Lower Salmon River ACEC Acquisitions

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Cottonwood Field Office, Idaho
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BLM

It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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Cover Photo by Craig Johnson, BLM Cottonwood Field Office (June 5, 2010)

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Cottonwood Field Office, is proposing to acquire lands in the scenic Lower Salmon River canyon and to purchase conservation easements on adjacent parcels. The lands are in Idaho County, Idaho, approximately five miles downriver of the White Bird Creek confluence with the Salmon River (see Attachment, **Map 1**). This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations, to determine potential environmental consequences associated with purchasing land for management as part of the Lower Salmon River Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

1.1 Purpose and Need

The Cottonwood Resource Management Plan (RMP) designated the Lower Salmon River ACEC to include all BLM land contiguous to the Salmon River from White Bird Creek to the mouth of the Salmon River (BLM, 2009). The RMP specifically places a high priority in acquiring non-federal lands or interests in lands adjacent to the Salmon River to provide long-term protection of important resource values and to enhance public access. The purchases would use annually appropriated Land and Water Conservation funds or other authorities available to the BLM. Timely action is needed due to the current availability and potential public sale of private lands that border the ACEC from a willing landowner. The proposed acquisitions would expand public ownership and uses in the largely undeveloped, remote canyon, while allowing current land uses to remain intact. Purposes of the proposed acquisitions are to enhance BLM's management of the Lower Salmon River corridor as part of the ACEC, to conserve and protect important recreational, visual, endangered plant species habitat, cultural and natural resources. The corridor is also managed by the BLM as a Scenic Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) to protect its identified outstanding remarkable values and free-flowing condition.

1.2 Relationship to Laws, Policies and Land Use Plans

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965 was established by Congress to conserve land and wetlands for future generations. The Act designated up to $900 million annually from a portion of the royalties from offshore oil and gas leases be deposited into the U.S. Treasury. Congress appropriates the funds for federal, state and local conservation, as well as for the protection of our national treasures. BLM LWCF acquisitions are authorized by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA, 43 USC 1715), as amended. FLPMA Section 205(a) provides authority for the Secretary of the Interior to acquire lands or interests therein by purchase, exchange, donation, or eminent domain, and Section 205(b) further requires an acquisition be consistent with the mission of the department and with applicable land use plans.

The lower 53-miles of the Salmon River and adjacent BLM corridor lands are proposed for designation by Congress under the Wild and Scenic River Act (W&SR) as a scenic segment. However this action does not include any attempt to finalize the W&SR designation by Congress. To fulfill obligations under Section 5(d)(1) of the Act and protect the remarkable values of the river and adjacent corridor lands, BLM proposes to manage the acquired lands as part of the ACEC.

1.2.1 BLM Land Use Plan Conformance

The proposed action is in conformance with the Record of Decision and Approved Cottonwood Resource Management Plan, as it was approved on December 21, 2009 (BLM, 2009). As described and analyzed in this EA, the proposed acquisitions are consistent with the following decisions from the RMP specific to management of the Lower Salmon River ACEC and Scenic SRMA.

Table 1.2.1: Cottonwood RMP Conformance

RMP Reference	Citation from 2009 Approved Cottonwood RMP	EA section
Lands (LR), p. 49	**Action LR-1.1.1**—Utilize land exchange, purchase, and donation to acquire land, or interest in land, with high public resource values and to consolidate public landownership.	1.1 2.1, 2.2
Lands (LR), p. 49	**Action LR-1.1.3—**Manage acquired lands or interests in lands in a manner consistent with adjacent or nearby public lands, or manage them for the purposes for which they were acquired.	1.1 2.1
ACEC (AR), p. 53	**Action AR-1.9.2—**A high priority should be placed on acquiring non federal lands or interests in lands adjacent to the Salmon River to provide long-term protection of important resource values and enhance public access and use of the area.	1.1 2.1 3.2.1
ACEC (AR), p. 53 Map 15	**Objective AR-1.9—**Protect and conserve scenic values, cultural resources, special status species, important wildlife habitats, and other ecological resources by designating Lower Salmon River ACEC (13,855 acres)	1.1 2.1 3.2
Wild and Scenic Rivers (WR), p. 54	**Action WR-1.1.2---**Continue land acquisition and conservation easement acquisitions along the Lower Salmon River.	1.2 3.2.1
Recreation (RC), p. 41 Map 13	**Action RC-1.2.1**—Designate and manage Salmon River Scenic SRMA (14,004 acres) as a destination recreation-tourism market… in a largely undeveloped, rugged, remote river canyon setting.	2.1 3.2.2
Recreation (RC), p. 41	**Action RC-1.2.1.6**—Continue to implement the Salmon River Scenic SRMA Activity Plan.	2.1, 2.2 3.2.2
Vegetation/Habitat (VN), p. 23	**Objective VN-1.1—**In perennial plant communities, maintain existing native plants and manage desirable	3.2.3

RMP Reference	Citation from 2009 Approved Cottonwood RMP	EA section
	nonnative plants for diversity, production, soil stability and nutrient cycling.	
ACEC Weeds (AR), p. 53	**Action AR-1.9.4—**Assign high priority for control of undesirable nonnative vegetation utilizing integrated pest management. Vegetation treatments will support long-term improvement of ecological condition and minimize or avoid adverse impacts on aquatic and wildlife habitats. **Action AR-1.9.2—**Weed-control activities will have implementation and effectiveness monitoring conducted. Minimize or avoid land uses that cause adverse impact on listed plant populations.	2.1, 2.2 3.2.4 3.2.5
ACEC Special Status Plants (AR), p. 53	**Action AR-1.9.3—**A high priority is assigned for continued systematic botanical inventory of suitable habitat for federally listed and Idaho BLM sensitive plants.	2.1 3.2.5
Aquatic Resources, Fish and Special Status Fish (AF), p.29	**Action AF-1.1.6—**To promote conservation and restoration for special status fish, where applicable: (1) support conservation easements that protect or conserve special status fish habitat; (2) land acquisitions or exchanges that promote improved management for special status fish; and (3) cooperative planning efforts that promote conservation and restoration for special status fish.	2.1 2.2 3.2.6
Wildlife Habitat (WS), p. 26, p. 28	**Action WS-1.5.5-**Promote sensitive species conservation through land tenure adjustments, conservation easements, restoration projects, and cooperative planning. **Action WS-1.8.5—**Because of the BLM's mixed or limited amounts of ownership in many areas; pursue and prioritize management efforts that maintain high quality or improve: wildlife habitat, travel corridors, habitat connectivity, and wildlife security with partners, Tribes, state agencies, federal agencies, and private landowners.	1.1 3.2.7
Livestock Grazing (LG), p. 38	**Action LG-1.1.7—**When lands are acquired into public ownership, they may be included in the grazing allotment base and grazing may be authorized if it is compatible with other resources and uses.	2.1 3.2.8
ACEC Cultural Resources	**Objective AR-1.9—**Protect and conserve … cultural resources … by designating Lower Salmon River ACEC (13,855 acres).	2.1 3.2.9
Social and Economic Conditions (SE), p. 56	**Objective SE-1.1—**Develop sustainable land uses and management strategies that contribute to the social and economic well being of local communities and the nation.	2.1 3.2.10

1.2.2 Consistency with Non-BLM Authorities

The proposed action is further consistent with other Federal, State and local land use policies and plans to the maximum extent possible. The following table identifies elements of the human environment that are regulated by a statutory or regulatory authority that would be affected and are analyzed in chapter 3 of this EA, as well as those that BLM determined would not be affected.

Table 1.2.2. Interdisciplinary Team Review of Statutory Authorities

ELEMENT/RESOURCE	Affected?	Comment
Air Quality	No	No actions are proposed that affect air quality.
Area of Critical Environmental Concern (FLPMA)	Yes	See section 3.2.1 for a discussion of impacts of acquiring the lands/interests for management as part of the Lower Salmon River ACEC.
Cultural Resources (National Historic Preservation Act)	Maybe	There is potential for sites on the proposed fee and easement lands to contribute to the National Register of Historic Places. See section 3.2.9.
Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)	No	There are no minority or low income populations that would be disproportionately affected by the proposed action.
Farm Land -Prime/Unique	No	No prime or unique farm land is in the project area.
Floodplains (EO 11988, as amended, May 24, 1977)	No	Lands/interests proposed for acquisition are not located in the floodplain of the Salmon River.
Human Health & Safety	No	The proposed acquisitions do not involve any actions that pose a risk.
Migratory Birds (EO 13184, January 10, 2001)	Yes	See section 3.2.7. Long term management of the acquisitions would be beneficial to conservation of migratory bird habitat.
Native American Concerns	No	See Chapter 4, Consultation and Coordination. No concerns have been identified by the Nez Perce Tribe.
Non-Native Invasive and Noxious Species	Maybe	Future management of acquired lands may include actions to prevent the spread of weeds. See section 3.3.4.
Threatened or Endangered Species (Endangered Species Act)	Yes	See sections 3.2.5 (Special Status Plants), and 3.2.8 (Special Status Fish).

ELEMENT/RESOURCE	Affected?	Comment
Water Quality (Surface/Ground)	Yes	Perennial and intermittent Salmon River tributary streams flow through proposed acquisition lands. See section 3.2.6, Aquatic Habitat and Special Status Species. Livestock grazing on fee lands may affect water quality.
Wastes, Hazardous/Solid	No	A Pre-Acquisition Liability Survey (BLM 2011b) revealed no evidence of hazardous substances, petroleum products, or environmental conditions, and concluded the parcels are suitable for fee acquisition.
Wetlands, Riparian Zones	Maybe	See section 3.2.3 on Vegetation, including riparian zones.
Wild and Scenic Rivers (W&SR)	Yes	See section 3.2.1. Future management of acquired lands as part of the Lower Salmon River ACEC would be consistent with protecting the remarkable values of the river.
Wilderness	No	No Wilderness/Study Areas are in the vicinity.

2 ALTERNATIVES

This chapter describes the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives. It also describes alternatives that BLM considered but eliminated from further analysis in this EA.

2.1 Proposed Action

Using LWCF, the BLM is proposing to execute a fee purchase acquisition of parcels of land totaling 479.21 acres from a willing owner in 2011. BLM also proposes to seek funding in future years to purchase conservation easements on several adjacent parcels totaling up to 3,320 acres. The lands are located in Salmon River canyon in Idaho County, Idaho (see **Map 2**). All of the parcels are in Township 29 North, Range 1 East, Boise Meridian. Following acquisition, the lands would be managed to meet objectives of the Lower Salmon River ACEC and SRMA.

2.1.1 Fee Title Acquisition

The BLM plans to purchase land in fee at fair market value from Heckman Ranches Inc., based upon a Federal appraisal. The parcels to be acquired and are legally and generally described as follows:

Table 2.1.1. Proposed Fee Acquisition Parcels

T.29N, R.1E, Section	Portion of Section	Acres	Description
14	Lot 9 W½NW¼ NW¼SW ¼	39.21 80.00 40.00	The northern 159.21 acre parcel in section 14 has Sharkey Creek and two intermittent streams that flow into the Salmon River.
27	NE¼NE¼ SW¼NE¼ W½SE¼	40.00 40.00 80.00	McCulley Creek flows through the middle 160 acre parcel in section 27, and includes adjacent Salmon River face drainage lands.
34	N½NW¼ SE¼NW¼ NE¼SW¼	80.00 40.00 40.00	The southern 160 acre parcel in section 34 includes Shorty Canyon that has a creek running through it.
	Total Acquisition	479.21	

After acquisition, the lands will be managed as part of the Lower Salmon River ACEC and Scenic SRMA. The size of the ACEC and SRMA would increase to include the newly acquired public land. The parcels to be acquired also border the BLM Wildcat Creek Allotment, which is comprised of 1,294 acres and is leased by Heckman Ranches, Inc. for grazing cattle. The fee title lands would also be added to the current lease that expires in 2013. Upon acquisition, BLM would continue to allow grazing on the acquired lands, in accordance with the current lease, until information for renewing the lease is evaluated and a grazing decision is issued.

