United States
Department of
Agriculture

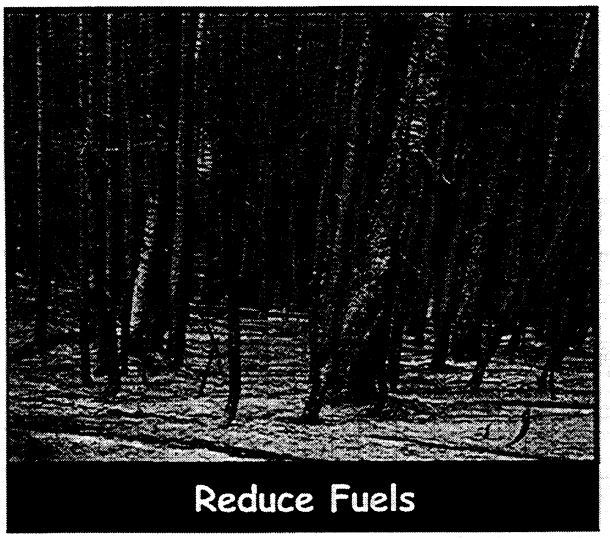
Forest
Service

Bitterroot
National
Forest

September
2001

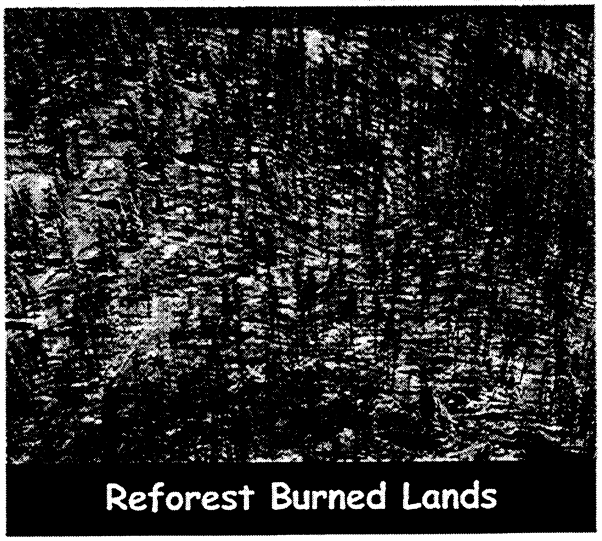
Burned Area Recovery

Final Environmental Impact Statement



Reduce Fuels

Improve Watershed Conditions



Reforest Burned Lands

Volume 1

Relationship Between Short-Term Use and Long-Term Productivity

In most watersheds, most activities would not cause effects more severe than those from the fire and their contribution to them would be minor (refer to Land and Water WEPP and water yield estimates and PF-Watershed-41). In most watersheds and treatment areas, the harvest may improve conditions by reducing soil erosion and sediment delivery by increasing storage areas on the hillslope from logging slash; and by improving drainage from haul roads (Maloney and Thornton, 1995) as well as the road improvements that are proposed in the various alternatives. The presence of smaller diameter coarse woody debris would provide shade and as they decomposed, nutrients for newly established vegetation.

Irreversible or Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

Proposed harvest or watershed improvements would not result in irreversible or irretrievable commitment of water resources. In some watersheds, the sediment produced by the activities would be offset by the beneficial effect of increased slash on the ground and by the long-term decreases in sediment yields that result from road improvements.

The use and construction of landings and temporary roads would disturb soils and vegetation at those locations. These areas would be altered from their present conditions and would take many years to recover. Soil profiles would be disturbed to some extent. Slash and seed spread over the disturbed area would improve rehabilitation success.

Effects on Floodplains or Wetlands

No vegetation management activities are proposed in floodplains or wetlands, these areas have been flagged for exclusion. Watershed improvement would occur in floodplains or wetlands. Although there would be increases in sediment during the culvert removal and some other roadwork, there would be a long-term decrease in sediment yield and improvement in floodplains and streamside wetlands. Changes in wetlands, riparian areas and floodplains could occur from increases in water and sediment yields following the fires. This has already happened in North Rye and Laird Creek.