United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

United States Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project

Eastside Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Volume 1

May 1997

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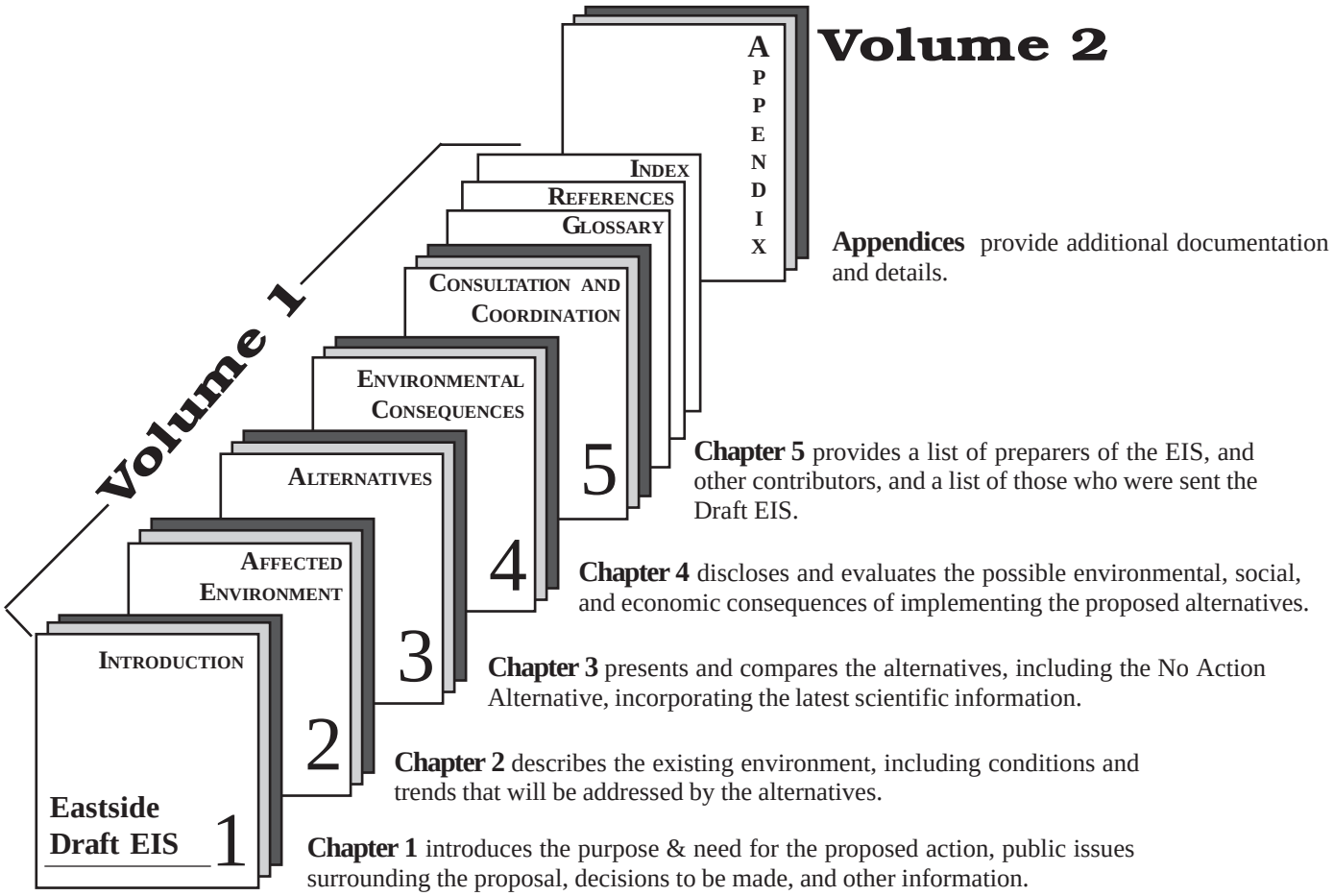
Organization of This Document



As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

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INTERIOR COLUMBIA BASIN ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT PROJECT

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Dear Reader,

We ask for your participation in the review of this Eastside Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS). It was prepared jointly with the Upper Columbia River Basin Draft Environmental Impact Statement, as part of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP).

The Preferred Alternative for the Draft EIS is Alternative 4; the reasons it was chosen are enclosed. Keep in mind that we are at the **draft** stage. A final decision will be recorded in a Record of Decision after full consideration of the comments received on the Draft EIS and the preparation of the Final EIS.