Figure 1 - Wildcat Creek drainage. Proposed fee title lands are on the bench above the toe slope (left side), and areas upslope are included in the proposed conservation easement. (BLM Photo taken by Craig Johnson on June 6, 2010.)

Environmental Design and Resource Protection Features

Following acquisition, BLM would integrate and manage the lands in accordance with the Cottonwood RMP (BLM, 2009), in a manner consistent with the adjacent public lands, as part of the Lower Salmon River ACEC (13,855 acres) and Scenic SRMA. Maps of the ACEC and the activity plan for the Scenic SRMA (BLM, 1991 and 1998) would be updated as necessary to include the lands acquired in fee. Management activities in the ACEC would continue to protect and conserve scenic values, cultural resources, special status species, and other ecological resources. Management of the SRMA would continue to provide for river based recreational opportunities.

BLM would be responsible for compliance with any local, state or federal laws or regulations that may apply to any proposed activity or use of the fee land in the ACEC, Scenic SRMA and Wildcat Creek Allotment. Applicable federal authorities include, but are not limited to, the FLPMA, Noxious Weed Control Act, ESA, and NHPA. Livestock use would be administered in accordance with BLM grazing regulations found at 43 CFR part 4100, and renewal of the lease would include completion of special status species and cultural resource inventories and ESA and NHPA consultations.

Monitoring

Following incorporation of the fee title lands into the Lower Salmon River ACEC, BLM would continuously monitor and periodically evaluate area-specific conditions to ensure resource management objectives established for the ACEC by the Cottonwood RMP, Scenic SRMA Activity Plan, and the Wildcat Creek Allotment grazing lease are being met.

2.1.2 Conservation Easement

The parcels of land for which BLM would seek funding in future years to purchase conservation easements are also located in sections of T. 29 N., R. 1 E, and total up to 3,320 acres. The cost of the easement would be determined at the time of purchase using a Federal Appraiser. Each stage would require separate approval from the BLM Washington Office granting additional funding.

Table 2.1.2 -- Proposed Conservation Easement Parcels

T.29N, R.1E, Section	Acres
4	480
9	320
10	400
15	640
22	640
27	520
28	320
Total Acres	**3,320**

The conservation easement would include both rights reserved to the Property Owner and appropriate development restrictions to protect important resource values. The Property Owner would retain the exclusive right to occupy, possess and use the Property consistent with all historical and traditional uses and the conservation purposes of the easement. Construction of new dwellings, structures or roads would be restricted in all sections *except Section 4* (see **Map 3)**. In exercising any of the rights reserved, it would be the Property Owners' responsibility to comply with any local, state or federal law or regulation that may apply to such activity or use.

Rights reserved to the Property Owner generally include:

1. Use of all existing buildings, roads, airstrips, water systems, stock ponds, trails, and other improvements.

2. Use of the Property for general livestock ranching and agriculture, without exceeding historical livestock stocking rates.

3. Use of approved methods of noxious weed control.

4. Use of Property for recreation, commercial outfitting, dude ranching, game ranching, and/or leasing of hunting and fishing privileges.

5. Performing ordinary maintenance on all existing buildings and other improvements such as fences, trails, roads, airstrips, stock ponds, bridges, etc., together with the right to replace existing improvements after obtaining written concurrence from the BLM.

6. Maintenance and improvement existing roads on the Property, and to relocate the main access road to a home site (see **Map 3**) in a manner that will result in no new or minimal visual impacts when viewed from the Lower Salmon River.

7. Pumping or diversion of water authorized by existing appropriated water rights.

Resource Protection

Consistent with management of public lands in the ACEC and SRMA, the easement(s) would be purchased to protect the viewshed of the Lower Salmon River corridor along with protecting the natural habitat of native plants, animal species, and watershed resources. Also summarized below are rights that BLM would be granted in the conservation easement to protect important resource values. Rights of the BLM would not affect, without the owner's consent, any use regularly exercised prior to the acquisition of the easement.

1. The BLM would have the right to enter the Property to perform such erosion prevention, restoration, or improvement projects deemed necessary to protect, restore, or enhance the values for which the Property is being protected, provided that any such projects shall be jointly designed and agreed upon by both the Property Owner and the BLM.

2. The BLM would have the right to enter the Property to conduct surveys and inspections, and prepare documentation as necessary to administer the provisions of the easement. The BLM is authorized, but not obligated, to survey or otherwise delineate boundaries of the property. The BLM would not enter any structures or personal property without the permission of the Property Owner.

The easement includes restrictions on some activities and uses that would require *prior written approva*l from the BLM. The non-listing of a particular use or activity in restrictions would not be construed to allow such uses unless rights have been expressly reserved to the Property Owner, or it clearly complies with the purpose of the easement. Restrictions include:

1. No placement or construction of new dwellings, structures or roads of any kind, except as depicted for the Section 4 parcel on **Map 3**.

2. To protect the scenic views along the Lower Salmon River, construction of new improvements or modification or replacement of existing improvements must utilize materials and colors that blend in with the surrounding terrain and vegetation.

3. No placement of signs, billboards, outdoor advertising structures, advertising of any kind or nature, or use of paint to mark the property line, except temporary "No Trespassing" or "No Hunting signs" placed no closer than 600 feet apart and hung on posts. The sign exception shall be displayed during big game and upland bird hunting seasons only or as otherwise authorized, in writing, by the Authorized Officer. The post exception shall be permanently set and painted to match the surrounding landscape or vegetation. The purpose of the exception is to place signs that are designed to protect the interests of the land owner in a manner which conforms with the purposes of this easement while meeting the requirements of state law.

4. No pumping, diversion or removal of water from tributary streams to the Salmon River except: (1) as previously authorized by existing valid appropriated water rights, (2) for the temporary pumping or diversion of water in the case of a bona fide emergency such as a fire, and (3) watering of livestock in a manner that has customarily and historically occurred.

5. Forest management activities would be conducted consistent with the purposes of the conservation easement and in accordance with an approved Forest Management Plan. The term "Forest Management Activities" shall mean all forest management practices including the harvesting and removal of any and all forest products by any and all current and future harvesting and removal techniques. These activities require a Forest Management Plan prepared by a professional forester be approved in writing by the BLM.

6. Commercial use, other than historic uses such as livestock grazing, unless such use is authorized in a separate agreement between the BLM and land owner.

Monitoring

BLM would conduct annual visual inspections from the Salmon River, and periodically visit the easement (every 5 years) to confirm compliance with the conservation easement and other applicable local, state and federal laws. Any non-compliance could result in a formal notice to the land owner for correction and possible legal action.

2.2 No Action

The BLM would not acquire the fee land or interest in the described properties. They would remain in private ownership and would not be managed as part of the Lower Salmon River ACEC and Scenic SRMA. The LWCF would be used on other project(s), in accordance with the ranking criteria established by the BLM Washington Office.

2.3 Alternatives Eliminated from Further Analysis

This section describes alternatives considered and the reasons BLM eliminated the alternative from analysis in the next chapter of this EA.

2.3.1 No Livestock Grazing on Fee Title Lands

The BLM considered an alternative suggested during public scoping that would allow for the completion of the fee title acquisition, but not allow grazing to continue as part of the Wildcat Creek Allotment. BLM eliminated analysis of this alternative in *this* EA because the Cottonwood RMP objective for Livestock Grazing provides for lands acquired into public ownership to be included in the grazing allotment base if it is compatible with other resources and uses (Objective LG-1.1.9, page 38). Upon acquisition, the Proposed Action alternative would allow grazing of the parcels by the lessee of the Wildcat Creek Grazing Allotment, with no change in Animal Unit Months (AUMs) allocated, class of livestock, or season of use. However, allowing this ongoing use to continue does not preclude future consideration of eliminating grazing on the newly acquired parcels, or any other areas in the allotment, to protect values of the ACEC. As discussed in section 3.2.8 of this EA, the current grazing lease expires in 2013, and BLM is collecting information to evaluate if allotment-specific and resource management objectives for the Lower Salmon ACEC are being met by ongoing grazing use. As part of the lease renewal process, BLM will develop alternatives to continue, reduce, or eliminate livestock use of any or all of the allotment, including the newly acquired parcels, for evaluation in an EA and a biological assessment to support issuance of a grazing decision prior to expiration of the lease on February 28, 2013. Currently there are no division fences between the Wildcat Creek Allotment and the private property, so cattle graze on both at the same time. One way to restrict cattle from the newly acquired parcels would be to construct fences, which would be expensive and extremely hard to maintain due to the steep and rough topography.

2.3.2 Acquire Land/Interest by Exchange

To avoid a net loss in taxable acres, the Idaho County Commissioners requested that BLM consider an alternative to exchange the lands for other federal lands in Idaho County. This avenue was considered during the proposal process and rejected by Heckman Ranches Inc. It was determined by the Property Owner that they would attempt to sell the property to another organization before they would pursue a land exchange. The Property Owner further explained to the BLM they do not want to see the property developed and considered the BLM as the best entity to manage the property for the preservation of the Lower Salmon River corridor. In the event the proposed conservation easement parcels are sold to another party, future use of BLM's exchange authority to acquire the easements would not be precluded.

3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND EFFECTS OF ALTERNATIVES

This chapter characterizes the resources and uses that have the potential to be affected by the proposed action (section 3.1), followed by a comparative analysis of the direct and indirect impacts of the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives (section 3.2). Section 3.3 discusses cumulative impacts.

3.1 Scope of Analysis

3.1.1 General Setting

As shown by **Map 2**, the parcels proposed for fee acquisition (479.21 acres) and conservation easement (3,320 acres) are located in the undeveloped portions of the canyon that are managed to meet objectives of the Lower Salmon ACEC (13, 855 acres) and Scenic SRMA (14,004 acres). The corridor lands of critical environmental concern include high scenic, recreational and cultural values as well as habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed and other special status species (plants, fish and wildlife), game and non-game species. Important recreational values include white water rafting, power boating, fishing, camping, hunting, hiking, swimming, and sightseeing. The proposed acquisitions are in the viewshed from the Salmon River, generally from below Hammer Creek (river mile 52) to Pine Bar (river mile 42).

Figure 2. Lower Salmon River ACEC, looking upriver from Shorts Bar. The proposed acquisition lands are at the upper right side, upslope and upriver of Schwartz Bar at river mile 46. BLM photo by Craig Johnson.

The area is comprised of steep to moderately sloped canyon grasslands with scattered shrubs and trees. Numerous intermittent and perennial Salmon River tributary streams

(non-fish bearing) flow across the proposed acquisition and ACEC lands. The lands are primarily used for livestock grazing by the current landowner, Heckman Ranches Inc., who also holds the BLM grazing lease for the Wildcat Creek Allotment (1,294 acres) in the Lower Salmon River ACEC.

3.1.2 Potentially Affected Resources and Uses

Table 3.1 below summarizes the issues analyzed in this chapter, with reference to the subsections that address impacts and applicable direction from the 2009 Cottonwood RMP. The geographic extent of resources and uses that would be affected by the proposed acquisition of the fee land and/or conservation easements varies by the type of resource and impact, as noted below for each resource issue. The timeframe of the analysis assumes the acquisition of the fee land would be acquired by summer in 2011, and BLM purchase of the conservation easement could occur as funds are requested and allocated in future years. Once acquired, the analysis assumes the lands and uses would be managed over the life of the 2009 Cottonwood RMP, unless otherwise amended as a result of periodic evaluations of the RMP or area-specific activity plans.

