



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Pacific  
Southwest  
Region

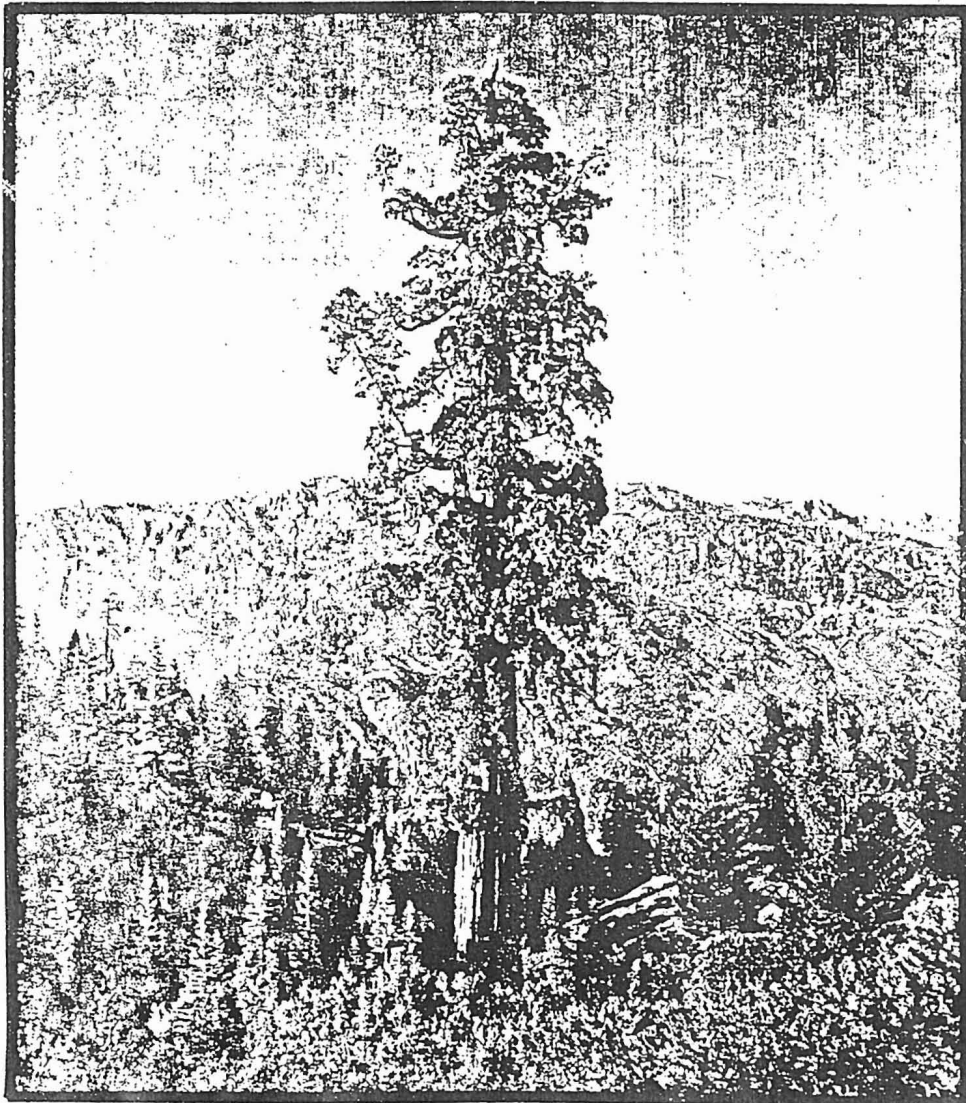


# Record of Decision

## Kings River Special Management Area;

## Kings, Kings South Fork and Kings Middle Fork, Wild and Scenic Rivers

Sierra National Forest  
Sequoia National Forest



*Kassirer*  
*Sept. 1981*

DECISION NOTICE

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Middle Fork, South Fork and the Kings Wild and Scenic River boundary and Classification EA

Sierra National Forest, Kings River Ranger District  
Sequoia National Forest, Hume Lake Ranger District

Fresno County, California

PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION  
U.S.D.A. FOREST SERVICE

The Kings River, South Fork Kings River, and Middle Fork Kings River Environmental Assessment documents the analysis of alternatives for establishing boundaries for these designated Wild and Scenic Rivers and the analysis for the classification of the Middle Fork Kings River and a one-mile portion of the Kings River from Garlic Creek to the 1595-foot elevation.

