There are also no known nests or communal roosts located within three and a half miles of the project area. Therefore, there will be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effect to bald eagles or their habitats associated with either conveyance or new Ranger Station construction in either alternative.

Northern Spotted Owl

The project area occurs outside of the range of the northern spotted owl. There will be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to spotted owls or their habitat associated with this project.

Canada Lynx

The Canada lynx is a federally listed threatened species. The Forest Wildlife Biologists from the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests, and Crooked River National Grasslands have made a determination based on the best available science, that neither the Canada lynx nor their habitat are currently present on these administrative units (USDA 2003b). There is only one verified Canada lynx record from the Deschutes National Forest collected near Lava Lake in 1916 and only 12 verified records in Oregon since 1897. Most of the verified lynx records in Oregon coincide with population peaks of lynx in Alaska and Canada. Self-maintaining lynx populations in Oregon have not existed historically, and lynx occurrence here is likely the result of dispersal from occupied areas with declining prey populations (Verts and Carraway 1998; McKelvey and Aubrey 2001). Surveys for lynx were conducted on the Deschutes National Forest in 1999, 2000, and 2001. There were no lynx detections confirmed from the survey efforts.

The Lynx Biology Team reported that all investigations into lynx habitat in the southern part of its range shows an association between lynx and lodgepole pine cover types within the subalpine fir series. The best scientific information available suggests that subalpine fir plant associations capable of supporting a minimum density of snowshoe hares (*Lepus americanus*) is a reasonable surrogate for describing lynx habitat conditions in order to support survival (primary vegetation to support survival and reproduction and comprise a Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU)). In addition, the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (Ruediger et al. 2000) identified the need for at least 10 square miles of primary vegetation to support lynx survival and reproduction and comprise a LAU. On the Deschutes National Forest, four subalpine fir plant associations (subalpine fir-Engelman spruce, alpine parkland sedge, alpine parkland woodrush, and alpine parkland sagebrush) could be considered primary vegetation that could contribute to lynx habitat. In total, about 3,650 acres of subalpine fir plant associations occur across the entire Forest and most of those (3,500 acres) are “parklands” which do not support snowshoe hare. Therefore, there is not an adequate amount of primary vegetation to identify any lynx habitat or a Lynx Analysis Unit on the Deschutes National Forest. For these

reasons, implementation of the project would have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effect on the Canada lynx or their habitat.

CANDIDATE SPECIES

The Oregon spotted frog, pacific fisher, and western sage grouse are candidate species that are known to occur or may potentially occur on the Deschutes National Forest. However, there is no suitable habitat for any of these species within the Sisters Administrative Site project area, so no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would occur from this project.

REGION 6 SENSITIVE SPECIES

The American peregrine falcon, bufflehead, California wolverine, Crater Lake tightcoil, harlequin duck, horned grebe, pygmy rabbit, red-necked grebe, tricolored blackbird, and yellow rail are all sensitive species that are known to occur or may potentially occur on the Deschutes National Forest. However, there is no suitable habitat for any of these species within the Sisters Administrative Site project area, so no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would occur from this project.

MANAGEMENT INDICATOR SPECIES

Management indicator species that are known to occur on the Sisters Ranger District include the American marten, great blue heron, great gray owl, golden eagle, osprey, and waterfowl. However, there is no suitable habitat for any of these management indicator species located within the Sisters Administrative Site project area, so no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would occur from any alternative considered in this project.

Mule Deer

The project occurs outside the Deschutes LRMP deer allocation. The project area is within transitional deer habitat identified during the Integrated Fuels Strategy process (USDA 1998).

The mixed pine stands, bitterbrush, and Idaho fescue of the Sisters Administrative site provides transition range habitat for mule deer migrating west to east, between summer range and winter range. There is a very limited amount of hiding cover within the project area, while high human use is prevalent. That limits the amount of time deer utilize the project area.

There is also a small group of “resident deer” that come and go through the project area year round.

Under the no action alternative, existing deer habitat would be retained and continue to allow for movement and migration. The trend of residential development surrounding this area would cause these undeveloped forested parcels to become increasingly more important in the future for migration as well as for forage and limited hiding cover. Disturbance to animals would continue to occur and potentially increase as a result of

increasing public use and pressure by humans. Under the no action alternative habitat would not change significantly.

In either action alternative, 36 acres of wildlife habitat, (80 acres minus the 36 acres currently developed, minus 8 acres that remain as habitat in the Triangle) within the project area will be altered. There is limited cover within that area, but alteration will most likely remove any cover that currently exists. In addition forage areas will be altered. Overall, 36 acres of potential deer habitat will be removed from the Forest Service land base, although the project area is already heavily disturbed by human activities. Future use by the “resident deer herd” in the project area will depend of the amount of habitat retained during development, however it is expected that the “resident deer” will be displaced.

In either alternative a small portion of the 12 acres retained for the new Ranger Station will remain as forested habitat, albeit in the midst of considerable development and activity, much like it is today. Deer that have adapted to live around the current level of activity on the Admin Site will likely remain in the area of the new Ranger Station. In Alternative2, the new station would be adjacent to undeveloped forest lands where deer could easily come and go. In Alternative3, the new Ranger Station would be surrounded by new development, where deer will less easily be able to move across the landscape undisturbed.

Cumulative Impacts: The Sisters Ranger District is being used as the scale for analysis for big game, in particular winter range, MA-7. Based on that review, the potential cumulative impacts are those discussed below.