Table 3.1 - Issues Analyzed and Extent of Area Studied

Section	RESOURCE/USE	Issue Statement	Analysis Area
3.2.1	Lower Salmon River Area of Critical Environmental Concern (AR-1.9.2)	How would the newly acquired lands/interest modify the setting or affect development of the Salmon River corridor?	ACEC (13,855 acres) Fee Lands: 479.21 acres) Easement:3,320 acres
3.2.2	Salmon River Scenic Special Recreation Management Area (WR-1.1.4; RE-1.2.1.6)	Would the acquisitions affect implementation of the Scenic SRMA Activity Plan?	SRMA (14,004 acres) especially from Hammer Creek to Pine Bar (river miles 52-42)
3.2.3	Vegetation/Habitat (AR-1.9)	What measures would BLM take to protect the upland habitat values of the canyon grassland, riparian and forested communities in the ACEC?	Salmon River – Hammer Creek Hydrologic Unit (27,212 acres), including the face drainages on the fee and easement lands adjacent to the ACEC

Section	RESOURCE/USE	Issue Statement	Analysis Area
3.2.4	Invasive, Nonnative Species (Weeds) (AR-1.9.5; VW-1.1.4)	How would weed management change as a result of the fee acquisition and conservation easement?	ACEC (13,855 acres) Fee Lands: 479.21 acres Easement: 3,320 acres
3.2.5	Vegetation/Special Status Plants (AR-1.9.7; SP-1.2.6)	How would the acquisitions support recovery and conservation of listed and sensitive plants?	ACEC (13,855 acres) Fee Lands: 479.21 acres
3.2.6	Wildlife/Habitat (WS-1.8.4)	How would the acquisitions affect BLM's efforts to improve important habitat with partners?	Salmon River – Hammer Creek Hydrologic Unit (27,212 acres) ACEC (13,855 acres) Fee Lands: 479.21 acres Easement: 3,320 acres
3.2.7	Aquatic Special Status Species/Habitat (AF-1)	How would the proposed acquisitions affect ESA-listed fish and their critical habitat in the Salmon River?	Salmon River – Hammer Creek Hydrologic Unit (15 tributary streams in the ACEC and adjacent fee and easement lands)
3.2.8	Livestock Grazing (LG-1.1.10)	How would BLM administer grazing on the acquired fee lands in the Wildcat Creek Allotment?	Fee Lands: 479.21 acres Allotment: 1,294 Acres
3.2.9	Cultural Resources (LR-1.1.8; CR-1.2)	How would the acquired lands be managed to protect cultural resources?	Fee Lands: 479.21 acres Easement: 3,320 acres
3.2.10	Social/Economic Resources (SE-1.2.2)	How would the Federal acquisitions affect the local economy?	Idaho County

3.1.3 Past, Present and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

Human caused and natural events have had varying levels of impacts on the high resource values associated with BLM's designation of the Lower Salmon River ACEC, and since BLM revised the Scenic SRMA activity plan in 1991 to pursue acquiring fee title, scenic or conservation easements on non-public land below Hammer Creek. Previous LWCF

acquisitions of mining claims helped to consolidate BLM management to protect cultural values within the ACEC. Other past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions of BLM and others on public and private lands pertinent to the analysis of cumulative effects include: public and commercial recreational use of the Salmon River corridor, vegetation/timber harvest activities, invasive plant control actions, special status plant, animals and fish protection measures, livestock grazing, mining, road construction, road use and maintenance, dispersed recreation, developed recreation sites, invasive plant control actions, and private development of rural lands for subdivisions, homes, and ranching.

3.2 Effects of the Alternatives

The degree to which resources/uses may be affected by the proposed activities are discussed in the following subsections. Each subsection includes discussion of the:

(1) Affected Environment (current condition) of the resource or use
(2) Effects (direct and indirect) of the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives

Direct effects are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place. Indirect effects are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable.

3.2.1 Lower Salmon River Area of Critical Environmental Concern

The analysis area includes the designated ACEC (13,855 BLM acres) and other private and public lands occurring within the Salmon River canyon; from the mouth of the Salmon River to White Bird Creek. Refer to **Map 2** for location of the Lower Salmon River ACEC and proposed fee title and conservation easement lands. The primary issue is how the proposed acquisitions would affect future management and achievement of management objectives to protect and conserve the high value natural resources of the Lower Salmon River ACEC.

Affected Environment

The Salmon River is the longest free-flowing river in the lower 48 states. The ACEC includes public lands contiguous to the river from the mouth of the Salmon River (river mile 0.0) to White Bird Creek (river mile 53.6). BLM lands contiguous to the Salmon River generally occur within 0.25 to 0.50 miles from the river. The ACEC encompasses primarily canyon grasslands; with riparian habitats along streams and the Salmon River, and scattered trees and shrubs. The Lower Salmon River ACEC corridor lands have very high resource values for scenic, recreational, cultural, and ecological values of national significance. The ACEC provides important habitat for many special status plant, fish and wildlife species, and a variety of game and non-game wildlife.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives

Proposed Action

Fee Title Lands
Acquisition of 479.21 acres of fee title lands would increase the size of the Lower Salmon River ACEC. Future management of these lands would be in accord with the Cottonwood RMP, to "Protect and conserve scenic values, cultural resources, special status species, important wildlife habitats, and other ecological resources" (BLM 2009, Objective AR-1.9). Direct beneficial effects of limiting future development would occur from BLM acquisition of the fee title lands as part of the ACEC to protect, conserve, or restore the unique resource values in the long term. BLM would inventory and monitor existing vegetation/habitat and uses on the acquired lands to achieve ACEC management objectives and eliminate or reduce adverse effects which may occur on the lands. Existing conditions and trends for resources would be expected to continue in the short term. Long term benefits to resources would be expected to occur with potential implementation of future actions to maintain or improve resource conditions or trends. As analyzed in the following subsections of this EA, improvement in conditions and trends, specifically in regards to vegetation, wildlife/habitats, and watershed fisheries resources are expected.

Conservation Easement Lands
Purchase and the rights reserved to BLM on up to 3,320 acres of conservation easements adjacent to the Lower Salmon River ACEC would have direct and indirect benefits to achievement of ACEC management objectives. Rights reserved to the BLM in approving future plans for development of the homesite in T. 29 N., R. 1E., section 4, and vegetative management activities on any parcel, would help to protect the viewshed of the Lower Salmon River, and sustain the natural habitat of native plants, wildlife species, and watershed resources in the long term. Existing resource conditions and trends for resources would be expected to continue in the short term.

No Action

No acquisition of the fee title of lands (479.21 acres) or conservation easement (3,320 acres) would occur for private lands which are adjacent to the Lower Salmon River ACEC. For the short term, existing land uses such as livestock grazing, timber harvest, rural development, road maintenance, and noxious weed control actions would continue to occur without BLM oversight or involvement. Existing vegetation conditions and trends would thus also continue for BLM lands and private lands within the project area as tracts of the private lands remain available for future subdivision, road construction, timber harvest, and rural development. Potential long term adverse effects which may occur would include disturbance to wildlife species and habitats and a significant reduction in the scenic value of the river corridor.

3.2.2 Salmon River Scenic Special Recreation Management Area

The analysis area encompasses the Lower Salmon River Scenic (SRMA). The issue addressed is how the fee land and conservation easement acquisitions would affect the river activity and future management of the river corridor, especially along the 10 mile reach between Hammer Creek (river mile 52) to Pine Bar (river mile 42).

Affected Environment

The parcels proposed for fee land purchase and conservation easements are located adjacent to the Salmon River corridor and Scenic SRMA. The 2009 Cottonwood RMP provides for management of the SRMA "with an emphasis on overnight, non-motorized river floating (summer) and motorized/non-motorized anadromous fishing (spring/fall) experiences in a largely undeveloped , rugged, remote river canyon setting (RMP Action RC-1.2.1.1- Recreation Niches). The corridor is managed to meet Class II Visual Resource Management guidelines (RMP Objective VR-1.1 and Action VR-1.1.1, page 36 and Map 8); the objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives

Proposed Action

Fee Title Lands
If lands are acquired, BLM would manage the parcels as part of the SRMA, to meet the recreational and visual management objectives along the river, and enhance the recreational experiences of river users. BLM management would specifically protect the viewshed from adverse impacts of development of the parcels, especially along the 10-mile reach from below Hammer Creek to Pine Bar. For activities such as issuing special recreation permits for group use or outfitters (river or hunting guides), BLM would be responsible for ensuring compliance with applicable local, state and federal laws, policies and plans. Management of the parcels as part of the SRMA is expected to cause little to no change in impacts to natural resources from public or commercial recreational use of the river corridor, but would protect the scenic qualities of the canyon from impacts of future development.

Conservation Easement Lands
Acquisition of the conservation easements would also protect the viewshed of the Salmon River from development. This includes any reasonably foreseeable future development of a homesite and access roads in T. 29N., R 1E., section 4 (**Map 3**), because the site development plans would be subject to BLM approval that would include measures to retain the existing character of the landscape.

The easement allows the landowner to continue use of the property for cattle ranching, recreation, commercial outfitting, dude ranching, game ranching, and/or leasing of hunting and fishing privileges in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws. Commercial uses could be authorized in a separate agreement between the BLM and landowner.

BLM would periodically inspect the lands to confirm compliance with the terms of the conservation easement. There would be no change in the management of the Scenic SRMA in accordance with the activity plan if the easements are purchased.

No Action

There would be no change in ownership, therefore there would be no improvement in BLM's management of the SRMA to protect the viewshed from impacts of development and enhance public recreational use of the scenic river corridor.

3.2.3 Vegetation/Habitat

The project/analysis area is the fee title and conservation easement lands and Salmon River face drainages adjacent to BLM lands in the Wildcat Creek Allotment and ACEC. (See also section 3.2.6 (Aquatic Habitat) for additional information regarding streams and riparian habitats in the analysis area.). The primary issue is how future management of the fee title and conservation easement lands will directly and indirectly affect upland and riparian vegetation/habitats. Vegetation types are diverse and represent a range of seral stages which would be primarily influenced by historic, current, and future land uses and natural events. Such uses include: livestock grazing, timber harvest, roads, recreation, wildfire, mining, invasive plant control, and rural development.

Affected Environment

Canyon Grassland and Open Mixed Conifer Habitats
The canyon grasslands are primarily a broad extension of the Pacific bunchgrass formation. The dominant habitat types are bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicatum*) and Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*). Sand dropseed (*Sporobolus cryptandrus*) and red three-awn (*Aristida longiseta*) have become dis-climax species on some river benches, bars, and toeslope areas. Common invaders of poor and fair ecological condition canyon grasslands within the analysis area include yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), dalmation toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica* ssp. *dalmatica*), spotted knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*) and annual grasses, such as cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*), rattlesnake brome (*Bromus brizaeformis*) and Japanese brome (*Bromus japonicus*). When a suitable seed source is available, yellow starthistle may also invade good condition grasslands.

Elevations above 3,000 feet often have patterned grassland and timbered sites, with bluebunch wheatgrass/Idaho fescue on south and west aspects and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) sites on north and east aspects. Dry south-facing slopes may have grasslands, with scattered overstory conifers and shrubs. The mixed conifer overstory primarily includes Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*). Moister

sites and draw bottoms may have occurrences of grand fir (*Abies grandis*). Common understory shrubs include ninebark (*Physocarpus malvaceus*), oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*), serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), Rocky Mountain maple (*Acer glabrum*), and rose (*Rosa sp.)*.

Riparian Vegetation/Habitats
A total of six tributary streams (2.15 miles) flow across the fee title lands, which includes 8.42 acres of riparian habitat. A total of fifteen tributary streams (13.69 miles) flow across the conservation easement lands, which includes a total of 50.91 acres of riparian habitat. Tributary streams often have narrow riparian zones that typically vary from 25 - 40 feet in width and are confined by the steep side slopes. The lower elevation riparian areas overstories are dominated by white alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), black hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*), water birch (*Betula occidentalis*), and hackberry (*Celtis reticulata*); with occasional ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*). Common understory species include mockorange (*Philadelphus lewissii)*, serviceberry, elderberry (*Sambucus cerulea*), willow (*Salix sp.*), red-osier dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*), poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), oceanspray, and grasses/forbs. At the mid to upper elevation areas Douglas-fir and grand fir are more common in the overstories of the riparian areas. Common understory species include mockorange, black hawthorn, oceanspray, elderberry, gooseberry (*Ribes sp.*), rose, chokecherry, Rocky Mountain maple (*Acer glabrum*), dogwood, alder (*Alnus sp.*), willow, and grasses/forbs.