Based on the analysis presented in the Environmental Assessment (EA), it is my decision to select Alternative B, which would establish boundaries approximately one-quarter mile from the high water line. This alternative will be the most cost-effective to administer because the State Plane coordinate boundary lines and monument points could be scaled off U.S. Geological Survey maps and easily field located if necessary. Since there are no current issues requiring resolution, it is assumed the boundaries would not have to be physically located in the foreseeable future.

This EA is available for review at the following Forest Service offices: USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, 630 Sansome Street, San Francisco, California 94111; USDA Forest Service, 1130 "O" Street, Fresno, California 93721; and USDA Forest Service, 900 W. Grand Avenue, Porterville, California 93257.

This environmental assessment documents the first phase of the analysis required by Public Law 100-150 (P.L. 100-150). This phase involves completing the determination of boundaries and classifications for the 26 miles of designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. The locations of the rivers are those designated within the Act and shown in the environmental assessment.

Two issues were identified: the effect of the designation on a proposed Ten Mile Creek small hydroelectric project and the manner in which the boundary will be monumented. These two issues guided the formation of alternatives. There were no required actions to mitigate potential significant environmental effects. There were four management action items identified and listed in Appendix C that would be necessary to carry the results of this analysis into the next phase of the wild and scenic rivers planning.

Three alternatives were analyzed: 1. A high water mark which would be confined to the immediate river, normal high water mark to normal high water mark (Alternative A), 2. A one-quarter mile width boundary which would comprise that area measured approximately one-quarter mile horizontal distance from the normal high water mark on each side of the river (Alternative B), and 3. A boundary which would be established by using aliquot parts of sections (Alternative C). All alternatives include establishing a Wild classification for the Middle Fork Kings River, which is entirely within the Monarch Wilderness, and for one mile of the Kings River from Garlic Meadow Creek to the 1595-foot elevation, which is entirely within the Kings River Special Management Area.

Two alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed study. The first alternative that was considered used existing Congressionally designated features. This alternative was eliminated from further consideration because it would not meet the intent of the 1988 Public Law 100-534 amendment to Section 3(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to include an average of not more than 320 acres of land per mile within the corridor. The second alternative that was considered used a combination of existing Congressionally designated features and a one-quarter mile corridor width on either side of the rivers. This alternative was eliminated from further consideration because it was basically the same as Alternative B. It was therefore combined with and analyzed as a part of Alternative B.

Alternative B is the environmentally preferred alternative in accordance with NEPA Section 101(b).

All actions necessary to mitigate or enforce this project have been determined as outlined in the EA Appendix C "Management requirements and constraints". The second phase for meeting P.L. 100-150 requirements will be an analysis of various management activities and their associated impacts within the established approved river boundaries and classifications.

I have determined, after assessing the impacts, that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. This determination was made considering the following factors:

1. Because the rivers have been designated into the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, thereby ensuring an average boundary, the impact of establishing a detailed boundary is of small magnitude affecting only the local environment. Also, because the Middle Fork Kings River is within legislated wilderness and the one mile of the Kings River is within the Kings River Special Management Area, the effects of establishing a classification is of small magnitude affecting only the local environment.
2. The actions of local short-term use does not preclude maintenance and enhancement of long-term wild and scenic river resource values.
3. The irreversible and irretrievable resource commitments associated with the environment are minor.

4. There are no unique or rare resources that will be affected by the project activities.

5. The physical and biological effects are local ones limited to the project area.

6. The effects on the human environment are not uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Appeals must be filed within 45 days of the date of this notice.

Implementation of this project may take place immediately. .

*Paul F. Barker*

PAUL F. BARKER  
Regional Forester

*March 24, 1989*

Date

# Record of Decision

The Kings River Special Management Area;

Kings,  
South Fork Kings and  
Middle Fork Kings,  
Wild and Scenic Rivers



Fresno County, California

United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Sierra National Forest, Kings River Ranger District