Several large vegetation management projects have occurred in the past several years. These include Big Bear, Bear Garden, Broken Rim, Highway 20, Jack Canyon, McCache, Santiam Corridor, Happy Jack, Walla Bear, Canal Thinning, BBR Fuels, Davis Creek Thin, and Underline. With the exception of Highway 20, all occurred within summer range and were developed to address the mass mortality caused by insects in the early 1990's. Within these project areas, there has been an overall decrease in cover. However, stands were declining or dead and cover would have been lost overtime. Down woody material levels also increased across the landscape. This provides added benefits in the form of hiding cover, especially in fawning and calving areas; but abundant down woody material levels also impede movement and increase the risk of loss of existing cover to a large fire event. An increase in forage also resulted in these project areas. This forage increase may have helped to increase the health and vigor of resident herds, leading to increased survival rates.

The Highway 20 project area was located within deer transition range and MA-7. Approximately 1,044 acres were treated with this project. The Metolius Basin project area was the first vegetation management project planned to occur within biological winter range. Overall, an estimated 12% of the winter range on the Sisters Ranger District is proposed to be treated with the Metolius Basin project. This area is not as important as other portions of the winter range in that snow conditions may preclude use

for much of the winter. It was noted in the Metolius Mule Deer Winter Range Plan that approximately 90% of the deer occupying the Metolius Basin area during the summer move toward the east to the high plains area for the winter months. In addition the Sisters Area Fuels Reduction will treat 4,667 acres of the MA-7 within the project area. However, treatments are designed to retain cover and forage throughout the project area.

During the summers of 2002, two large wildfires occurred on the district. The Eyerly Fire, occurred within biological winter range and MA-7 and resulted in a decrease in cover and winter forage opportunities. However, summer forage values were expected to increase dramatically within the fire area with the re-sprouting of forbs and shrubs. This prediction held true with an increase of grasses, forbs, and shrubs occurring throughout the fire area. It was also noted through casual observation, increases in the amount of big game use within the fire area.

In the summer of 2003, two additional wildfires occurred; Link and B&B. These occurred within biological winter range. An estimated 2,566 acres resulted in stand replacement within winter range. Impacts and vegetation responses are similar to the Eyerly fire.

An estimated 30 miles of roads have been decommissioned across the district. In addition, 60 miles of decommissioning is proposed under the Metolius Basin project. These closures, along with road closures for the B&B project (60 miles), will aid in reducing disturbance to big game and reduce the potential for noxious weed spread. Additional noxious weed treatments will continue and aid in enhancing potential habitat.

Past hazard tree removal, BAER activities, and riparian restoration projects did not impact big game habitat. These projects were small in scope compared to big game needs.

Private lands are not managed for big game habitat. Therefore, it is assumed that any habitat provided by these parcels is incidental and may not be long term.

Over the Sisters Ranger District and taking into account past and ongoing projects, big game cover habitat (hiding cover and thermal cover) has been reduced and foraging habitat increased. Reductions in cover were not as great in the winter range as they were in summer and transition range. High road densities within the watershed can compound the impact of a lack of cover. This could result in a shift in habitat use patterns by big game.

Big game populations are expected to increase across the district due to the increase in foraging habitat and reduced road densities. Use patterns are expected to change as well due to the loss of cover.

The proposed actions “**May Impact**” deer due to the alteration approximately 36 acres of potential cover and foraging habitat.

Rocky Mountain Elk

The area is not within a Key Elk area, nor was it identified as elk habitat during the Integrated Fuels Strategy process (USDA 1998). Use of the project area by elk is considered incidental, so no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would occur from the project.

Townsend's Big-eared Bat

The project area does not have any caves or abandoned mines located within it. However, there are buildings located within and adjacent to the project area that may provide roosting or maternity colony locations. The project area does provide potential foraging habitat. The no action alternative will result in maintaining current potential roosting or maternity colony areas and foraging habitat. The trend of residential development surrounding this area would cause these undeveloped forested parcels to become more important in the future for potential foraging opportunities and limited hiding cover. Under the no action alternative habitat would not change significantly.

Conveyance of the land and buildings will result in the removal of 16 buildings and potential roost snags as the property is developed. The removal of current buildings and large snags would result in a decrease in available roosting areas. In addition, 36 acres of potential foraging habitat will be altered. By conveying the land there will be limited amounts of future bat habitat within these parcels due to the reduction in forested habitat.

Cumulative Impacts: The Sisters Ranger District is being used as the scale for analysis for bats, in particular mature mixed conifer and ponderosa pine forests and riparian reserves. Based on that review, the potential cumulative impacts are those discussed below.

Several large wildfires have occurred on district in the past 5 years – Cache Mountain, Eyerly, Link, and B&B. An estimated 17,335 acres (13%) of mature mixed conifer and ponderosa pine forests experienced stand replacement fire further reducing green mature forests. Not every acre of the forests equated to suitable habitat for bats but this habitat is considered unsuitable due to the fires for some species and unusable for a period of time for other species until decay begins.

Past management activities removed potential habitat across the district (e.g. Bear Garden, Big Bear, Broken Rim, Corridor Follow-up, Demo, Happy Jack, Jack Canyon, North Slope, Santiam Corridor and Walla Bear). These vegetation management projects removed trees that had been impacted by recent insect and disease attacks. Approximately 5000 acres were treated. Potential roost trees remained but habitat was altered.

Activities proposed under the Eyerly Fire Salvage project, Coil Fiber, Lower Jack Reoffer, and B&B Fire Recovery timber sales did not impact bat habitat greatly as recently killed trees don't possess the characteristics needed by bats for roosting (decay and sloughing bark). In addition, three vegetation management projects may occur within suitable bat habitat (McCache, Metolius Basin Forest Management Project, and Sisters

Area Fuels Reduction). Measures were incorporated to retain large tree and snag habitat for each project area as well as enhance habitat conditions. Overall, treatments proposed will improve bat habitat conditions by promoting the development of large structure and reducing the risk of loss of existing habitat from other large-scale disturbances.

An estimated 30 miles of roads have been decommissioned across the watersheds. These closures, along with proposed closures for the B&B project (60 miles), will lessen fragmentation and reduce the need for additional danger tree removal.