Many steep gradient channels have good riparian condition, while lower gradient tributaries with wider bottoms at the mouths of a few streams are more susceptible to human activities and adverse effects. In steeply confined, narrow width tributaries, the riparian vegetation generally completely covers the channels, providing shade, cover, nutrient filtering, and organic input into the streams. Shrubs in the riparian areas are resistant to soil movement and can quickly resprout in many instances following wildfires and floods. Streambank stability and riparian condition is dependent on magnitude of land uses and natural events (e.g., floods, wildfire).

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives

Proposed Action

Fee Title Lands
Acquisition of 479.21 acres of fee title lands would allow for a future increase of acreage of BLM lands within the Salmon River – Hammer Creek HUC6 and ACEC. The northern 159.21-acre parcel in T. 29 N., R. 1 E., section 14 has Sharkey Creek and two intermittent streams that flow into the Salmon River. The middle 160-acre parcel in section 27 includes McCulley Creek, and an intermittent stream and lands that occur in Wildcat Creek drainage. The southern 160 acre parcel in section 34 includes Shorty Canyon (perennial stream) that flows into Salmon River. Future management of the canyon grasslands, timbered sites, and riparian vegetation would be to meet objectives of Cottonwood RMP, including:

1. In perennial plant communities, maintain existing native plants and manage desirable nonnative plants for diversity, production, soil stability and nutrient cycling (VN-1.1).
2. Plant communities dominated by nonnative annual plants will be managed to promote soil stability and rehabilitation opportunities (VN-1.2).
3. Strive to improve degraded riparian and wetland vegetation relative to site potential and potential natural vegetation composition and habitat diversity (VR-1.2).
4. Manage rangeland and forest vegetation habitats to provide for diversity, cover, structure, forage, and security to contribute to health populations of rangeland and forest dependent species and other wildlife (WS-1.6).
5. Manage for multiple resource values that include but are not limited to habitat management, grazing, etc. (VF-2)

No change in existing livestock grazing and invasive plant control measures are currently proposed, so existing upland and riparian vegetation ecological conditions and trends would be expected to continue in the short term on the fee title lands. As BLM completes surveys in the ACEC and considers renewing the 10-year grazing lease for the Wildcat Creek Allotment, BLM would propose actions to maintain, conserve, or restore habitat for the special status plants, including the 8.42 acres of riparian habitat and the diversity of the upland vegetation plant communities and habitats in the long term.

Conservation Easement Lands

No change in the landowner's ongoing use of the lands for livestock grazing use and associated impacts to vegetation is expected in the short term from the purchase of up to 3,320 acres of conservation easements. The 50.91 acres of riparian habitat along the tributary streams will have reduced threats from restrictions on private land development and land uses if the easements are acquired. Restrictions on future development and monitoring to ensure compliance with the terms of the easement is expected to help protect and conserve the native plants, wildlife habitat, and watershed resources and result in long term maintenance of riparian and upland plant communities. This includes BLM review and approval of plans to develop a home site in section 4 (**Map 3**), and of future vegetation management activities on any of the easement parcels.

No Action

If the fee title lands (479.21 acres) or conservation easement (3,320 acres) adjacent to the Lower Salmon River ACEC are not acquired, adverse effects would be not be reduced or eliminated from potential future private landowner development and land uses that may occur. If the fee lands remain in private ownership, such future uses include potential subdivision and rural development, road construction, changes in livestock grazing use, and increased human use. Vegetation management activities would not be subject to oversight or approval by the BLM, and so no federal action to improve the condition of riparian and upland habitat would be foreseeable.

3.2.4 Invasive, Nonnative Species

The analysis area for invasive, nonnative species, which will be referred to as weeds, includes the parcels proposed for acquisition and the public lands that comprise the Lower Salmon River ACEC. The issue identified is how current weed management may change with Federal acquisition of the upland and riparian communities on the fee land and conservation easement parcels.

Affected Environment

As mentioned in section 3.2.3 (Vegetation), yellow starthistle, dalmation toadflax , spotted knapweed and annual grasses are common invaders of poor and fair ecological condition canyon grasslands within the analysis area. When a suitable seed source is available, yellow starthistle may also invade good condition grasslands.

The proposed Lower Salmon ACEC acquisitions are within the Joseph Plains Weed Management Area. Cooperators include BLM, Idaho State Department of Lands, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho County, and numerous private landowners including the current owner of the property. Cooperators have developed a weed management plan and implement actions in concert with an annual operating plan that emphasizes treatment of new invaders and early detection as a priority. New invaders in this general vicinity include spotted knapweed, whitetop, and rush skeletonweed. The goal for treatment of these new invaders is eradication using the most effective treatment method.

The subject lands are within a contain zone for yellow starthistle and dalmation toadflax, meaning populations of these weeds are established throughout the area and mainly biological control is used in an attempt to reduce their density. Biological controls for yellow starthistle and dalmation toadflax have already been released along the river corridor. Control efforts for established weeds within the contain zone are lower priority than those for new invaders. Treatment to contain the established weeds and keep them from spreading is higher priority along the edges of the infested area, as a prevention measure along travel corridors, and in higher resource value areas within the perimeter of the established weed infestation.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives

Proposed Action

Future BLM management of invasive vegetation following acquisition of the parcels would be to meet objectives of Cottonwood RMP, including to "Work with partners in coordinated weed management areas to develop and implement annual treatment strategies" (VW-1.1).

Fee Lands
Cooperative efforts are already developed and being implemented for weeds in the vicinity of the proposed action area. This cooperative management direction will not change as a result of the proposed acquisition. What would change is the entity responsible for conducting weed control on parcels acquired in fee. Currently, if inventories locate a new invader species of high priority for control, treatment can be implemented without further analysis or delay by the private landowner or the Idaho County Weed Supervisor. If lands are acquired into BLM ownership, responsibility for treatment becomes the BLM's. Before weed control can take place, the site must have been surveyed for ESA-listed plants (see next section), and the treatment must have been reviewed for NEPA compliance. Because these areas are remote and not located adjacent to vectors of weed spread such as the river or roads, they are not at high risk for establishment of a new invader plant. Acquired lands would be available for use by hikers and hunters and there may be a minimal increase in foot traffic. Use levels are still expected to be low and would not be expected to increase the risk of weed introduction or spread.

Conservation Easement Lands
Purchase of the conservation easements may reduce the potential for weed spread as the easement includes restrictions on road construction and improvement, new dwellings, commercial uses, mining, etc. Reduction of these disturbance activities would lessen the chance that weeds would be introduced and become established. It would not change responsibility for weed treatment on lands subject to the conservation easement, so there would be no change in relation to treatment of new invaders.

No Action

There would be no change in ownership; therefore the fee lands would not be surveyed for sensitive plants, and there would be no potential delay associated with completing ESA consultation and a NEPA review for BLM proposed weed treatments. Since there is no restriction on land use and potential disturbance through a conservation easement, there may be a higher risk of new weed invasion or expansion of current weed populations on these lands than in the Proposed Action.

3.2.5 Special Status Plants

Affected Environment

The project analysis area is the fee title and conservation easement lands and Salmon River face drainages adjacent to BLM lands in the Wildcat Creek Allotment and ACEC. Primary focus is on the portions of the Lower Salmon River ACEC grazed by livestock as part of the Wildcat Creek Allotment and the fee title lands which would be added to the allotment. The issue addressed is how future management of fee title and conservation easement lands may affect special status plants and their habitat.

ESA-listed Plants

Two plants listed as threatened by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) may occur within the analysis area, MacFarlane's four-o'clock (*Mirabilis macfarlanei*) and Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*).

MacFarlane's four-o'clock was listed as endangered by USFWS in 1979, and downlisted to threatened by USFWS on April 15, 1996. A recovery plan developed for MacFarlane's four-o'clock in 1985 was updated in 2000 (USFWS 2000). Five known populations of MacFarlane's four-o'clock occur on BLM lands within the area administered by the Cottonwood Field Office. MacFarlane's four-o'clock occurs in river canyon grassland habitats. Sites are dry and generally open, although scattered shrubs may be present. Plants can be found on all aspects, but often occur on southeast to western aspects from approximately 1,000 to 3,500 feet in elevation. Habitat for MacFarlane's four-o'clock generally consists of bunchgrass communities dominated by bluebunch wheatgrass. Associated vegetation has been described as transitional between bluebunch wheatgrass/Sandberg bluegrass, bluebunch wheatgrass/pricklypear cactus, and smooth sumac/bluebunch wheatgrass.

The USFWS listed Spalding's catchfly as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on October 10, 2001. A recovery plan was developed for Spalding's catchfly in 2007 by the USFWS (USFWS 2007). The BLM Cottonwood Field Office area has the largest known population of Spalding's catchfly in the state of Idaho (Garden Creek). Spalding's catchfly prefers open grasslands with rough fescue (*Festuca scabrella*), Idaho fescue, and bluebunch wheatgrass with some occasional conifers, and also the deep-soiled valley/foothill zones. Other associated species include native shrubs and forbs as described by Lichthardt (1997) and the Montana Natural Heritage Program (1998). Scattered individuals of ponderosa pine may be found in or adjacent to Spalding's catchfly habitat. Spalding's catchfly sites range from approximately 1,600 feet to 5,100 feet in elevation.

BLM-Sensitive Plants

There is suitable habitat in the analysis area for the following BLM-Sensitive plants.

Canyon Grasslands/Open Ponderosa Pine:

- Jessica's aster (*Aster jessicae*)
- Lemhi milkvetch (*Astragalus aquilonius*)
- Green-band mariposa lily (*Calochortus macrocarpus* var. *maculosus*)
- Broad-fruit mariposa lily (*Calochortus nitidus*)
- Dwarf grey rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus* ssp. *nanus*)
- Palouse thistle (Cirsium brevifolium)
- Idaho hawksbeard (*Crepis bakeri* ssp. *idahoensis*)
- Palouse goldenweed (*Haplopappus liatriformis*)
- Hazel's prickly phlox (*Leptodactylon pungens* ssp. *hazeliae*)
- Salmon River biscuitroot (*Lomatium salmoniflorum*)
- Bank monkeyflower (*Mimulus clivicola*)
- Hall's orthotrichum (*Orthotrichum hallii* (moss))
- Goldenback fern (*Pentagramma triangularis* ssp. *triangularis*)

Riparian Areas/Seeps/Springs:
- Chatterbox orchid (*Epipactis gigantea*)
- Spacious monkeyflower (*Mimulus ampliatus*
- Membrane-leaved monkeyflower (*Mimulus hymenophyllus*)
- Stalk-leaved monkeyflower (*Mimulus patulus*)
- Western ladies-tresses (*Spiranthes porrifolia*)

Detailed information on the plants is available at the Cottonwood Field Office.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives

Proposed Action

Fee Title Lands
Acquisition of 479.21 acres of fee title lands would allow for a future increase of acreage of BLM lands within the ACEC. Future management of these lands would be in accord with the Cottonwood RMP. Livestock grazing and invasive plant control measures would continue on these lands, and in the short term, existing vegetation ecological conditions and trends would be expected to continue. Surveys of suitable habitat for ESA-listed and other special status plants in the Wildcat Creek Allotment (ACEC) and fee title lands would include inventory of the acquired parcels during the first time period of appropriate plant phenology. If MacFarlane's four-o'clock or Spalding's catchfly are found, monitoring will be established, and appropriate measures implemented to ensure proposed actions do not cause a loss of viability to the population or contribute to a trend toward federal listing of the species.