Public comments played an important role in shaping the issues and the alternatives. Numerous public meetings have been held throughout the planning process, which began in February 1994. Input has been received from individuals; interest groups; federal, state, and local agencies; and American Indian Tribes. This input, combined with science and management information, was used to construct the seven alternatives in this Draft EIS. Within these alternatives we have attempted to reflect the diverse and often conflicting desires of the public regarding how the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service implement their legal mandates on public land. We believe that with these alternatives, the stage is set for a full public discussion of future public land management within the project area.

Because of the complexity of this document and the large geographic scope covered by the Preferred Alternative, we have extended the comment period from the required 90 days to 120 days.

Your written comments will be most helpful if they are specific, mention particular pages or chapters where appropriate, and address one or more of the following:

- How well the Preferred Alternative meets the purpose and need statements,
- Which other alternative or parts of alternatives you would support or prefer and why,
- Items that need clarification, and
- New information that would have a bearing on the analysis.

We are particularly interested in receiving your comments on the following topics, with emphasis on how well the Preferred Alternative addresses them:

- How well do the anticipated levels of goods and services provide predictability and sustainability for area economies and communities?
- How well do the alternatives in the Draft EIS meet the reader's expectations for inclusion of a system of reserves or protected areas, and what are the scientific, social, and economic rationale for a different proposal?
- Do the alternatives provide an appropriate balance between the certainty provided by Draft EIS objectives and standards, and on-the-ground adaptive management accomplished through processes, such as site-specific project evaluations, Ecosystem Analysis at the Watershed Scale, and sub-basin review?

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- Do the alternatives appropriately balance ecological and social and economic needs?

- Do the alternatives establish an adequate framework for monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management?

Please send your comment letters to the ICBEMP EIS Team, 112 E. Poplar Street, P.O. Box 2076, Walla Walla, WA 99362. Comments received on the Draft EIS will become part of the administrative record, which is available for public review. We look forward to your comments on the Draft EIS.
Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

JEFF D. BLACKWOOD
Project Manager
Walla Walla, Washington

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Eastside

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

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USDI Bureau of Land Management, Oregon and Washington

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Abstract

The Forest Service (Department of Agriculture) and Bureau of Land Management (Department of Interior) propose to develop and implement a scientifically sound, ecosystem-based management strategy for lands they administer in eastern Oregon and Washington. A new strategy is proposed to meet dual needs of restoring and maintaining ecosystem health while sustaining a flow of goods and services from these lands to support people's needs. Two *no action* alternatives, which would not meet these needs, were analyzed. Alternative 1 (the No Action alternative) continues current management under existing approved plans. Alternative 2 (modified No Action alternative) proposes no change to current management plans except to replace interim strategies known as PACFISH, INFISH, and Eastside screens, with long-term direction. Five management alternatives (*action alternatives*) were developed and analyzed to meet the dual needs of the proposed action. Alternative 3 minimizes changes to local plans addressing only priority conditions that most hinder effectiveness or legal conditions while providing a more consistent and coordinated management approach. Alternative 4 aggressively restores ecosystem health through active management using an integrated ecosystem management approach. Alternative 5 emphasizes production of goods and services at a regional level consistent with ecosystem management principles. Alternative 6 emphasizes an adaptive management approach based on monitoring, evaluation, and scientific findings. Alternative 7 emphasizes reducing short-term risks to ecological integrity and species viability by establishing a system of reserves on federal lands. In general, Alternatives 4 and 6 would be most effective in transitioning toward healthy ecosystems in the long term; Alternatives 3, 5, and 7 moderately effective; and Alternatives 1 and 2 would be least effective. In the short term Alternative 1 would provide highest levels of commodity values; Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 moderate levels; and Alternative 6 and 7 low (in the long term, Alternatives 4 and 6 would increase; 1, 2, and 5 would decrease; 3 and 7 would remain stable). Alternatives 4 and 6 would provide high levels of amenity values in the long term, moderate levels for Alternative 7, and Alternatives 1 and 2 would actually result in a long-term decline of amenity values. The selected alternative will best achieve a combination of the following: restoring long-term ecosystem health and ecological integrity, supporting people's economic and/or social needs, providing consistent direction to federal managers within a broad ecological context, and emphasizing adaptive management over the long term. Mitigation of adverse effects has been incorporated into the Preferred Alternative. Monitoring, determined to be an important part of adaptive management, is outlined in the Implementation Framework appendix.

Comments on the Draft EIS should be received no later than 120 days after the notice of availability of the EIS is published in the *Federal Register*. Comments should be sent to:

ICBEMP EIS Team
112 E. Poplar St.
P.O. Box 2076
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