Hazard/danger tree activities are usually concentrated along roads and high use areas like campgrounds, many of which are associated with riparian reserves. Increased loss of large snag habitat within riparian reserves continues to limit available habitat for many species. Increased human use in riparian areas, especially recreational use, will reduce the effectiveness of remaining habitat. As the more severely burned areas recover, recreational use will become more spread out, reducing disturbance potential.

BAER activities, thinning projects, riparian restoration projects, and fuels treatment projects did not impact bat habitat. Thinning occurred in stands that are not yet considered habitat due to the small average diameter of the trees. Fuels treatments reduced brush levels which may have reduced fire risk to existing habitat. Private lands are not managed for bat habitat. Therefore, it is assumed that any habitat provided by these parcels is incidental and may not be long term. Private lands impacted by the fires were harvested but the impacts to habitat had already occurred to potential habitat by the fire. This is similar with tribal lands. Most of the area harvested in the last several years was a result of fire where habitat had already been impacted. Minimal snag levels were retained further reducing potential habitat.

Because a majority the potential habitat was severely burned, bat populations will likely decrease across the district especially those populations that rely on forests for both for roosting and foraging. Actions to reduce fragmentation and human disturbance, reduce the loss of large snags, and recover more fire-resilient habitat or that which is considered to be more within its historic disturbance regime will benefit bat populations in the long-term. Cumulatively, the action alternatives will not lead to a trend toward Federal listing for bats.

The proposed actions “**May Impact**” bats due to the alteration of 16 buildings and approximately 36 acres of potential foraging habitat.

Mitigation for potential loss of bat habitat

The buildings will be surveyed for the presence of hibernaculae and maternity roosts in the winter of 2006 and spring of 2007 as specified under current direction (Letter, Cal Joiner, June 16, 2006). If any hibernaculae or maternity roosts are found that are occupied by threatened, endangered or sensitive bat species, habitat mitigation will follow the recommendations made in the above letter.

Northern Goshawk

The project area does not have any nesting habitat within it, due to the lack of dense canopy cover. There are no known historic or active goshawk nest sites within 2 miles of the project area. The area is also not within an identified post fledging area. However, the project area does contain potential foraging habitat.

Surveys are currently underway within the project area. Potential nesting habitat was surveyed twice in 2005, and once in 2006. There have been no sightings or responses within 2 miles of the project area.

The no action alternative will result in the existing foraging habitat remaining for the short and long term. In the long term the higher productivity sites within the area may also become nesting habitat. However, even if nesting habitat becomes available it may not be utilized due to the amount of human disturbance in the area. Under the no action alternative habitat would not change significantly.

The action alternatives would result in the alteration of 36 acres of habitat, leaving approximately 8 acres of potential foraging habitat available currently and in the long term. While there will be a reduction of potential foraging habitat, it is unlikely that the area is utilized by goshawks as the project area already is disturbed by neighboring homes, roads, traffic, utility corridors, and recreation use.

Cumulative Impacts: The Sisters Ranger District is being used as the scale for analysis for the northern goshawk. Based on that review, the potential cumulative impacts are as follows.

The majority of nest sites on the Sisters RD are located within the mixed conifer PAGs (14 of 18). These PAGs experienced moderate to heavy mortality with the insect outbreak of the early 1990's with impacts occurring a few years later. This event probably had the greatest influence on goshawk habitat across the district due to the reduction of canopy cover prior to the fires. These open stands are considered unsuitable nesting habitat for goshawks.

Several large wildfires have occurred on district in the past 5 years – Cache Mountain, Eyerly, Link, and B&B. The recent fires have eliminated nesting habitat and negated many of the impacts resulting from past management projects (e.g. Corridor Follow-up, Happy Jack, Jack Canyon, North Slope, and Santiam Corridor). In addition, past vegetation management projects outside the fire area have resulted in a reduction in habitat (approx. 1,990 acres) by harvesting dead and dying trees (e.g. Bear Garden, Big Bear, Broken Rim, and Walla Bear). Activities proposed under the Eyerly Fire Salvage project, Coil Fiber, and Lower Jack Reoffer timber sales did not impact goshawk habitat since suitable habitat was avoided. In addition, three vegetation management projects may occur within suitable goshawk habitat (McCache, Metolius Basin Forest Management Project, Sisters Area Fuels Reduction, and West Trout). Measures were incorporated to retain suitable nesting habitat for each project area as well as enhance habitat conditions. Overall, treatments proposed will improve goshawk habitat

conditions by promoting the development of large structure and reducing the risk of loss of existing habitat from other large-scale disturbances.

An estimated 30 miles of roads have been decommissioned across the district. In addition, 60 miles of decommissioning is proposed under the Metolius Basin project. These closures, along with the road closures for the B&B project (approximately 60 miles), will aid in reducing the disturbance potential to existing nest sites and will lessen fragmentation leading to reduced disturbance potential to future nest sites.

Past thinning projects, BAER activities, hazard tree removal, and fuels treatments did not impact goshawk nesting or fledging habitat. Thinning occurred in stands that are not yet considered habitat due to the small average diameter of the trees. Hazard trees may have removed some trees within potential habitat however, this is minor in scope and limited to a very small area along roads primarily. Fuels treatments reduced brush levels which may have altered foraging habitat somewhat.

Private lands are not managed for goshawk habitat. Therefore, it is assumed that any habitat provided by these parcels is incidental and may not be long term.

Goshawk populations are expected to decline across the district due to the loss of nesting and fledgling habitat from the fires of 2002 and 2003. Most of the currently known nests are expected to remain active territories, especially with associated road closures and subsequent reduction in human disturbance. Fledging and dispersing goshawks, however, will likely have difficulty in establishing new territories due to limited habitat availability and increased competition for what remains. Cumulatively, the action alternatives will not lead to a trend toward Federal listing for the northern goshawk.

