Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Noxious Weed Treatments

DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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Abstract: This supplement to the 1999 Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Noxious Weed Treatments Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) summarizes recent noxious and invasive weed inventories for the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, and analyzes the effects of making minor modifications to the existing noxious and invasive weed management strategy.

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Introduction

The occurrence of noxious/invasive weeds within the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness (FC-RONRW) is a significant concern to managers and wilderness users due to the potential adverse ecological effects of these weed species. Many weed species have been present within the FC-RONRW for numerous years with spotted knapweed identified along the Salmon River corridor in the late 1970's.

The problem of noxious weeds and nonnative invasive species threatens every aspect of ecosystem health and productivity, in forests and on rangelands, on public lands and private lands (USDA Forest Service, 1998). Many exotic plants are aggressive and can invade new areas at an alarming rate because of explosive seed production and physiological adaptations to disturbed or droughty sites. Aggressive invasive species such as rush skeletonweed and spotted knapweed are capable of out-competing native plants and altering ecosystem conditions and processes. These weed species currently dominate many sites in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness affecting native wildlife and plant species (Refer to map in Appendix A).

In 1999, the Forest Supervisors of the Bitterroot, Payette, Nez Perce and Salmon-Challis National Forests signed a Record of Decision (ROD) to implement their selected alternative for noxious/invasive weed management (alt. 2) as described in the FC-RONRW Noxious Weed Treatments Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), August 1999. This selected alternative for integrated weed management includes inventory, prevention, treatment, monitoring and restoration activities and specifically analyzes the effects of these practices on the environment.

The 1999 Record of Decision specifies that noxious/invasive weed treatments will take place on 300 sites beginning in 1999 and continuing until the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement is completed. The analysis does not specifically address how, where or when non-treatment noxious/invasive weed management practices will occur. These components were to be addressed later in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement.

This Supplement to the 1999 Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Noxious Weed Treatments Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) will 1) assess conditions that may have changed since the 1999 EIS was approved, 2) describe the integration of non-treatment noxious/invasive weed management practices with treatment practices and 3) analyze proposed modifications to the existing weed management strategy described in the 1999 EIS.