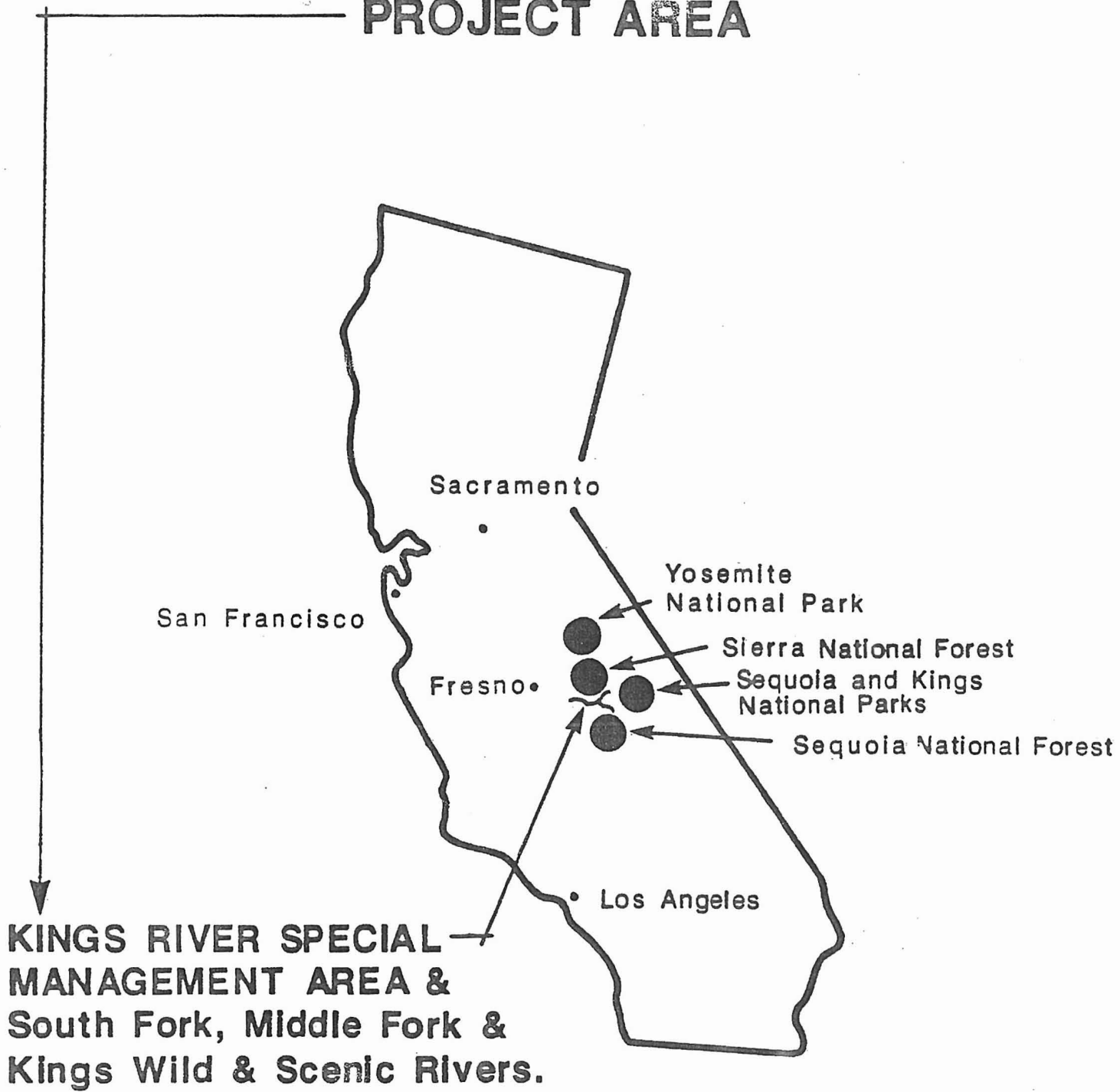
Sequoia National Forest, Hume Lake Ranger District