The proposed actions “**May Impact**” northern goshawks or their habitat due to the loss of approximately 36 acres of potential foraging habitat. However, the project area is currently experiencing human pressures so it is unlikely that goshawks are currently using or will utilize available foraging habitat in the future within the project area.

Cooper’s and Sharp-shinned Hawks

The project area does not have any nesting habitat within it, due to the lack of dense canopy cover. There are no known historic or active nest sites within the project area. However, the project area occurs within potential foraging habitat.

The no action alternative will result in existing foraging habitat remaining for the short and long term. In the long term the higher productivity sites within the area may also become nesting habitat. However, even if nesting habitat becomes available it may not be utilized due to the area being a high human use area. Under the no action alternative habitat would not change significantly.

The action alternatives would result in the alteration of 36 acres of habitat leaving approximately 8 acres of potential foraging habitat available after the project is completed. While there will be a reduction of potential foraging habitat, it is unlikely

that the area is utilized by Cooper's or sharp-shinned hawks as the project area already is disturbed by neighboring homes, roads, traffic, utility corridors, and recreation use.

Cumulative Impacts: Territories on the Sisters RD have historically been located within the mixed conifer PAGs. These PAGs experienced moderate to heavy mortality with the insect outbreak of the early 1990's with impacts occurring a few years later. This event had the greatest influence on Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawk habitat across the district due to the reduction of canopy cover prior to the fires. These open stands are considered unsuitable nesting habitat for these two species.

Several large wildfires have occurred on district in the past 5 years – Cache Mountain, Eyerly, Link, and B&B. An estimated 26,700 acres of mixed conifer forests experienced stand replacement fire further reducing cover in this forest type. Not every acre of the mixed conifer forests were considered suitable for these two species but all stand replacement habitat is now considered unsuitable. The recent fires have negated many of the impacts of past management actions within the fire areas (e.g. Corridor Follow-up, Happy Jack, Jack Canyon, North Slope, and Santiam Corridor).

Activities proposed under the Eyerly Fire Salvage project, Coil Fiber, and Lower Jack Reoffer timber sales did not impact Coopers and sharp-shinned hawk habitat since suitable habitat was avoided and concentrated primarily on the removal of dead material within stand replacement burned areas. In addition, several vegetation management projects have occurred or may occur within suitable habitat (McCache, Metolius Basin Forest Management Project, Big Bear, Bear Garden, Broken Rim, Walla Bear, Davis Creek Thinning, Highway 20, Sisters Area Fuels Reduction, and West Trout). Overall, treatments proposed will reduce the risk of loss of existing habitat from other large-scale disturbances. However, stand densities were reduced within treatment units below suitable conditions used for nesting in many areas.

An estimated 150,000 acres of potentially suitable habitat still remains after the impacts of the fires and past vegetation management projects due to the overstocked conditions of many forested stands in addition to existing mature and old growth stands. Across the district, Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawk populations are expected to decline due to the loss of nesting habitat from the fires and past projects. Populations would begin to recover several decades after the forested habitat develop. Cumulatively, alternatives will not lead to a trend toward Federal listing for the Cooper's or sharp-shinned hawk.

The proposed actions “**May Impact**” Cooper's or sharp-shinned hawks or their habitat due to the removal of approximately 36 acres of potential foraging habitat. However, the project area is currently experiencing human pressures so it is unlikely that Cooper's or sharp-shinned hawks are currently using or will utilize available foraging habitat in the future within the project area.

Red-tailed Hawk

The project area contains suitable red-tailed hawk foraging and nesting sites. Currently, there are no known nest sites within the project area.

The no action alternative will continue to provide nesting and foraging habitat, due to the extremely wide tolerance for habitat variation and preference for open woodland areas associated with forest edges for nesting. The fragmentation of forest habitat provides an abundance of foraging, and the larger trees provide nesting sites. Under the no action alternative red-tailed hawk habitat would not change significantly.

The action alternatives would result in the alteration of 36 acres of habitat leaving approximately 8 acres of potential foraging habitat available currently and in the long term. While there will be a reduction of potential foraging habitat, it is unlikely that the area is utilized by red-tailed hawks as the project area already is disturbed by neighboring homes, roads, traffic, utility corridors, and recreation use.

Cumulative Impacts: Activities proposed under the Eyerly Fire Salvage project, Coil Fiber, and Lower Jack Re-offer timber sales did not impact red-tailed hawk habitat since impacts to suitable habitat was minimized by retaining large snags. Other ongoing forest management projects and hazard tree removal may have reduced nesting habitat in the watershed. Past management projects occurring outside the fire areas have also resulted in a slight reduction of habitat by harvesting dead and dying trees (e.g. Bear Garden, Big Bear, Broken Rim, and Walla Bear). However, snag retention guidelines and green trees remained in treatment units.

Past thinning projects, BAER activities, and fuels treatments did not impact red-tailed hawk habitat. Thinning occurred in stands not yet considered habitat due to the small average diameter of the trees and fuels treatments may have helped to improve foraging habitat by reducing brush layers and opening up the understory.

Habitat will be enhanced under the Metolius Basin Forest Vegetation Management, Sisters Area Fuels Reduction, and West Trout projects. Measures were incorporated to retain large tree and snag habitat as well as enhance habitat conditions. Overall, treatments proposed will improve red-tailed hawk habitat conditions by promoting the development of large structure and reducing the risk of loss of existing habitat from other large-scale disturbances.

Private lands are not managed for red-tailed hawk habitat. Therefore, it is assumed that any habitat provided by these parcels is incidental and may not be long term

Cumulatively, red-tailed hawk populations are expected to remain stable across the district due to their generalist behavior. There may be increased competition for remaining nest sites among this species and other large raptor species. Also distribution of red-tailed hawks across the district may become more patchy, focusing on low-severity burn areas near open habitat. Long-term there may be a decrease in the populations due to the long period of time before late seral habitat develops for nesting (due to salvage efforts and ongoing projects) and the newly created foraging areas will become grown over with shrubs and small trees. Cumulatively, alternatives will not lead to a trend toward Federal listing for the red-tailed hawk.