BLM has submitted a Biological Assessment to initiate Section 7 ESA consultation with the USFWS on the proposed fee acquisition (BLM 2011b). The assessment concludes that the proposed fee title acquisition and interrelated grazing of Wildcat Creek Allotment "*may affect but is not likely to adversely affect*" the two listed plant species.

For the other special status plants with suitable habitat, BLM has determined that the proposed fee acquisitions "*may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend toward federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population.*"

Conservation Easement Lands
Purchase of up to 3,320 acres of conservation easement upslope of the Lower Salmon River ACEC would include restrictions on development and soil/vegetation disturbances that would also help to conserve the natural habitat of special status plants in the canyon grasslands and open ponderosa pine habitat, and riparian areas, seeps, and springs. This includes any future development of a homesite and access roads in T. 29N., R 1E., section 4 (**Map 3**), because the site development plans would be subject to BLM approval. BLM would monitor future use and vegetation management activities to be consistent with the purposes of the conservation easement. The easement includes a requirement for the Property Owner to submit a Forest Management Plan to the BLM.

Review and approval of the activity would include measures to meet BLM objectives for the management of special status plants.

No Action

If BLM does not purchase the fee title or conservation easement parcels adjacent to the Lower Salmon River ACEC, existing private land uses such as livestock grazing, road maintenance, and noxious weed control actions would be expected to continue without federal involvement. Future actions which may occur would include subdividing tracts of private lands, road construction, timber harvest, and rural development. Potential long term adverse effects would include more potential disturbance to special status plants and habitats, if they occur on the private lands.

3.2.6 Aquatic Habitat and Special Status Species

The analysis area for aquatic habitat is the Salmon River – Hammer Creek Hydrologic Unit (HUC6) within the Lower Salmon River subbasin. The Salmon River provides designated critical habitats for five Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed fish, three BLM sensitive fish species, and other native and non-native fish species. Issues addressed are how future management of fee title and conservation easement lands may affect special status fish, aquatic habitats, riparian habitats, and watershed conditions within the analysis area.

Affected Environment

The Salmon River – Hammer Creek HUC6 is comprised of perennial and intermittent non-fish bearing tributaries that flow into the Salmon River. The Salmon River – Hammer Creek HUC6 includes Salmon River face drainages from Rice Creek (River Mile 37.7) to White Bird Creek (River Mile 53.6) and is 27,212 acres in size. Within the project area, 15 tributary streams flow across the proposed fee title and conservation easement acquisition lands, and adjacent BLM ACEC lands (see **Map 5**).

Table 3.2.6 -- Summary of Salmon River Tributary Streams Within Project Area

Land Ownership or Management	Perennial Streams (Miles) and Riparian (Acres)	Intermittent Streams (Miles) and Riparian (Acres)	Total Stream Miles and Riparian (Acres)
Bureau of Land Management	1.18 miles (5.72 acres riparian)	2.26 miles (8.22 acres riparian)	3.44 miles (13.94 acres riparian)
Fee Title Lands	0.50 mile (2.42 acres riparian)	1.65 miles (6.00 acres riparian)	2.15 miles (8.42 acres riparian)
Conservation Easement Lands	0.93 mile (4.51 acres riparian)	12.76 miles (46.4 acres riparian)	13.69 miles (50.91acres riparian)
Private Lands	1.27 miles (6.16 acres riparian)	7.12 miles (25.89 acres riparian)	8.39 miles (32.05 acres riparian)
TOTAL	3.88 miles (18.81 acres riparian)	23.79 miles (86.51 acres riparian)	27.67 miles (105.32 acres riparian)

The Lower Salmon River provides aquatic habitat for 23 native fish species and 9 non-native fish species. Native fish species include anadromous and resident salmonids that are federally listed or are BLM sensitive species. Other native species include the white sturgeon, northern pikeminnow, dace, sculpins, and chiselmouth. Common non-native species include smallmouth bass, carp, and others.

ESA-Listed Fish
There are four anadromous species under the jurisdiction of National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries or NMFS) which are listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and occur within the general analysis area. NMFS has designated the Salmon River as critical habitat for all four species.

Sockeye salmon utilize the Salmon River as an upstream and downstream passage corridor. No sockeye salmon spawning or early rearing occurs in the Lower Salmon subbasin.

Fall Chinook salmon use the Salmon River as a juvenile and adult migration corridor, and for spawning and rearing. The BLM and Nez Perce Tribe currently cooperate in conducting annual aerial fall Chinook salmon redd surveys (mouth to French Creek – RM 104.8). During the period of 1992 through 2010, fall Chinook redd counts for the Lower Salmon River have ranged from 0 to 34 per year. During the last ten years the average annual redd count was 20 (mouth to French Creek – River Mile 104.8). Fall Chinook salmon are deep water spawners and all redds may not be observed from aerial surveys which may account for only 20% to 50% of the spawning activity (Groves and Chandler 1999).

Spring/summer Chinook salmon use the Salmon River as a juvenile and adult migration corridor, and to a limited extent for juvenile rearing habitat. Tributary streams within the subbasin providing suitable and accessible stream habitat are used for spawning and/or juvenile rearing. However, no such tributary streams occur within the project and analysis area.

Steelhead Trout use the Salmon River as a juvenile and adult migration corridor, for adult over-wintering, and to a limited extent for juvenile rearing habitat. Tributary streams providing suitable and accessible stream habitat within the subbasin are used by steelhead trout for spawning and/or juvenile rearing. However, no such tributary streams occur within the project and analysis area have known documented steelhead use (Salmon – Hammer Creek HUC6). Potential does exist that the mouth areas of a few of the larger perennial tributaries in the HUC6 analysis area may be used by juvenile steelhead trout for rearing when flow conditions are suitable (spring high flow periods), but such use would be incidental and considered discountable.

Bull trout is listed under the jurisdiction of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the USFWS has designated the Salmon River as critical habitat for bull trout. Two

distinct life-history forms, migratory and resident, occur throughout the range of bull trout (Pratt 1992, Rieman and McIntyre 1993). The migratory form is found in the Salmon River. Migratory forms rear in natal tributaries before moving to larger rivers (fluvial form) to mature. The Salmon River is used as a migration corridor and provides adult and subadult foraging habitat. A few tributary streams providing suitable habitat within the subbasin are used by bull trout for spawning and/or juvenile rearing; however, no such streams occur within project/analysis area.

BLM Sensitive Fish
Sensitive species are managed to ensure that BLM actions will not contribute to a trend toward federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population. Sensitive aquatic species that occur in the Lower Salmon River ACEC include:

Westslope cutthroat trout are found in the Lower Salmon River subbasin in the migratory (fluvial) and resident life-history forms. The Salmon River is used as a migration corridor, provides adult rearing habitat, and is used to a lesser extent for juvenile rearing. Spawning generally occurs in tributary streams providing suitable habitats, and migratory forms may spawn in lower reaches of the same streams used by resident fish. However, no such streams occur within the project/analysis area.

Redband trout (non-anadromous rainbow) in the Upper Columbia River basin have been divided into two groups. One group evolved in sympatry with steelhead trout, and the other allopatric, or those which evolved outside the historical range of steelhead trout. The Salmon River is used as a migration corridor by rainbow trout and is also used for juvenile rearing. Spawning and primary juvenile rearing occurs in tributary streams providing suitable and accessible stream habitat. However, no such tributary streams occur within the project and analysis area have known documented steelhead use (Salmon – Hammer Creek HUC6). Potential does exist that the mouth areas of a few of the larger perennial tributaries occurring in the HUC6 analysis area may be used by redband trout when flow conditions are suitable (spring high flow periods), such use would be incidental and considered discountable.

Pacific lamprey adults enter freshwater (Columbia River) between July and September and migrate over 400 miles to Idaho. They do not mature until the following March. They spawn in sandy gravel immediately upstream from riffles between April and July and die soon after. Eggs hatch in two to three weeks and the ammocoetes (larval lamprey) spend up to six years in soft substrate as filter-feeders before emigrating to the ocean. They remain in the ocean for 12 to 20 months before returning to freshwater to spawn. Diatoms appear to be a primary food supply for ammocoetes.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives

Proposed Action

The Salmon River -- Hammer Creek HUC6 has a total of 27,212 acres and BLM ownership within this face drainage HUC6 totals 4,278 acres (16 percent). With the acquisition of fee title lands (479.21 acres) BLM management authority would increase

to 17.5 percent, and with addition of fee title lands and conservation easement lands (3,320 acres) would increase to 30 percent (8,077.21 acres total in HUC6).

Fee Title Lands

Acquisition of 479.21 acres of fee title lands would result in an increase of the amount of BLM lands occurring within the Salmon River – Hammer Creek HUC6 and ACEC that are managed to protect special status aquatic species. Future management of these fee title lands would be in accordance with the ESA, BLM Special Status Species policy, and to specifically meet objectives of the Cottonwood RMP, including:

1. Provide for diverse and healthy aquatic habitats that contribute to the recovery of listed fish species and conservation of BLM sensitive fish species (AF-1.1).
2. Manage aquatic, riparian, and wetland habitats to provide diverse and healthy conditions for aquatic species (AF-1.3).
3. Maintain, restore, or enhance riparian and wetland areas so that they provide habitat diversity and healthy riparian and aquatic conditions (WS-1.7).
4. Ensure that management actions for other resources incorporate adequate soil protection (SO-1.1).
5. Protect and maintain watersheds so that they appropriately capture, retain, and release water of quality that meets or exceeds state and federal standards (WA-1.2).

Direct beneficial effects within the Salmon River – Hammer Creek HUC6 would occur from the acquisition of these fee title lands (479.21 acres). Acquisition of fee title lands would result in an additional 2.15 miles of stream (perennial and intermittent) and 8.82 acres of riparian habitat (see Table 3.2.6) that would be managed to provide healthy conditions for aquatic species and conserve special status species in the long term.

Future potential land uses which may have indirect or direct adverse effects to aquatic, riparian, water quality, and soil resources would be reduced or eliminated. Such land uses may include road construction, subdivision development activities, changing livestock grazing use, and increased human activity and use. The fee title lands would receive future management actions to maintain, conserve, or restore aquatic, riparian, and water quality, and soil resource conditions to support achievement of management objectives for the Salmon River ACEC, water quality, and riparian habitats. Adverse effects would be reduced or eliminated from potential future land uses that may occur if these fee title lands remained in private ownership.

Data collection, informal ESA consultation and NEPA scoping activities are ongoing for grazing on allotments in the Lower Salmon River subbasin. Continued grazing of the fee title lands is interrelated with livestock use of the Wildcat Creek Allotment, and is being assessed as part of renewing the 10-year lease before it expires in March of 2013. The steep gradient streams flowing across the fee title lands currently receive light to moderate cattle use during the season of use and are rated as being in Proper Function Condition (PFC) with stable trends. The Wildcat Creek Allotment includes 7.1 miles of the Salmon River. Primary potential effects to ESA-listed and BLM-sensitive fish are

associated with the lower reaches of larger perennial tributary streams and Salmon River aquatic and riparian habitats that may be used by fall Chinook salmon, spring/summer Chinook salmon, steelhead trout, and bull trout.

ESA-Listed Fish
BLM has prepared a Biological Assessment on the proposed fee acquisition (BLM 2011b), and submitted it the NOAA Fisheries and USFWS. In the short term, grazing use would continue in the Wildcat Creek Allotment on the newly acquired fee title lands at existing levels. Grazing use of these lands is interrelated with the entire Wildcat Creek Allotment and a "*may affect – not likely to adversely affect*" determination was made for fall Chinook salmon, spring/summer Chinook salmon, steelhead trout, bull trout; and designated critical habitat for these species. Because sockeye salmon use the Salmon River only for upstream and downstream migration, and no spawning or juvenile rearing occurs within the subbasin, a "*no effect*" determination has been made for this fish species and designated critical habitat.