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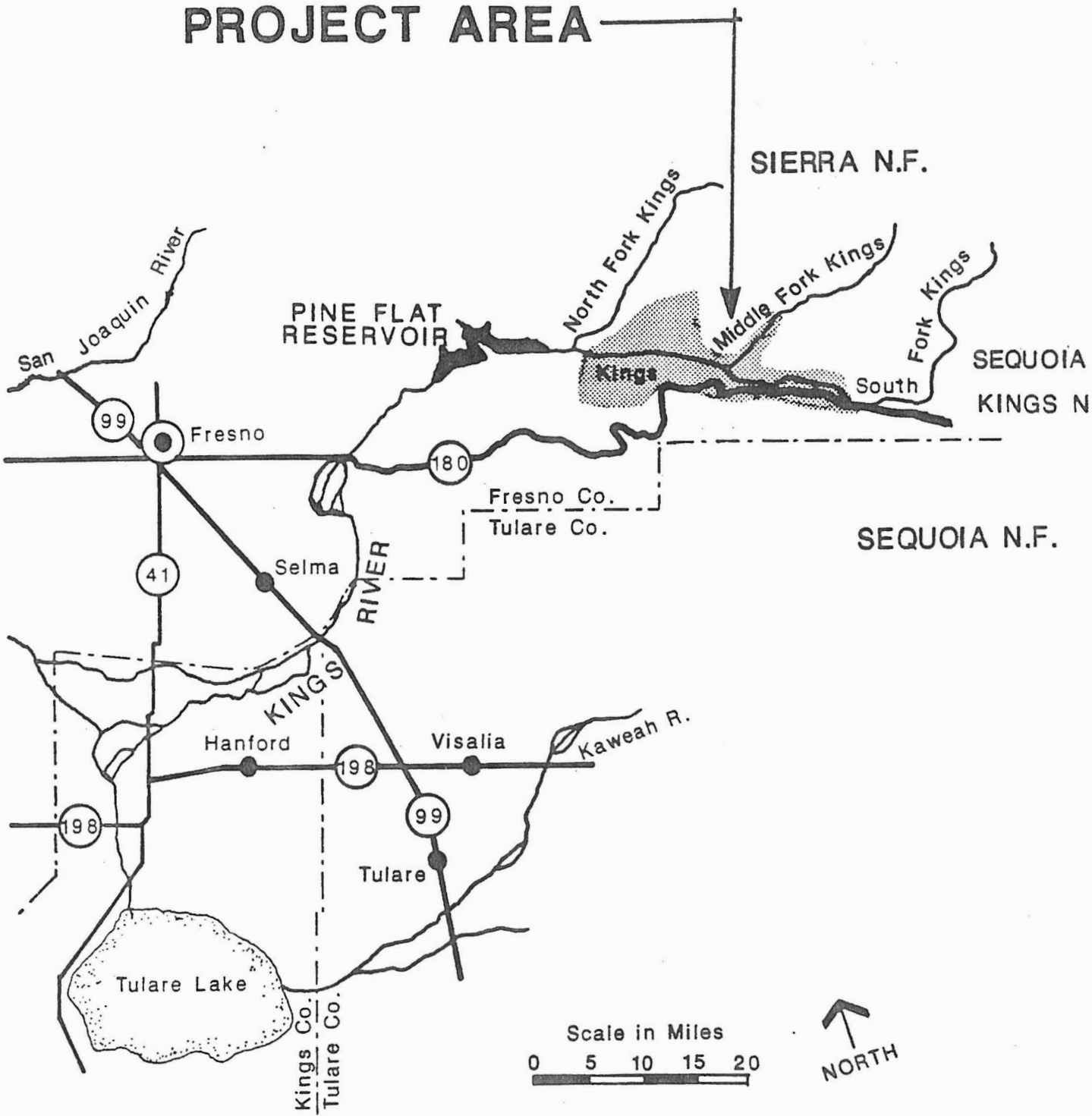
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# PROJECT AREA



**KINGS RIVER SPECIAL  
MANAGEMENT AREA &  
South Fork, Middle Fork &  
Kings Wild & Scenic Rivers.**

# PROJECT AREA





## 1.0 Introduction

This Record of Decision (ROD) explains and documents the rationale for the selection of the preferred alternative (Alternative NEW). The proposed action is to manage the land in accordance with PL 100-150, and to complete the items in the Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan further defines the specific management actions, and defines the management emphasis for the Kings River Special Management Area (SMA), and segments of the Middle Fork of the Kings River, the South Fork, Kings River and the Kings River (above elevation 1595')(W&SR). The goals of the Act and the Implementation Plan are:

"... to provide for public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment of certain areas within the Sierra National Forest and the Sequoia National Forest, to protect those areas' natural, archaeological, and scenic resources, and to provide for appropriate fish and wildlife management of those areas.."

In summary, the Implementation Plan will protect these resource areas, provide for appropriate fish and wildlife management and show a conceptual location for a trail as indicated in the act.

In addition, Implementation Plan indicates the eligibility for segments of the Kings River (below 1595' elevation) that could be added to the Wild and Scenic Rivers system.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) documents analysis of the potential impacts of development and management of the newly created Kings River Special Management Area and the Kings River Wild and Scenic Rivers. The SMA & W&SR were created by Public Law 100-150 (PL100-150). The SMA and W&SR are located approximately 45 miles east of the city of Fresno, CA. They include lands within both Sequoia and Sierra National Forests. An array of development and management scenarios were considered.

Public and agency comment were solicited continuously throughout the planning process through several mediums: an informal survey of users, regular meetings with interested individuals, public meetings, press releases, and a "SMA UPDATE" mailer sent to over 800 interested people at critical stages during the process.