The proposed actions “**May Impact**” red-tailed hawks or their habitat due to the removal of approximately 36 acres of potential foraging habitat. However, the project area is currently experiencing human pressures so it is unlikely that red-tailed hawks are currently using or will utilize available nesting habitat in the future within the project area.

Cavity Nesters/ Snags/Down Wood

Within the Sisters Administrative Site, habitat does not exist for the following primary cavity excavators: black-backed woodpecker, red-breasted sapsucker, red-naped sapsucker, three toed woodpecker, and Williamson’s sapsucker. Pileated woodpecker habitat does not occur within the project area either, as they are rarely found in pure ponderosa pine stands (Marshall et al 2003).

Within the project area downy, hairy, and white-headed woodpeckers along with the northern flicker and pygmy nuthatch have been observed.

In the Landbird strategy, the Lewis’ woodpecker, white-headed woodpecker, and the pygmy nuthatch are the cavity excavators identified as focal species in ponderosa pine. Therefore, the effects analysis will focus on Lewis’ woodpecker, white-headed woodpecker, and the pygmy nuthatch (cavity nesters).

Currently the project area consists predominately of ponderosa pine. Snags are limited. Many locations within the project area are heavily used by people, so snags have been removed for safety. However, in some less concentrated human use areas, snags still exist.

The no action alternative would result in the current snags remaining on the landscape. However, snag levels are dynamic both spatially and temporally. Therefore, management of green tree replacements in areas that snags are acceptable will be necessary to ensure a supply of snags over time.

There have been no down wood assessments within the project area, however walk-through surveys have revealed limited down wood in the project area.

Under the no action alternative, there will continue to be limited quantities of down wood within the project area. The no action alternative would result in the current down wood remaining on the landscape. As hazard trees are identified within the area, there will be an opportunity to fell the hazard trees to create down wood. Management of green tree replacements in areas that snags are acceptable will be necessary to ensure a supply of snags that will eventually become down wood.

The trend of residential development surrounding this area would cause this undeveloped forested parcel to become more important in the future for potential foraging and nesting of cavity nesters. Disturbance to animals would continue to occur and potentially

increase as a result of increasing public use and pressure by humans. Under the no action alternative habitat would not change significantly.

The action alternatives would result in the alteration of 36 acres of habitat leaving approximately 8 acres of potential habitat available currently and in the long term for cavity nesters. Within the 36 acres that will be altered, nesting and foraging habitat will be reduced on the site with removal of trees with development of the area. In addition future snags will be limited within the project area, as they create safety hazards. If any areas remain in open space there is potential for those areas to function as foraging or nesting habitat.

The action alternatives would result in the alteration of 36 acres of habitat leaving approximately 8 acres of down wood habitat available currently and in the long term. Within the 36 acres that will be altered foraging habitat will be reduced on the site during development of the area. If any areas remain in open space there is potential for those areas to function as down wood habitat.

Cumulative Impacts: Timber harvest, fire suppression, road construction, wildfire, and firewood cutting have impacted the distribution and density of snags and down wood across the Whychus watershed. These activities have created the existing condition of deadwood habitats.

Harvest activities have occurred within the watershed area over the last 30 years. Past harvest activities including regeneration harvest, overstory removal, and salvage that occurred prior to 1988 would have removed most or all overstory trees, snag, and down wood.

Harvest activities occurring between 1988 and 1994 retained minimal snag and down wood habitat. It is assumed that harvest units occurring within this time frame retained 1 to 4 snags per acre.

Sales planned west of the spotted owl line after 1994 utilized the Northwest Forest Plan standards and guidelines and followed Late-Successional Reserve Assessment guidelines by plant association group, which ranged from 4 to 13 snags and per acres depending on the plant association group and 120 linear feet of down wood at least 16 inches in diameter and 16 feet long. Sales planned after 1995 east of the owl line utilized the Eastside Screens, which calls for 2.25 snags 20 inches dbh or greater per acre and 20 to 40 lineal feet per acre in ponderosa pine and 100-140 lineal feet per acre in mixed conifer.

Shelterwood harvest prescriptions (1975 to present) retained 8 to 20 live overstory trees providing for some future large snag and log habitat as the younger stand develops into a mature stand, but would have eliminated the understory and mid-story cover and feeding substrate. Removal of snags does not normally occur with this treatment however incidental removal occurs due to safety reasons.

A western spruce budworm epidemic occurred within the analysis area starting in the late 1980s and continued into the early 1990s. Tree mortality and defoliation occurred throughout. This event produced a small pulse of dead wood habitat at slightly elevated levels.

Within the Whychus watershed two wildfires occurred in the early 1990's, the Delicious and Stevens Canyon Fires. These events created pulses of higher snag and down wood densities than would normally occur with natural succession. These high density snag rich areas are short-lived on the landscape with most snags falling down within 25 years. However, habitat would have been created for the Lewis' woodpecker and white-headed woodpecker.

Danger tree activities include the routine removal of snags along roads, high use recreation areas, and facilities. This activity occurs approximately 160 feet (one site potential tree height) either side of roads and from high use areas. Snag habitat remains in these areas however as they pose a danger to the public or facilities they are removed, therefore these areas are not managed for this habitat component. An annual danger tree removal project occurs focusing on recreation areas like campgrounds. Snag levels continue to decline around these facilities.