BLM-Sensitive Fish
Effects to BLM-sensitive redband trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and Pacific lamprey is discountable. The tributary streams that flow across the lands are not known to be used by these species. A few of the of the larger perennial stream mouth areas may receive incidental use, by ESA-listed fish and BLM-sensitive aquatic species during high flow periods, such use is discountable. Any changes to the grazing of the acquired fee land to conserve habitat for special status fish species will be considered as renewal of the lease for the Wildcat Creek Allotment is processed.

Conservation Easement Lands
Purchase of up to 3,320 acres of conservation easements adjacent to the fee title and BLM Salmon River corridor lands would have direct and indirect benefits to achievement of riparian and water quality management objectives for 15 streams flowing across these lands. Acquisition of conservation easement lands would result in an additional 13.69 miles of stream (perennial and intermittent) and 50.91 acres of riparian habitat (see Table 3.2.6) that would be managed with specific land use restrictions to avoid or minimize potential for adverse effects to Salmon River canyon aquatic and riparian resources. The proposed easement is designed to minimize potential for additional adverse effects to aquatic/riparian habitats and watershed resources.

Overall, both the fee title and conservation easement acquisitions would protect existing values of the Lower Salmon River ACEC in regards to watershed/fisheries resources. Existing riparian and water quality conditions and trends would continue in the short term and are more likely to improve for these streams flowing across the ACEC lands if the fee title and conservation easements are acquired in the long term with reduce risks from potential adverse land uses that may occur if such lands remained in private ownership.

No Action

If the fee title parcels (479.21 acres) or conservation easements (3,320 acres) are not acquired, the fifteen Salmon River tributary streams (15.84 miles) flowing across the acquisition lands and 59.36 acres of riparian habitat would not benefit by management emphasis that would occur with implementation of the proposed action. Current trends of aquatic, riparian, watershed and vegetation conditions from continuation of existing land uses such as livestock grazing, road maintenance, and noxious weed control actions would continue. Other foreseeable future actions which may occur that could result in adverse effects on aquatic resources would include subdividing tracts of land, roading, timber harvest, and rural development.

3.2.7 Wildlife/Habitat and Special Status Species

The Lower Salmon River canyonlands provide diverse habitats which are important seasonally or yearlong for a variety of game, nongame, and special status wildlife species. As described for vegetation (section 3.2.3), the analysis area includes the species specific preferred habitats (e.g., upland canyon grassland/open forest vegetation, riparian vegetation, and stream/rivers) occurring within the Salmon River – Hammer Creek HUC6 and ACEC. The area includes terrestrial habitat in the specific face drainages associated with the proposed fee title and conservation easement lands, and adjacent BLM lands in the ACEC (**Map 5**). The primary issue is how future management of the fee title and conservation easement lands will affect wildlife species, special status species, and preferred habitats.

Affected Environment

Wildlife/Habitat

Salmon River canyonlands are comprised of moderate sloped toeslopes and benches to oversteepened slopes with rock outcrops and cliffs. Habitats vary from riparian habitats, and low elevation grasslands to patterned timbered and grassland breaklands at the higher elevations.

Within the project/analysis area occur perennial and intermittent tributary streams that flow into the Salmon River (see **Figure 1**, section 2.1, and **Table 3.2.6**). These streams and riparian habitats provide valuable wildlife habitats. Within the analysis area, vegetation types are diverse and represent a range of seral stages which are primarily influenced by livestock grazing, timber harvest, roads, recreation, wildfire, mining, and rural development. These habitats provide important seasonal or yearlong habitats for a large variety of game, nongame, and upland game species. Moderate sloped areas and some of the steeper sloped areas are infested with invasive plants, and these canyonlands are in poor to fair ecological condition. Steeper sloped areas with rock outcrops and cliffs are generally in good to excellent condition.

Common big game species using the area include mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, and mountain lion. Other big game species utilizing the general area include black bear and bighorn sheep. The area provides important winter range for mule deer, white-tailed

deer, and elk. Upland game species using the canyon grasslands and associated habitats include chukar partridge, gray partridge, California quail, mountain quail, ruffed grouse, blue grouse, and mourning dove. Turkeys may also use timber/shrub and riparian habitats within the analysis area.

The area also provides important habitats for a large variety of non-game species. Approximately 150 wildlife species may use the project/analysis area yearlong or seasonally. These wildlife species include mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. The Lower Salmon River canyonlands have a high concentration of raptors, and commonly observed raptors include golden eagles, bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, northern harriers, and American kestrels.

Migratory birds use all the habitats within the project area. Idaho has 243 species of birds that breed in the state. Of these, 119 are Neotropical migrants, birds that breed in Idaho but migrate to winter in the Neotropics of Mexico, Central American, the Caribbean, and South American (Idaho Partners in Flight 2000). Those species that are thought or known to occur in the project/analysis area and are identified as high priority species by Idaho Partners in Flight (2000) are listed below by primary breeding habitat.

Table 3.2.7a. High Priority Indicator Species and Migratory Birds That May Occur in the Project Area

Primary Habitat Type	Species
Grassland	Western Meadowlark
Low-elevation Mixed Conifer Forest	Lewis Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker[1], Dusky Flycatcher[1], Varied Thrush, Townsend's Warbler[1], Northern Goshawk, Western Tanager[1], Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Brown Creeper
Ponderosa Pine	Flammulated Owl, White-headed Woodpecker
Mountain Brush	Mountain Quail, Black-chinned Hummingbird[1], Calliope Hummingbird[1], Rufous Humminbird[1], MacGillvray's Humming Bird[1]
Riparian	Calliope Hummingbird[1], Rufous Hummingbird[1], Willow Flycatcher[1], Dusky Flycatcher[1], American Dipper, Yellow Warbler[1], and MacGillivray's Warbler[1]

[1]Neotropical Migratory Birds

Special Status Species

Sensitive species are managed to ensure that BLM actions will not contribute to a trend toward federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population. As listed below, a variety of sensitive mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates are known to occur or potentially occur within the analysis/project area

Table 3.2.7b. Sensitive Wildlife Species and Preferred Habitat That May Occur in the Project Area

Common Name (*Genus Species)*	**Habitat**
MAMMALS	
Fringed Myotis *Myotis thysanodes*	Large trees, caves, mine tunnels, attics of old buildings. Insectivorous.
Townsend's Big Eared Bat *Plecotus townsendii*	Caves, mine tunnels and buildings for roosts, obligate cave/mine user, may also feed on ground or in shrubs. Insectivorous.
Gray wolf *Canis lupus*	Gray wolves preferred habitats are associated with good quality ungulate (elk and deer) habitats. Elk and deer are important prey species for gray wolves. Critical habitat niches for gray wolves are associated with den sites and rendezvous areas, with minimal effects from human disturbance.
BIRDS	
Bald eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* (The bald eagle was delisted as an ESA-listed species in 2007.)	Winter habitat is primarily associated with the larger rivers and corridors, and lower elevation uplands and prairie areas if carrion is available. Winter habitat for bald eagles is a function of perch and roost site availability, as well as access to fish, waterfowl, and ungulate carrion as forage/prey. Nest sites have been documented in the Dworshak Reservoir area, along Clearwater River, and along Salmon River.
Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus anatum*	Primarily open country; specifically cliff localities adjacent to mountain valleys, rivers, and large bodies of water. Nest is cape on ledge of high cliff. Foods are primarily small birds.
Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*	Forests, forest edge, open woodlands. Most common in ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir forests. Riparian habitats in winter. Nests are masses of twigs in tall conifers. Foods are tree squirrels, jackrabbits, ground squirrels, small birds, and occasionally grouse.
Prairie Falcon *Falco mexicanus*	Steppe, canyon grasslands, to forests with cliffs. Nest is sticks and twigs on niche of cliff. Foods are ground squirrels, rodents, small birds.
Flammulated Owl *Otus flammeolus*	Montane forests, open stands of fire-climax ponderosa pine or Douglas-fir forests. Nests in abandoned woodpecker holes. Primarily insectivorous.

Common Name (*Genus Species)*	**Habitat**
American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*	Found on rivers and lakes. Feeds mainly on fishes, eats some salamanders and crayfishes. Has been observed (very rare) on larger rivers (e.g. Snake River, Salmon River, Clearwater River) and Mann Lake within the Cottonwood Field Office management area. In Idaho, breeds at Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge, Blackfoot Reservoir, and on Snake River near Glenn's Ferry.
Lewis Woodpecker *Melanerpes lewis*	Open or logged forests, river groves in mountains. Nest is a hole in tree. Foods are insects, berries, and fruits.
White-headed Woodpecker *Picoides albolarvatus*	Montane coniferous forests, primarily dry open forests with ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir. Nest is a hole in tree or stump, often close to ground. Food is primarily insects.
Williamson's Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus thryoideus*	Coniferous forests and burns at higher elevations in mountains. Nest is hole in tree. Foods are sap, insects and inner bark.
Mountain Quail *Oreotys pictus*	Riparian areas, shrub mountainsides, coniferous forests, and forest edge. Nests on ground. Foods are buds, seeds, grain, and insects.
Olive-sided Flycatcher *Contopus borealis*	Open timber at meadow margins in sparse timber, burns, partially logged areas. Nest is woven twigs near end of a horizontal limb of a conifer. Food includes insects caught while flying.
Hammond's Flycatcher *Empidonax hammondii*	Mountains, in partially logged forests, open woods and along forest edges at medium and lower elevations. Nest is woven cup of vegetation in deciduous tree. Insectivorous and eats insects such as beetles, moths, flies, bees, and wasps.
Willow Flycatcher *Empidonax traillii*	Riparian areas, swamps, willow thickets, open woodlands. Builds cup shape nest in shrub or deciduous tree. Insectivorous.
Calliope Hummingbird *Stellula calliope*	Foothills and forested mountains. Nests in conifers. Foods are nectar and insects.
Brewer's Sparrow *Spizella breweri*	Lowest elevations to highest (8,000 feet or more) in sagebrush valleys, dry grassy ridges of foothills, brushy plains to tree line, cultivated areas with brushy fence rows or patches. Nest is cup of grass and twigs usually in sagebrush or other shrubs. Foods are insects and seeds.
REPTILES and AMPHIBIANS	
Common Garter Snake *Thamnophis sirtalis*	Inhabits wet or moist habitats. Preys primarily on earthworms, frogs, toads, salamanders, and fish.

Common Name (*Genus Species)*	**Habitat**
Western Toad *Bufo boreas*	Streams, springs, grasslands, woodlands, mountain meadows. Usually in and/or near ponds, lakes, reservoirs, rivers, streams. Insectivorous.
INVERTEBRATES	
Columbia River Tiger Beetle *Cicindela columbica*	Sandy beaches/riparian areas along the Salmon River.
Columbia Pebblesnail *Fluminicola columbianus*	Occurs in the mainstem Salmon River. Restricted to small-large rivers, in swift current on stable gravel to boulder substrate in cold, unpolluted, highly oxygenated water, generally in areas with few aquatic macrophytes or edyphytic algae.
Whorled Mountainsnail *Oreohelix vortex*	The species occurs in low to mid elevations in the Salmon River drainage, from Rock Creek to Riggins. Restricted to large-scale taluses. Sites are typically rather dry and open. Grasses common at preferred sites, with some forbs and shrubs.
Boulder Pile Mountainsnail *Oreohelix jugalis*	Found in lower elevation areas in the Salmon River canyon, from river mile 20 to Riggins. Occurs in rock taluses and boulder piles. Sites generally open and can be seasonally dry. Plant associates include hackberry, shrubs, and grasses.
Lava Rock Mountainsnail *Oreohelix waltoni*	Found in dry open areas occurring in the Lower Salmon River. Known to occurs between White Bird and Riggins, primarily in the Lucile and John Day Creek area. Associated with basalts and mixed schist/alluvium sites. Common plants found at sites are grasses and shrubs.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives

Proposed Action

Fee Title Lands
Acquisition of 479.21 acres of fee title lands would allow for a future increase in the amount of BLM lands occurring within the Salmon River ACEC that are managed to meet wildlife management objectives of the 2009 Cottonwood RMP, including:

1. Manage rangeland and forest vegetation habitats to provide for diversity, cover, structure, forage, and security to contribute to healthy populations of rangeland and forest dependent species and other wildlife (WS-1.6).
2. Provide for migratory bird habitat through implementation of actions supporting habitat diversity (WS-1.6. Action WS-1.6.11).

