

# Chapter 3 - Existing Condition

## Introduction

The conditions associated with invasive weeds, cultural resources, fisheries, recreation, vegetation susceptible to noxious weeds, threatened, endangered, and sensitive plant and wildlife species, and other wildlife species remain primarily unchanged since 1999. A description of the existing conditions can be found in the 1999 EIS, pages 31-57. Changed conditions since 1999 are described in this chapter.

## Noxious and Invasive Weeds

The 1999 FC-RONRW Noxious Weed Treatment EIS identified 1,775 acres of known noxious/invasive weed infestations within approximately 293 inventoried sites. Since this time, the number of inventoried weed infested acres and sites have increased due in part to favorable weed habitat resulting from wildfire, and also completion of more thorough inventories. Inventories have identified 4,222 acres of noxious weeds within the FC-RONRW (Refer to map in Appendix A and Tables Appendix B). Because of the sheer size of this wilderness and the difficulty of conducting inventories, managers believe there are even more undetected weed infested sites within the wilderness.

Favorable conditions for noxious/invasive weeds within the FC-RONRW continue to increase due in part to large wildfires. In the year 2000 alone, over 435,000 wilderness acres were burned by wildfires. Many of these sites were considered high intensity burns. Following wildfire, especially areas burned with high intensity, the potential for noxious/invasive weed invasion increases (Asher, Dewy, Olivarez, 2001). Weed managers within the FC-RONRW have observed significant spread of noxious/invasive weeds into burned areas, especially in areas adjacent to existing weed sites.

Weed detection and inventory remains an important component of integrated weed management in the FC-RONRW. As a result of new surveys, the noxious/invasive weed inventory database continues to be revised and enlarged (Refer to map in Appendix A and Table in Appendix B). The following Table is a summary of current inventory information regarding the major noxious/invasive weeds within the FC-RONRW. For a complete list of the 2002 weed inventory refer to Appendix B.

**Table 3.1 Inventory of Major Noxious/invasive Weeds Within the FC-RONRW**

Noxious/invasive Weed Species	1999 Inventory Sites	1999 Inventory Acres	Inventory 2002 Sites <i>(As of Sept 1, 2002)</i>	Inventory 2002 Acres <i>(As of Sept 1, 2002)</i>
Spotted knapweed	216	510	276	1,311
Rush skeletonweed	79	170	140	2,865
Sulfur cinquefoil**	38	800		

*\*\* Sulfur cinquefoil, though not officially designated as a "Noxious" weed in the State of Idaho, has become established on hundreds of acres within the FC-RONRW. It has become widespread within the FC-RONRW and formal inventory records have not consistently been kept.*

In addition to established species of noxious/invasive weeds in the FC-RONRW, invasive species not previously known to occur in the wilderness have been detected in or adjacent to the wilderness. Leafy spurge is a noxious weed that is very difficult to control once it becomes established. Leafy spurge is now known to occur on private lands adjacent to the wilderness and can easily move downstream by way of the Main and Middle Forks of the Salmon River. Hoary alyssum (*Berteroa incana*) is another invasive species recently detected within the FC-RONRW on the Middle Fork and Main Salmon River.

## **Cultural Resources**

Conditions associated with Cultural Resources in respect to the management of noxious and invasive weeds have not changed significantly since 1999. A description of the existing conditions for Cultural Resources can be found in the 1999 EIS, pages 46-47.

## **Fisheries**

Habitat conditions for fisheries have not changed significantly since the 1999 EIS. The 1999 EIS, page 47, concludes that fisheries habitat within the FCRONR Wilderness is in natural or near natural conditions.

Current management of fisheries habitat is similar to fisheries management described in the 1999 EIS. One specific change in the management of fisheries/aquatic resources is the designation of streams identified as having “limited” water quality [303(d)]. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the states maintain a listing (303(d) list) of water bodies believed to be water quality limited.

Twelve stream segments on eleven streams within the FC-RONRW have been designated as 303(d) water bodies (Appendix L). Primary concerns within these specific 303(d) listed streams are elevated levels of sedimentation. Natural sediment-producing events most commonly occur following stand replacement forest fires and high intensity storms. These impacts are generally short-term, and over time are self-correcting.

The Forests of the FC-RONRW utilize Management Indicator Species (MIS) to quantify effects of management actions on forest habitats and fish and wildlife species. MIS are key species identified to represent selected habitats. They are used to detect changes in habitat conditions, major habitat components, economically or socially important species, ecological indicators, and monitoring capability. There have been changes made to the list of MIS with respect to the fisheries within FC-RONRW since the 1999 EIS. Table 3.2 illustrates the fisheries MIS by Forest for both 1999 and 2004. The Bitterroot and Nez Perce National Forests have no changes to their fish MIS list. The Boise, Payette and Salmon-Challis National Forests have amended their lists to identify the Bull Trout as the only MIS for aquatic systems on those Forests.