Fuels reduction projects include mowing, burning, and thinning stands from below. Burning varies but may include underburning, jackpot burning of concentrations, pile burning, or some combination of these activities. A reduction in down woody material is usually associated with these activities with some incidental snag loss. Material impacted primarily includes smaller size classes (<15" dbh) and those in more advanced decayed stages (Decay Classes 3-5). These treatments, although some minor impacts occur, reduce the risk of loss to existing large snags and logs by reducing fuel levels and ladder fuels. These projects enhanced habitat for white-headed woodpeckers and pygmy nuthatch.

Future vegetation management projects include the Sisters Area Fuels Reduction, West Trout, and Glaze Meadow projects, which will focus on reducing understory vegetation to reduce risk of loss from wildfire. It is assumed that snags will not be impacted however, smaller sized down woody material may be depending on treatments proposed. The future management projects will enhance habitat for white-headed woodpeckers and pygmy nuthatch by opening up ponderosa pine stands and retaining the largest trees. Overall, these impacts are expected to be minor and material for future recruitment will be available in the remaining stand. Cumulatively, alternatives will not lead to a trend toward Federal listing for the Lewis' woodpecker, white-headed woodpecker, or the pygmy nuthatch.

The proposed actions "**May Impact**" cavity nesters, snags, and down wood due to the removal of approximately 36 acres of potential habitat.

Neotropical Migratory Birds (NTMBS)/ Landbirds

Surveys were not conducted for neotropical migrant bird species. However, incidental sightings have been made by district personnel.

The project area lies entirely within the ponderosa pine plant association group (PAG). Therefore, NTMBS discussion will only cover species identified as focal species for ponderosa pine in Central Oregon under the conservation strategy for landbirds.

The entire project area is potential chipping sparrow habitat.

The no action alternative will continue to provide potential nesting and foraging habitat for the chipping sparrow. However, fragmentation around and within the project area may increase nest parasitism and predation, which could result in the project area functioning as a sink habitat. Under the no action alternative habitat would not change significantly.

The action alternatives would result in the alteration of 36 acres of habitat leaving approximately 8 acres of potential habitat available currently and in the long term. Within the 36 acres that will be altered, nesting and foraging habitat will be reduced on the site during development of the area. If any areas remain open space there is potential for those areas to function as foraging or nesting habitat.

Cumulative Impacts: Several large wildfires have occurred on district in the past 5 years – Cache Mountain, Eyerly, Link, and B&B. These fires reduced available habitat for chipping sparrow.

Work is occurring under the Butte, Booth, Little, Eyerly Fire Salvage, Coil Fiber, and Lower Jack Reoffer timber sales. Activities under these timber sales are not impacting chipping sparrow habitat since suitable habitat was avoided and concentrated primarily on the removal of dead material within stand replacement burned areas.

In addition, several vegetation management projects have occurred or may occur within suitable habitat (McCache, Metolius Basin Forest Management Project, BBR Fuels, and Highway 20). Overall, treatments proposed will reduce the risk of loss of existing habitat from other large-scale disturbances. Stand densities (regenerating trees) and shrubs were reduced within treatment units impacting habitat for the short term until regeneration occurs again. Mowing and burning were widely prescribed and will maintain grassy understories, which should benefit chipping sparrows.

An estimated 30 miles of roads have been decommissioned across the district. In addition, 60 miles of decommissioning is proposed under the Metolius Basin project. These closures, along with closures for the B&B project (60 miles), will aid in reducing the disturbance potential to existing territories and the potential for noxious weed spread. Additional noxious weed treatments will continue and aid in enhancing potential habitat.

Private lands are not managed for chipping sparrows. Therefore, it is assumed that any habitat provided by these parcels is incidental and may not be long term. Cumulatively, the alternatives will not lead to a trend toward Federal listing for the for chipping sparrows.

The proposed actions “**May Impact**” chipping sparrows due to the alteration of approximately 36 acres of potential habitat.

Old and Late Structural Stage Stands and Connectivity

The project area is not within an identified old growth area and does not meet the definition of a late or old structure (LOS) stand. However, there are individual trees within the project area that meet the LOS characteristics (i.e. over 21 inches dbh).

The project area is surrounded on three sides by developed private land. Due to the developments connectivity is not an issue as there is no adjacent LOS available to be connected through the project area.

The no action alternative will result in current LOS characteristic structures remaining on the landscape. Over time, the area has the potential to reach the definition of a LOS stand. The trend of residential development surrounding this area would cause this undeveloped forested parcel to become more important in the future. However, human activity within the project area may deter species that are sensitive to disturbance from using the area.

The action alternatives will result in up to 72 acres of land being altered. Within those 72 acres of land there is potential for trees over 21 inches to be removed as the conveyed lands are developed. Individual trees that meet LOS characteristics may be removed during development.

Cumulative Impacts: Prior to the late 1980s, loss of suitable old growth was limited to timber harvest. Between the late 1980s and early 1990s the district experienced a spruce budworm epidemic resulting in the degradation or loss of a large amount of old growth habitat in the mixed conifer. Recent harvest activities are aimed at reducing risk to existing habitat and promoting desired species composition to develop and maintain habitat.

Fires have also reduced old growth habitat across the forest. In the past four years, fires have reduced old growth habitat on the Sisters and Crescent Ranger Districts. Old growth habitat losses have occurred within the Davis fire (21,100 acres) on the Crescent Ranger District and the Cache Mountain (2,275 acres), Eyerly (17,790 acres), B&B (66,140 acres) and Link (3,510 acres) fires on the Sisters Ranger District. While not all acres within those fires were considered old growth most of the old growth within those acres was lost to stand replacement events.

The proposed actions “**May Impact**” LOS due to the loss of individual trees meeting the definition of LOS within the project area. The proposed actions will have “**No Impact**” on connectivity, as the project area is surrounded on three sides by developed private land. Due to the developments, connectivity is not an issue as there is no LOS that needs connected through the project area.