3. Manage BLM sensitive species habitats so actions do not contribute to species decline or contribute to federal listing (WS-1.5).
4. Manage wildlife habitats to provide for overall species diversity (WS-1.8).
5. Provide for the protection of active raptor nests (WS-1.9).
6. Maintain or restore Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep habitat (WS-1.10).

A total of 479.21 acres would be incorporated into the existing Wildcat Creek Allotment, but only the current season of use and AUMs would be authorized as BLM considers renewing the lease before it expires in March of 2013. The steep gradient streams receive light to moderate cattle use during the season of use and are rated as being in Proper Function Condition (PFC) with stable trends. Localized areas with moderate slopes receive heavier grazing use, and ecological conditions of these sites are rated as poor to fair. Actions to reduce or avoid adverse impacts from livestock grazing will be considered as BLM completes an EA for all grazing allotments in the Lower Salmon subbasin.

Direct beneficial effects to the Lower Salmon River canyonland wildlife, neotropical birds, and special status species habitats would occur from the acquisition of these fee title lands, because these lands would receive management actions to maintain, conserve, or restore resource values in the long term. Existing wildlife habitat conditions and trends and current effects to wildlife species would continue in the short term.

Conservation Easement Lands

Purchase of up to 3,320 acres of conservation easements adjacent to the Lower Salmon River corridor lands would also facilitate achievement of management objectives for the ACEC, because potential indirect adverse effects which may occur on private land would be eliminated or reduced. The proposed easement is designed to conserve the natural habitat of native wildlife species of the Lower Salmon River. Impacts to wildlife habitat from continued livestock grazing and recreational hunting would be expected to remain at current levels or be reduced.

Direct beneficial effects to the Lower Salmon River canyonland wildlife, neotropical birds, and special status species habitats would occur from the acquisition of these conservation easement lands, because these lands would receive management actions to reduce some of the potential adverse land uses which may occur on them if easement design measures were not in place. These land use and development restrictions would be beneficial in the long term in the conservation or maintenance of existing resource values. Existing wildlife habitat conditions and trends and current effects to wildlife species would continue in the short term.

Fee Title and Conservation Easement Lands

With the acquisition of fee title lands (479.21 acres) and conservation easement lands (3,320 acres), BLM management authority (include fee title and conservation easement lands) would total 8,077.21 acres and increase from 16 percent to 30 percent of the Salmon River – Hammer Creek 6th code HUC6. This would allow for improved long term wildlife habitat management conservation within the project/analysis area and

HUC6, with reduction of potential adverse land uses which may impact wildlife species and habitats. No change of livestock grazing levels would be authorized. Connectivity of wildlife habitats and travel corridors (e.g., riparian habitats) would be maintained within the project area on BLM lands and proposed acquisition lands.

BLM Sensitive Species

With the exception of the ten species listed below, a "*no effect*" determination is concluded for the other BLM species identified in **Table 3.2.7b** above. The determination for mountain quail, willow flycatcher, Brewer's sparrow, common garter snake, western toad, whorled mountainsnail, and boulder pile mountain snail is "*may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend toward federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population*". These species are less mobile, ground nester, and/or have riparian or canyon upland habitats as a preferred habitat. These species would be more prone to habitat impacts and/or disturbance and impacts to the species from authorized livestock grazing of fee title lands and interrelated grazing of Wildcat Creek Allotment. The area is presently grazed by livestock, and would continue at existing levels with the proposed acquisitions. Overall, existing conditions and trends for potential effects to these species and habitats would continue in the short term. Long term restoration or conservation would occur with the reduction of potential adverse impacts from land development activities such as subdivision, rural development, roading, timber harvest, and increased human uses.

No Action

No acquisition of the fee title of lands (479.21 acres) or conservation easement (3,320 acres) would occur for private lands which occur adjacent to the Lower Salmon River BLM corridor lands. For the short term, existing land uses such as livestock grazing, road maintenance, and noxious weed control actions would be expected to occur in the short term. Existing vegetation conditions and trends would be expected to occur for BLM lands and private lands within the project area. Other foreseeable future actions which may occur would include subdividing tracts of land, roading, timber harvest, and rural development. Potential long term adverse effects which may occur include more disturbance to wildlife species and habitats from various land uses occurring on private lands which occur adjacent to BLM lands adjacent to the Lower Salmon River. These potential private land uses include rural development (subdividing), timber harvest, increased livestock grazing, and roading.

3.2.8 Livestock Grazing

The analysis area includes the public land in the ACEC and Wildcat Creek Allotment, which encompasses 1,294 acres. The action would add 479.21 acres of fee land to the allotment and 3,320 acres of conservation easement proposed for acquisition (**Map 4**). The issue is how would BLM administer grazing on the acquired lands in the Wildcat Creek Allotment.

Affected Environment

The private lands described in the Proposed Action alternative adjoin the Wildcat Creek Allotment within the Lower Salmon River ACEC. Heckman Cattle Company owns all the private land adjacent to the ACEC, and has historically used it for grazing cattle. Heckman Cattle Company also has a Taylor Grazing Act, Section 15 Grazing Lease (1106129) on the Wildcat Creek Allotment.

Currently there are no division fences between the Wildcat Creek Allotment and the private property, so cattle graze on both at the same time. The permitted and active use for the allotment totals 344 Animal Unit Months (AUMs). Cattle are authorized to graze from 4/1 to 6/21.

The Rangeland Health Assessment completed in 2003 determined that all of the Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health were being met. The Grazing Lease was issued for 10 years, which expires on February 28, 2013. BLM is collecting information to evaluate management objectives for the Lower Salmon ACEC the allotment are being met by grazing use and if any changes are needed to protect and conserve special status plant, wildlife and fish species as part of the lease renewal process,

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives

Proposed Action

Fee Title Lands
The proposed action would incorporate the fee title lands to be included into the Wildcat Creek Allotment. The only thing that would change would be the increase in acreage of the Wildcat Creek Allotment that would be evaluated and monitored by the BLM. Therefore, impacts associated with grazing of the lands would continue following acquisition. However, no additional grazing would be authorized, so the number of cattle, season-of-use, and number of AUMs would remain the same until BLM fully processes renewal of the lease. Prior to the grazing lease expiring, BLM will complete ESA consultation and an EA for all the allotments within the Lower Salmon River Subbasin, which includes the Wildcat Creek Allotment. Modifications to the grazing lease may occur depending upon the results of the analysis.

Conservation Easement Lands
The conservation easement provides for continued use of the private lands for ranching, without exceeding historical stocking rates. Thus grazing use would be grandfathered at existing levels, and the property owner would likely continue to run the same number of cattle as Heckman Cattle Company is currently grazing.

No Action

Short term impacts of the No Action Alternative are no different than the Proposed Action because the same number of cattle, season-of-use, and AUMs would remain the

same. The only difference between the Proposed Action and the No Action is that no additional acres would be incorporated into the Wildcat Creek Allotment if the fee title lands are not acquired. As BLM considers renewing the expiring 10-year grazing lease, the condition of the private lands would not be evaluated nor monitored.

3.2.9 Cultural Resources

The ACEC and adjacent parcels proposed for acquisition within the Lower Salmon River National Register of Historic Places District comprise the analysis area for cultural resources (**Map 2**).

Affected Environment

Within ¼-mile of the fee acquisition and conservation easement parcels, there are 27 previously recorded historic properties on public lands in the ACEC that contribute to the Lower Salmon River National Register of Historic Places District, and four potential historic properties recorded from the General Land Office plats for the analysis area, One potential historic property is the primary trail used to access the mid-slope of the canyonthat may have been used to carry supplies to miners or other settlers along the Salmon River. The trail continues from the fee acquisition site to the proposed conservation easement parcels, and there are three cabin sites and a fence location that may have indicated some attempts at farming. In addition, a potential historic hydraulic mine site extends from BLM land in the ACEC uphill to one of the conservation easement parcels.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives

Proposed Action

Fee Title Lands

Acquiring the historic property on the fee acquisition parcel whould benefit cultural resources. This was probably the main trail bringing supplies into miners and homesteaders in this section of the Salmon River. Other unknown historic properties that may be associated with the trail could be identified and protected by the BLM following acquisition of the newly acquired lands.

Conservation Easement Lands

There is a high potential for the cabin sites associated with the supply trail to homesteaders and miners along the Salmon River to contribute to the Lower Salmon River National Register of Historic Places District. The historic cabin sites would not be subject to inventory and protection by BLM unless stipulations were placed in the conservation easement, when negotiated with the landowner, to protect the potential cabin sites.

No Action

The opportunity to acquire or provide protection to some unique historic properties will be foregone. These resources could be affected by housing development or physical impacts from other uses.

3.2.10 Social and Economic Resources

Idaho County is the analysis area for social and economic issues. Idaho County encompasses 5,430,323 acres, more or less, of which the BLM, Cottonwood Field Office area comprises 90,745 acres, or 1.67% (2009 RMP, Map 1). The Cottonwood RMP identifies the 13,855 acres in the Lower Salmon River ACEC for retention, and the fee acquisition of 479.21 acres would be added to this area. The issue addressed is how the Federal acquisitions would affect the local economy.

Affected Environment

Tourism and recreational use of the Salmon River are significant factor in sustaining small businesses communities throughout the County. Opposition to the proposed acquisitions were expressed by recreational organizations and a concerned citizen, because Idaho County is already 85% public lands and they felt, given current budget issues, to procure more land would be wasteful. (Western Whitewater Association, January 25, 2011; Joseph Riener, January 20, 2011, Idaho Recreation Council, February 8, 2011). The Idaho County Commissioners also wrote BLM of their concerns for any loss in property tax revenue (April 26, 2011). National Forest lands comprise most of the public lands in the county.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives

Proposed Action

Fee Title Lands
Deposits from royalties in the LWCF would be used to purchase the fee acquisition lands in 2011. As BLM seeks funds for the conservation easements, purchase would depend on the annual appropriations and the ranking of proposals. The proposed acquisitions are expected to benefit public enjoyment of the Lower Salmon River SRMA, and increase use of the corridor by outfitters and guides that generates tourism income and local employment that benefits the local economy.

Loss in property tax revenue to Idaho County will be less than $80.00, or about $0.17/acre, according to 2009 assessed tax value. To help offset losses in property taxes due to nontaxable Federal lands within their boundaries, Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) are made. In 2009, qualifying Federal lands reported by BLM on behalf of all agencies totaled 4,519,662 acres, of which 90,475 acres were BLM (2 percent). The PILT payment to Idaho County was $1,422,343 (about $0.31/acre). The fee acquisition of 479.21 acres would be offset by the increase in the PILT payment.

Conservation Easement Lands
No loss in property tax revenue would result from purchase of the conservation easements. However, the restriction on future development would preclude future increases in the assessed value and taxes paid from subdivision of the parcels, and/or changes in use from agricultural to residential or commercial use.

No Action

If BLM does not purchase the parcels, Heckman Ranches Inc., would likely market the lands for sale to a private landowner. There would be no change in federal ownership, therefore there would be no loss in property tax revenue to Idaho County from purchase of the fee title lands. No purchase of the fee title or conservation easement parcels is more likely to result in subdivision and/or development of the lands for commercial uses by the future landowners.

3.3 Cumulative Impacts

As defined by NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1508.7), "Cumulative impacts result from the incremental impacts of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions." As summarized below, acquisition of the fee title lands and conservation easement will result in beneficial or negligible direct and indirect effects to affected visual, recreational, natural, cultural and socio-economic resources.