**Table 3.2 Management Indicator Fish/Aquatic Species by Forest and Year**

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<b>National Forest</b>	<b>1999 Fish MIS List</b>	<b>2004 Fish MIS List</b>
Bitterroot	Westslope Cutthroat Trout	Westslope Cutthroat Trout
Boise	Chinook Salmon, Steelhead, Redband Rainbow Trout (Cascade RD only – Bull Trout)	Bull Trout (2003 Forest Plan Revision)
Nez Perce	Westslope Cutthroat Trout; Spring Chinook Salmon; Summer Steelhead	Westslope Cutthroat Trout; Spring Chinook Salmon; Summer Steelhead
Payette	Chinook Salmon, Steelhead, Bull Trout, Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Redband Rainbow Trout	Bull Trout (2003 Forest Plan Revision)
Salmon	Salmon and Steelhead; Trout; Aquatic Macroinvertebrates	Bull Trout (2004 Forest Plan Amendment)
Challis	Anadromous Fish; Resident Fish; Aquatic Macroinvertebrates	Bull Trout (2004 Forest Plan Amendment)

## Recreation

Conditions associated with Recreation Resources in respect to the management of noxious and invasive weeds have not changed significantly since 1999. A description of the existing conditions for Recreation Resources can be found in the 1999 EIS, pages 48-49.

## Vegetation (Susceptible to Invasive Weeds)

A key environmental component influencing the potential invasion and expansion of invasive plants is type and integrity of plant communities. Plant communities within the FC-RONRW are described in the 1999 EIS, page 49-50. Plant community diversity has not changed significantly since 1999. Large wildfires within the wilderness since 1999 have resulted in site conditions that favor the establishment of invasive plants. This is especially true in areas that burned with greater intensity and burned areas that are in close proximity to existing weed infestations.

### Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Plant Species

The 1999 EIS, pages 50-51, addresses three federally listed “threatened” plant species, Macfarlane’s four o’clock (*Mirabilis macfarlanei*), water howellia (*Howellia aquatilis*) and Ute ladies’-tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) which were thought to have potential habitat in the FC-RONRW. Numerous surveys conducted for water howellia (*Howellia aquatilis*) and Ute ladies’-tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) on the Nez Perce and Payette National Forests found no habitat for these plants. As the result of these plant surveys, USFWS no longer requires formal analysis and consultation for these two species. Habitat for howellia (*Howellia aquatilis*) and Ute ladies’-tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) has not been identified on the Bitterroot or Salmon-Challis. Neither species requires consultation with the USFWS.

Since 1999, one new threatened plant species, Spalding silene (*Silene spaldingii*) and one candidate species slender moonwort (*Botrychium lineare*) were added to the Nez Perce and Payette National Forests sensitive species list requiring consideration or consultation with the USFWS. Neither plant was added to the Bitterroot or Salmon-Challis National Forest list as no known habitat occurs in these areas.

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The 1999 EIS, page 54, identifies twenty sensitive plant species potentially found within the FC-RONRW and describes habitat conditions for these species. Four sensitive species, Payson's milkvetch (*Astragalus paysonii*), Bank monkeyflower (*Mimulus clivicola*), Lemhi penstemon (*Penstemon lemhiensis*) and Puzzling halimolobos (*Halimolobos perplexa* var. *perplexa* and var. *lemhiensis*), are identified as occurring within or near weed infestations.

Currently, twenty-eight sensitive or proposed sensitive plant species occur within the FC-RONRW, three of the additional eight sensitive species are known to occur within or near weed infestations to be treated. The three additional sensitive or proposed sensitive plants found within or near weed infestations are:

- Davis stickseed (*Hackelia davisii*) with occupied habitat in the Middle Fork of the Salmon River,
- Pored lungwort (*Lobaria scrobiculata*) with occupied habitat on the Main Salmon River and,
- Borsch's stonecrop (*Sedum borschii*) with occupied habitat on the Main Salmon.

Table 3.3 briefly describes the habitat for the eight additional sensitive plant species found in the FC-RONRW since 1999.