Recreation, Social, Aesthetic, and Scenic Values

The Sisters Admin Site parcel is located within the city limits of Sisters. Commercial and light industrial development bound it on three sides; the north side is adjacent to contiguous forest lands. The nearest residential development outside the city limits is the Trapper Point Subdivision, approximately 1/3 mile northeast. The 80 acres is currently occupied by approximately 36 acres of developed features:

- Ranger Station and parking lots on about 3.5 acres
- seven residences, yards and paved access on about 4.5 acres;
- warehouse and bunkhouse complex on about 5 acres,
- ODOT cinder yard and maintenance complex on about 6 acres
- East Portal Scenic Byway facility and parking lot on about 6 acres
- Paved portions and rights of way for Highways 20 and 242, Pine Street, and Barclay Avenue on about 11 acres (1.5 miles of road by 60 foot ROW).

The entire parcel was heavily logged prior to its acquisition by the Forest Service in 1947. There are some ponderosa larger than 21” dbh, some are remnants of the original stand, but most are likely the beneficiaries of regular irrigation, rather than extreme age. Much of the area developed by the Ranger Station, residences, and East Portal contains second growth ponderosa pine and juniper trees as well as other native vegetation such as bitterbrush and various grasses and forbs, as does the remaining undeveloped portions of the parcel. The entire parcel has been thinned of small pine and juniper recently, and brush was mowed to reduce fire hazard. Some small areas around the facilities have been underburned.

The appearance from the highway and other travel corridors is of an open mixed pine and juniper forest with scattered large trees and glimpse of buildings and other development. The moderate amount of visible development on the east side of Hwy 20 (Ranger Station, ODOT, Ponderosa Hotel) provide a transition from the downtown commercial core to the forest corridor. From Pine Street, once past the Ranger Station and residences, the site provides forested contrast to the commercial development across the street to the east. However, the forest is open enough that traffic on Hwy 20 and the current facilities are visible from virtually any location on the property.

Because of its proximity to the city core, the area gets a small amount of use by casual hikers, dog walkers, and bird watchers. There are no recreation facilities, except for the East Portal. Traffic noise and activities associated with the Ranger Station are dominant on all except the northern-most portion. Even so, the area is valued by some residents for its open space and forested character.

The Forest's LRMP places the Admin Site within the slightly altered landscape category with a medium scenic integrity level. Even though the lands have been impacted and altered, people traveling through this area value it for scenic access to recreation sites, while people living in the area value it for providing a scenic natural buffer from the highway and other residential developments, as well as for the aesthetics it may provide to their homesites. The parcels also provide areas for dispersed recreation uses such as walking and wildlife viewing. Under the No Action alternative, the parcels would continue to provide these values and serve these purposes.

With conveyance under either alternative, the scenic corridors that the properties provide along roads and highways would no longer be managed under LRMP standards and guidelines or the Scenery Management System. The City of Sisters Development Code rules and regulations would guide future development and would be expected to help protect the area's existing scenic forest attributes, but likely to a lesser degree than it would under Forest Service management. Management objectives would be different under local jurisdiction; state and county regulations would tend to address development potential compared to the Forest Service which manages for natural resource values.

Some alteration of the existing landscape and forest appearance would occur with development. Based on current land use patterns, development would result in more highly altered scenic and landscape characteristics from the current condition. The scale and scope of the effects would depend largely on development plans, such as where structures are built, the type and style of facilities, changes that are made to the forest vegetation, and how these appear from roads or other locations. Implementation of local zoning rules and regulations would help maintain scenic values and help minimize visual impacts from development in the area.

Under private ownership, the land would no longer be open to the public, and individuals might have to go elsewhere to pursue the limited recreational opportunities such as walking and bird watching that the parcel provided. Development under either alternative is not expected to have a significant effect on the scenic byway system or major travel routes in the area.

In either action alternative, the east Portal Interpretive features would be incorporated into the new Ranger Station site.

In Alternative 2, the new Ranger Station would provide a portal to trails and access for other uses of the National Forest lands immediately to the north. In Alternative 3, a portal could be provided but access to trails would be dependent on the location and availability of a trail system over private lands.

Roads and Access

The Admin Site property contains about 1.5 miles of road. Roads include portions of state and federal Highways 20 and 242. Pine Street which borders the east side of the

parcel, is a county road. Barclay Avenue and Cascade Avenue, both city streets, cross portions of the property. There are also several access roads to the various Forest Service facilities. The parcel is flat and can be accessed with little difficulty.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no change to any of the existing roads.

Conveying these parcels out of federal ownership would not change any current road use through or adjacent to the parcels. All of the major roads are public streets and highways, either owned outright by the State, county or city, or managed under easement from the federal government. Where easements exist, they would be transferred with the property to the new owners to provide for continued use by the public.

In either alternative, development of the new Ranger Station would not affect current public roads or public access.

In Alternative 3, some flexibility for road design might be lost to potential developers due to the new Ranger Station blocking access to a portion of the Highway 20 and Barclay Avenue intersection.

Hazardous Materials

The parcel has been examined for the presence of hazardous substances and petroleum products as required by Section 120(h) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) and Forest Service Manual 2160, Hazardous Materials Management. A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment and Hazardous Building Material Survey, Sisters Ranger Station (GeoEngineers Inc, June 17, 2005) is on file. There are six underground heating oil storage tanks associated with the residences which will be removed in 2006. Some of the residences contain minor amounts of lead-based paint and/or asbestos tile. No other hazardous materials have been found on the parcel, and there is no known threat to public health or safety.

The properties would be conveyed free of most hazardous materials, although there may be some non-hazardous debris on the property at the time of conveyance. It would be the responsibility of the new property owners to remove the materials and any unwanted structures.

Soils, Geology, and Minerals

The parcel is at approximately 3200 feet elevation, along the terminal edge of the Whychus and Trout Creek outwash plains. The surface soils are mostly on cobbles and gravels covered with volcanic ash, and sandy soils. The parcel receives about 15 inches of precipitation annually, most as winter snow.