A Draft EIS (DEIS) and Implementation Plan were released to the public on July 19, 1990. As a result of comment on the DEIS, a new alternative was developed that combined elements of two of the original alternatives. No new analysis was undertaken; however, editorial corrections and points of clarification have been added.

Due to the deliberate attempt to maintain the natural, unrestricted quality of the SMA, no significant commitment of natural resources would occur under any of the alternatives. The most significant would be construction of new trails as authorized by PL100-150. The effects of trail construction would vary by alternative; however, no significant commitment of resources would occur.

Implementation of any of the alternatives considered would have minimal effect on the long-term physical or human environment of the area. As a result of opinion expressed during public and agency scoping, no high-use alternative was considered.

As indicated, the proposed action is to implement the NEW alternative. A series of zones would be created. Management direction would vary by zone and would range from managing for river-based recreation below Garnet Dike (Kings River Zone), to leaving an area essentially un-modified (Rough and Converse Zones).

In addition, PL100-150 called for construction of a trail from Garnet Dike to Little Tehipite Valley. In response to public comment on the DEIS, the NEW Alternative does not propose constructing a trail directly up the

Middle Fork (MF) Canyon. Rather, the existing National Recreation Trail (NRT) from Garnet Dike to Garlic Meadow Creek would be extended to Highway 180 at Yucca Point. Construction of a bridge and a trail head on Highway 180 would be required. A second trail segment, the Spanish Mountain Trail, would connect the NRT to the existing trail system to Tehipite Valley at Geraldine Lakes.

### **2.0 Scoping and Public Involvement**

Public involvement was a crucial part of the development of the DEIS and the Implementation Plan. The issues were the basis for the development of the alternatives, the objectives, and the management direction.

A Public Participation Plan was written in May 1989. The Plan, which is on file at the Forest Supervisor's office, identified opportunities for public involvement. The first opportunity was during the identification of issues; the second, while gathering information on alternatives and consequences; and the third, with the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and Draft Implementation Management Plan.

The scoping process took place from December 1988 to October 1990 and consisted of the following steps:

- Over 800 people on the current Kings River mailing list (inviting comments on issues and concerns) were notified.
- Three public meetings were held: two held in Clovis, California; and one in Visalia, California.
- A news release was mailed (June 1989) to local and selected metropolitan news media outlets (inviting comments on issues and concerns).
- "Update" notices were mailed to interested parties (identifying ongoing progress of the EIS and Plan).
- The Interdisciplinary (ID) Team met with interested and affected Forest Service personnel.
- The ID Team met with interested and affected State and Federal Agency personnel.
- The ID Team met with interested individuals and organizations.
- Two notices were published in the Federal Register. One notice identified the Forest Service's intent to publish a Draft EIS and Implementation Plan (September 8, 1989) and, a second notice announced the availability of the Drafts (August 10, 1990).
- A Draft EIS and Implementation Plan was available for public comment from July to October, 1990

See section 8.0 Appendix C of the EIS for a summary of public comments on the draft and the Forest Service resolution of those comments.

### **3.0 Alternatives Considered**

Alternatives were developed following public and agency scoping. Issues and concerns were determined within the parameters of PL100-150 and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Scoping indicated a clear consensus that the area should be kept as natural and unregulated as is feasible. Alternatives were created by grouping comments according to emphasis resulting in four themes: continuing the current management direction,

## SMA and WSR Record of Decision

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emphasizing preservation of natural resources, emphasizing river-based recreation, and dividing the area into zones with different management strategies.

Following publication of the DEIS, the public expressed support of the zone concept; but preferred the trail and boundary strategies found in one of the other alternatives. The NEW alternative reflects that preference. The river trail was also modified slightly from the original concept--again, as a result of public comment. The modification would eliminate lateral river access trails between Garlic Falls and Tenmile Creek.

**ALT. PNR (Preserve Natural Resources)** This alternative would manage for maximum retention of the wild, rugged character and biological diversity of the area. This alternative would have the least effect on the natural environment; there would be no significant development within the SMA or W&SR. It would require obtaining use of PG&E's property at Keller Ranch and developing overnight capacity outside the SMA. Commercial rafting capacity would remain, essentially, at the current level. There would be no significant increase in total overnight capacity; however, group camps would move from the SMA river corridor to Keller.