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**Table 3.3 Additional sensitive and proposed sensitive plant species found in the FC-RONRW since the 1999 EIS.**

Species Name (known to occur or with potential habitat in FC-RONRW)	Habitat or Plants Present in Treatment areas	Geographic Distribution	Habitat or Community Type	Elevation (ft)	Succession Stage	Phenology
1. <i>Astragalus vexilliflexus</i> var. <i>vexilliflexus</i> Bent flowered milkvetch	No	Disjunct	Openings in subalpine forests.	7,000-9,000 in Idaho	Early-mid	Flowers late June to August
2. <i>Botrychium simplex</i> Least Moonwort	No	Circumboreal	Shaded moist sites under various conifers; dry to moist meadows.	1,500-6,000	mid-late	Leaves June - August
3. <i>Hackelia davisii</i> Davis stickseed	Yes	Local endemic	Shady cool rock and cliffs in river canyons	1,000-2,000	Early-mid	Flowers April -June
4. <i>Helodium blandowii</i> Blandow's helodium moss	No	Circumboreal	Wetlands and riparian area.	4,000-7,300	Late	NA
5. <i>Lewisia kelloggii</i> Kellogg's bitterroot	No	Regional Endemic	Rock outcrops and decomposed granitics.	4,000- 8,000	Early-mid	April - July
6. <i>Lobaria scrobiculata</i> Pored lingwort	Yes	Circumboreal	Forest understory on rocks and moss in moist areas	600-1750	mid-late	NA
7. <i>Ribes wolfii</i> Wolf's currant	No	Disjunct	Forest understory in moist area	3,000-7,000	mid-late	Flowers May- July
8. <i>Sedum borschii</i> Borsch's stomecrop	Yes	Sparsely distributed	Rock talus and scree	2,000-5,000	mid-late	Flowers April-July

## Wildlife Including Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species

Habitat conditions for wildlife have not changed significantly since the 1999 EIS. The 1999 EIS, page 55, concludes wildlife habitat remains in a near pristine state.

Federally listed and forest designated sensitive species with habitat within the FC-RONRW remain the same as those listed in the 1999 EIS, except that lynx was proposed for federal listing in 1999 and is now listed as a threatened species, and peregrine falcons are now considered sensitive species, rather than threatened (USFWS, 2003). In addition, populations of gray wolf, designated as “experimental, non essential” continue to increase within the wilderness.

The existing habitat condition for wildlife has remained relatively stable since the 1999 EIS. Large wild fires during the years 2000 – 2003 have altered structural and spatial wildlife habitat components in some areas of the wilderness. In the year 2000 alone, over 435,000 acres within the FC-RONRW was burned by wild fire.

The Forests of the FC-RONRW utilize Management Indicator Species (MIS) to quantify effects of management actions on forest habitats and fish and wildlife species. MIS are key species identified to represent selected habitats. They are used to detect changes in habitat conditions, major habitat components, economically or socially important species, ecological indicators, and monitoring capability. There have been changes made to the list of MIS with respect to wildlife within FC-RONRW since the 1999 EIS. Table 3.4 illustrates the wildlife MIS by Forest for both 1999 and 2004. The Bitterroot and Nez Perce National Forests have no changes to their wildlife MIS list.

**Table 3.4 Management Indicator Wildlife Species by Forest and Year**

<b>National Forest</b>	<b>1999 Wildlife MIS List</b>	<b>2004 Wildlife MIS List</b>
Bitterroot	Pine Marten, Pileated Woodpecker, Elk	Pine Marten, Pileated Woodpecker, Elk
Boise	Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow Warbler, Mountain Chickadee, Mule Deer/Elk Meadow Vole, Red-backed Vole	Pileated Woodpecker Whiteheaded Woodpecker (2003 Forest Plan Revision)
Nez Perce	Pileated Woodpecker, Elk, Bighorn sheep Shira's moose, Goshawk, Fisher, Pine marten Wolf, Grizzly, Bald eagle, Peregrine falcon	Pileated Woodpecker, Elk, Bighorn sheep Shira's moose, Goshawk, Fisher, Pine marten Wolf, Grizzly, Bald eagle, Peregrine falcon
Payette	Pileated Woodpecker, Vesper Sparrow Williamson Sapsucker Elk	Pileated Woodpecker Whiteheaded Woodpecker (2003 Forest Plan Revision)
Salmon	Elk, Mule Deer, Bighorn Sheep, Mountain Goat, Pine Marten Pileated Woodpecker, Vesper Sparrow Yellow Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pygmy Nuthatch Brown Creeper, Mountain Bluebird	Spotted frog, Pileated Woodpecker Sagegrouse (2004 Forest Plan Ammendment)
Challis	Elk, Mule Deer, Bighorn Sheep Mountain Goat, Red Squirrel	Spotted frog, Pileated Woodpecker Sagegrouse (2004 Forest Plan Ammendment)