A mineral report has been prepared which determined that the potential for occurrence of any mineral resource is low. There are no mining claims on the parcel.

Some soil and rock would be removed during construction of structures, facilities, and amenities, which is typical for development. Other than displacement for construction, there would be no effects to the soil and geology on either parcel under either alternative.

There is no mineral activity on any of the parcels and low mineral potential; therefore, there would be no reason for the United States to reserve the mineral rights and not transfer them to the new owner. There would be no adverse effects from conveying the mineral estate with the surface estate for either of the parcels under either alternative.

Groundwater and Water Rights

The water table on the parcel is approximately 200 feet below the surface, based on the depths of nearby wells. The current quality of groundwater under both parcels is believed to be high, with low nitrate concentrations.

A review of the Oregon Department of Water Resources records shows that there are no water rights on the parcel.

Neither alternative would have any direct effect to groundwater water quality or quantity. There would be no water rights involved in the conveyance. Water for any new development including the new Ranger Station would be provided via the City of Sisters municipal water system.

There would be an indirect and cumulative effect on local groundwater caused by the increased draw on the community water system as development increases on the sold lands. The amount and significance of this is dependent on zoning and the level of development. Future developments would be required to conform to Oregon Department of Environmental Quality regulations and standards for water use and for water quality protection

Forest Plan Amendment

Alternatives 2 and 3 would require a Forest Plan Amendment. The lands proposed for sale and lands to be retained for a new Ranger Station are all currently allocated to Scenic Views (MA-9), and are part of a scenic corridor that runs along both sides of Highway 20 from Sisters to Indian Ford Road. The lands to be sold would be removed from the allocation land base altogether. The lands to be retained would have their allocation changed from Scenic Views to Administrative Site.

Factors to Consider

Timing – The Forest Plan has been in effect since 1989 and is scheduled for revision starting in 2007 and finishing in 2009. The proposed action would take place in the next two years before the plan is updated.

Location and Size – Approximately 80 acres would be affected in either action alternative. Approximately 68 acres would be permanently removed from the Scenic Views land base, and another 12 acres would be converted from Scenic Views to Administrative Site. 80 acres is approximately .005 percent of the 15,600 acres of Scenic Views allocation on the Sisters Ranger District, and approximately .05 percent of the 1505 acre Scenic Views corridor that runs from Sisters to Indian Ford Road.

Goals, Objectives, and Outputs – There would be no change in the long-term level of goods and services projected by the Forest Plan. Vegetation management and timber harvest has been limited in this corridor to that necessary to preserve safety for the traveling public, and to maintain the large ponderosa pine character of the view. The forest character of the 80 acres is already dominated by the surrounding urban setting and the development that already exists on the site. It is very different than the remaining corridor that begins outside the Sisters City limits.

Management Prescriptions – The amendment applies only to the selected alternative in this project area and would not apply to future decisions. The amendment does not alter the desired future condition of the Scenic Views corridor, nor does it change the anticipated goods and services to be produced. Future management options will be lost on the 68 acres that are permanently removed from Forest Service management.

Other Disclosures

Civil Rights and Environmental Justice

Government-to-government consultation with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs has occurred in the form of a scoping letter describing the project area and proposed action. The Tribes in their response noted that land sales result in a loss of ceded lands. In this case, the ceded lands were not available to the Tribes for any treaty uses or rights because of the development on the Admin Site. No other special concerns about Tribal resources were identified.

There are no known direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on Native Americans, minority groups, women, or civil rights beyond effects disclosed in the Deschutes LRMP.

Executive Order 12898 on environmental justice requires federal agencies to identify and address any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low income populations. For all alternatives, there would be no disproportionately high or adverse effects to minority or disadvantaged groups qualifying under the environmental justice order identified.

Congressionally Designated Areas

No old growth stands or Wild and Scenic Rivers would be adversely affected by the proposed activities. No significant irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources would occur under Alternative 2 (Proposed Action) or Alternative 3.

Prime Farm Land and Forest Lands

The Secretary of Agriculture issued memorandum 1827 which is intended to protect prime farm lands and rangelands. The project area does not contain any prime farmlands or rangelands. Prime forestland is not applicable to lands within the National Forest System. National Forest System lands would be managed with consideration of the impacts on adjacent private lands. There would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effects to these resources and thus are in compliance with the Farmland Protection Act and Departmental Regulation 9500-3, "Land Use Policy."

Compliance with Other Polices, Plans Jurisdictions

The alternatives are consistent with the goals, objectives and direction contained in the Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and accompanying Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision dated August 27, 1990 as amended by the Regional Forester's Forest Plan Amendment #2 (6/95) and Inland Native Fish Strategy, and as provided by the provisions of 36 CFR 219.35 (f) (2005), which address Management Indicator Species.

Implementation of Alternative 1 (No Action), Alternative 2 (Proposed Acton), or Alternative 3 would be consistent with relevant federal, state and local laws, regulations, and requirements designed for the protection of the environment including the Clean Air and Clean Water Act. Effects meet or exceed state water and air quality standards.

Irretrievable and Irreversible Commitment of Resources

NEPA requires that environmental analysis include identification of "...any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources which would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented." Irreversible and irretrievable resource commitments are related to the use of nonrenewable resources and the effects that the use of these resources have on future generations. No significant irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources would occur under Alternative 2 (Proposed Action) or Alternative 3.

- Irreversible: Those resources that have been lost forever, such as the extinction of a species or the removal of mined ore. The proposed activities would result in a transfer of forested lands from public to private ownership.
- Irretrievable: Those resources that are lost for a period of time, such as the temporary loss of timber productivity in forested areas that are kept clear for use as a power line rights-of way or road.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

The Forest Service consulted the following individuals, Federal, State, and local agencies, tribes and non-Forest Service persons during the development of this environmental assessment:

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