1. ACEC – The analysis area includes the acres of private lands that would be added to public lands in the Lower Salmon River ACEC. Future management of the acquired lands and easements would help to meet objectives for the ACEC and BLM's obligations for the conservation of special status species and protection of cultural resources. Following acquisition, BLM will increase activities for collecting information pertinent to managing resources and uses on the fee lands, and work with the Property Owner to ensure objectives of the perpetual conservation easement are met. Acquisition of the fee title lands and conservation easement is expected to result in the availability of better information for use in managing resources and improving conditions of importance within the Lower Salmon River ACEC.

2. Scenic SRMA – The analysis area includes the viewshed along the 10-mile reach of the Salmon River from Hammer Creek to Pine Bar. BLM would continue to manage the SRMA to emphasize commercial and public recreational use of the river, but with increased ability to monitor use and prevent future development that would detract from the remarkable scenic qualities of the canyon.

3. Vegetation/Habitat – Acquisition of the fee title lands will result in long term beneficial effects to Lower Salmon River upland and riparian vegetation/habitats. Purchase of the conservation easements would also help to maintain or improve current conditions, and avoid or minimize adverse disturbances from future uses, including

livestock grazing, mining, timber harvest, road construction, road use and maintenance, dispersed recreation, developed recreation sites, and weed control actions. Development of a home site and related facilities in section 4 would be limited and planned to minimize adverse effects to vegetation and habitat.

4. Invasive, Nonnative Species – With the change in ownership of the fee land and management as part of the Lower Salmon ACEC, BLM would be responsible for ensuring future livestock grazing, timber harvest, road use and maintenance, and dispersed recreation activities do not contribute the spread of invasive weeds throughout the Salmon River – Hammer Creek drainage area and Lower Salmon River ACEC. For the conservation easement, early detection and treatment by cooperators in the Joseph Plains Weed Management Area would continue to control new invaders. The proposed acquisitions is not expected to contribute to weed establishment and spread in the ACEC and adjacent private lands when paired with other actions in the area.

5. Special Status Plants -- Purchase of the fee title parcels or conservation easements is likely to reduce adverse impacts on special status plants from livestock grazing, and avoid impacts from future subdivision and/or development of the easement lands for commercial uses by the future landowners.

6. Aquatic Resources and Special Status Species/Habitat – With the change in ownership of the fee land and management as part of the Lower Salmon ACEC, BLM would be responsible for ensuring that future activities do not adversely affect special status fish or their habitat. Purchase of the conservation easement parcels would maintain existing riparian/water quality effects at current conditions and trends. Existing land uses would continue at existing levels and acquisitions would minimize or avoid adverse impacts of future subdivision and/or development of the lands for commercial uses by the future landowners.

7. Wildlife/Habitat -- Acquisition of the fee title lands and conservation easements will result in long term beneficial effects to Lower Salmon River wildlife/habitats. The acquisitions would help to minimize adverse disturbances from future uses, as described for vegetation.

8. Livestock Grazing -- Currently the parcels of private lands are grazed by Heckman Ranches, Inc. in conjunction with the BLM Wildcat Creek Allotment. There are no fences to prevent grazing of the public land separate from the parcels of fee and easement lands located upslope from the Allotment. Therefore, impacts associated with grazing of the lands, together with impacts associated with grazing of other allotments in the Lower Salmon River subbasin, would continue following acquisition. As a reasonably foreseeable action, BLM will evaluate and issue a grazing decision for the Wildcat Creek Allotment, as part of the lease renewal process for it and other allotments throughout the Lower Salmon River subbasin. As part of evaluating the allotments, BLM will propose measures if necessary to reduce or eliminate grazing to meet objectives for any resource of concern.

9. Cultural Resources – No cumulative effects are anticipated.

10. Social/Economic Resources – Idaho County encompasses 5,430,323 acres, more or less, of which the BLM, Cottonwood Field Office area comprises 90,745 acres, or 1.67% (2009 RMP, Map 1). The Cottonwood RMP identifies the 13,855 acres in the Lower Salmon River ACEC for retention, and the fee acquisition of 479.21 acres would be added to this area. The Cottonwood RMP directs the BLM to consider disposal of other isolated tracts of public lands that are not identified for retention when proposed.

BLM manages the Scenic SRMA to emphasize commercial and public recreational use of the river. The proposed acquisition are expected to provide recreational benefits along the 10-mile reach of the Lower Salmon River. Past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions by BLM includes issuance of a Special Recreation Permits to river guides, which increase local business income and employment. Based on this historical activity, the BLM and Idaho County have seen a steady increase in public river recreation activities, including non-motorized floating/boating, motorized boating, fishing and hunting.

The BLM has completed almost 8,000 acres of fee title and conservation easement acquisitions, within the ACEC, in order to preserve the river's outstanding remarkable values for the recreating public. Past LWCF fee acquisition of mining claims in the Lower Salmon River ACEC (T. 31 N., R. 1.E. Section 23), helped to consolidated public ownership of lands within the ACEC to its current size. This was a land exchange transaction, so the loss in property tax revenue to Idaho County was offset by the disposal of public land. Review of recent annual PILT payments shows that the loss in revenue from acquisition of the fee land would be more than offset by federal PILT payments to Idaho County. However, purchase of the fee land and acquisition of conservation easements would preclude future development of parcels that could be taxed at a higher assessed value.

The effects of the proposed acquisitions on all affected resources and uses are beneficial or negligible. BLM concludes the proposed action is not related to other actions with cumulatively adverse impacts.

3.4 Mitigation and Monitoring

The additional mitigation or monitoring measures recommended as a result of the above analysis of the proposed fee title and conservation easement acquisitions are:

1. ACEC (and Special Status Plants) -- Within one year of acquisition of the fee title lands, complete riparian condition and special status plants surveys as part of processing of the expiring grazing lease for the Wildcat Creek Allotment.

2. Scenic SRMA – No additional mitigation and monitoring measures are recommended.

3. Vegetation/Habitat – Cooperate with the property owner(s) of conservation easement to design vegetation treatments that enhance rangeland and forest health and habitat diversity.

4. Weed Control (and Special Status Plants) -- If surveys of the ACEC, including newly acquired parcels, locate any populations of ESA-listed plants (McFarlane's four o'clock or Spauldings catchfly) and prior to allowing weed control activities to proceed, complete section 7 consultation with the USFWS to identify conservation and monitoring measures to protect the population from adverse impacts.

5. Special Status Plants -- See items 1, 4 and 8.

6. Aquatic Habitat – No additional mitigation and monitoring measures are recommended.

7. Wildlife/Habitat -- No additional mitigation and monitoring measures are recommended.

8. Livestock Grazing (and Special Status Plants) -- If surveys of suitable habitat in the ACEC, including newly acquired fee parcels, locate any populations of ESA-listed plants (McFarlane's four o'clock or Spauldings catchfly), complete section 7 consultation with the USFWS for renewal of the grazing lease for the Wildcat Creek Allotment. This is to allow identification of conservation and monitoring measures needed to protect the population from adverse impacts of livestock grazing use throughout the 10-year term of the lease.

9. Cultural Resources (3.2.9) – The conservation easements have a high potential for sites that contribute to the Lower Salmon River National Register of Historic Places District. When negotiating the conservation easement(s) with the landowner, consider stipulations that will allow BLM to protect the potential cabin sites associated with the supply trail to homesteaders and miners along the Salmon River. When approving the new homesite development (section 4 parcel) or vegetation management activities (any parcel), request permission from the landowner to survey the lands, and propose measures to mitigate adverse impacts to historic properties.

10. Social/Economic Resources (3.2.10) – When seeking funds to purchase the conservation easements adjacent to the ACEC in Idaho County, and to address concerns for spending taxpayer dollars to increase the amount of federal land, consider exchange proposals for isolated tracts of public lands in the Cottonwood planning area that are available for disposal.

4 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

4.1 Persons, Groups and Agencies Consulted

Scoping for preparation of this EA included publishing information on the Idaho BLM NEPA website, and sending letters on December 20, 2010, requesting comments from various groups and the public. The Cottonwood Field Manager also conducted a briefing to the Idaho County Commissioners in April of 2011. The following summarizes responses the BLM received.

Idaho Conservation League strongly supports the proposal for preservation of the Lower Salmon River corridor.

Friends of the Clearwater also supports the proposal, and suggested the BLM consider a no-grazing alternative.

Idaho Recreation Council does not support the project because of reduced Federal budget and increased deficit.

Western Whitewater Association strongly opposes the proposal based on their opinion of a possibility for more land being added to the Proposed Wild and Scenic Rivers System, assumed reduction in grazing and reduced private property in Idaho County.

Joseph Reiner opposes the project on the basis of his opinion that the land should remain in private ownership, and that any additions to the Proposed Wild and Scenic Rivers System would be a waste of government money.

Idaho County is opposed to any decrease in the property tax base, and suggested BLM consider land exchanges as an alternative to the proposed acquisitions.

Consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is ongoing for ESA-listed plants and fish. BLM coordinated with NOAA Fisheries and USFWS biologists in preparing a biological assessment specific to the currently proposed acquisitions (BLM 2011b). The consultation is expected to conclude informally with concurrence for BLM's 'may affect, not likely to adversely affect' determination from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries.

Consultation under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act has been completed with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office.

The Nez Perce Tribe was contacted with an initial scoping letter, and an additional letter describing this project. No response was received.

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality identified all the creeks within the project area as being in a non-assessed water bodies (ID 170602090SL008_02), and that waters of the state are protected in accordance with IDAPA 58.01.01.

4.2 Preparers

Jeff Cartwright, Realty Specialist (Project Lead)

Mike Stevenson, Hazardous Wastes (Environmental Site Assessment)

Joe O'Neill, Recreation Planner (Recreation)

Craig Johnson, Biologist (Vegetation, Aquatic Resources, Wildlife/Habitat)

Lynn Danly, Natural Resource Specialist (Weeds)

Mark Lowry, Ecologist (Special Status Plants)

Dean Huibregtse, Rangeland Management Specialist (Livestock Grazing)

David Sisson, Archeologist (Cultural Resources)

Lorrie West, Planning and Environmental Coordinator

4.3 Distribution

This EA will be available for public comment on the Idaho BLM public internet site at http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/info/nepa.html. Copies may be requested by calling or visiting the BLM Cottonwood Field Office, 1 Butte Drive, Cottonwood ID 83522, telephone 208-962-3245. A notice of availability or copy of this EA will be sent to the following interested entities who commented during scoping and/or requested a copy.

Individuals
Joseph Reiner, Cottonwood ID

Businesses
Heckman Ranches, Inc., White Bird ID
SA8 River Outfitters

Non-Governmental Organizations
Jonathan Oppenheimer, Idaho Conservation League, Boise ID
Brian J. Oakey, Western Whitewater Association, Boise ID
Gary Macfarlane, Friends of the Clearwater, Moscow ID
Sandra F. Mitchell, Idaho Recreation Council, Boise ID

Advisory groups
Coeur d'Alene District Resource Advisory Council

Tribal Governments
Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee, Lapwai ID

State and Local Governmental Agencies
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Lewiston ID
Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Lewiston ID
Idaho Department of Lands, Boise ID

Local Elected Officials
Idaho County Commissioners, Grangeville ID

State Legislators Idaho District 8
Senator Sheryl L. Nuxoll
Rep. Ken A. Roberts
Rep. Paul E. Shepherd

Federal Legislators
Rep. Raúl R. Labrador, First Congressional District, Idaho
Senator Mike Crapo, Idaho
Senator James E. Risch, Idaho

Federal Agencies
BLM Idaho State Office, Realty Program Lead, Boise ID
NOAA Fisheries, Boise ID
NOAA Fisheries, Grangeville ID
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Boise ID
U.S. Forest Service, Nez Perce National Forest, Grangeville ID

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USFWS. 2000. Revised Recovery Plan for MacFarlane's Four-O'Clock (*Mirabilis rnacfarlanei*). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Portland Oregon. 46 p.

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