**ALT. CMD (Current Management Direction)** This alternative would continue the existing mix of uses. Use would increase as a function of population growth. Associated wear on cultural resources and riparian vegetation could increase to an unacceptable level. There would be no significant development within the SMA or W&SR. Commercial rafting capacity would not change significantly. This alternative would not require acquisition of PG&E's Keller property. Increased overnight use would occur in undeveloped dispersed campsites. Vegetation and cultural resource sites would be at risk from unregulated use.

The "Tehipite Trail" would be selected from the array presented in the other alternatives.

**ALT. ERO (Emphasize Recreation)** This alternative would emphasize increased recreation opportunities. Facilities would be added or expanded to increase capacity. Development would be consistent with resource values and W&SR designations. Vegetation and cultural resources would be protected or mitigated. Interpretation would be emphasized. Commercial rafting capacity would be the highest of any alternative. Full implementation would require obtaining use of PG&E's Keller Ranch property.

The "Tehipite Trail" would include two trails--a lower route extending the existing Kings River National Recreation Trail to Highway 180 near Yucca Point and an upper route, the Spanish Mountain Trail, that would leave the NRT at Rough Spur, go upslope around Spanish Mountain, and connect with the existing Tehipite Trail at Geraldine Lakes. The lower trail would include laterals to the river where feasible; a bridge would cross the river near the confluence of Tenmile Creek; trail-head parking would be required at Highway 180.

**ALT. MOA (Mosaic alternative)** This alternative would vary management emphasis by zone. Five zones would be established; opportunity class would range from essentially unmodified to developed recreation. Objectives for each zone would be based on unique features, suitability and ability to withstand use. Vegetation and cultural resources would be protected or mitigated. Commercial rafting capacity would increase during non-peak periods. Full implementation of this alternative would require obtaining use of PG&E's Keller Ranch property. There would be a boundary change on the north to eliminate existing timber plantations included in the SMA.

The "Tehipite" Trail, or Spanish Mountain, would be limited to the high route connecting the existing NRT to Geraldine Lakes, described in Alt. ERO above. There would be no new developed trail in the river corridor, except a lateral to Garlic Falls. Trail construction to access natural features outside the W&SR corridor would be emphasized.

**ALT. NEW (New alternative)** The NEW alternative is the same as Alt. MOA with two exceptions; the boundaries would remain as set by Congress, and the design of the "Tehipite Trail" would change.

The revised "Tehipite Trail" would include both the Spanish Mountain route and the extension of the NRT as described in Alt. ERO, with the exception that lateral access trails to the river would not be constructed beyond Garlic Falls.

## 4.0 Disposition of the Issues

This section briefly describes the issues addressed and the disposition of these issues by the alternatives considered. In general, issues were addressed through the design of specific alternatives. Chapter 2.0 of the FEIS describes measures common to all alternatives. Actions specific to the NEW alternative were further developed and described in the accompanying Implementation Plan.

**CULTURAL RESOURCES AND ARCHAEOLOGY:** How will the protection of archaeological resources be integrated with development and utilization of the river corridor?

**DISPOSITION:** To date, there has been no systematic inventory or sampling of the archaeological resources of the SMA or W&SR. Despite this lack, a number of historic, prehistoric, and ethnohistoric sites are known to exist. A high density of sites of all types is expected based on preliminary sampling. A particularly dense concentration of sites occurs along the KR between Tenmile Creek and the lower boundary of the SMA. Members of the Dunlap Band of Mono indicate there are sites now in the SMA that members of the tribe use and consider highly significant. They are concerned that these sites remain accessible to them and protected from damage.

Cultural Resources are a central issue in developing the SMA plan, primarily because of geographic limitations. The outstanding natural features of the SMA and W&SR have attracted people since prehistoric times. Popular locations and features frequently are also prehistoric, historic, and/or ethnohistoric sites. This convergence of current use and archaeological sites is intensified in the narrow floor of the canyon.

The FEIS and Plan will require that archaeological reconnaissance and Native American consultation take place prior to any project activity. No adverse effects would occur under any alternative; however, the level of mitigation versus protection changes by alternative.

Alternative PNR would offer maximum protection. The future value of sites would be preserved. Alternative CMD, the risk of use-caused damage would continue or increase. Alternative ERO, sites in developed zones would be mitigated. Some mitigation techniques (excavation) limit a site's value to the present level of technology. Some loss of future potential may result. Alternatives MOA and NEW would offer a high level of protection. Sites in developed zones would be protected. Their future value would be preserved.

**RECREATION:** What strategy of recreational opportunity development and utilization will be emphasized in terms of kinds and amounts of recreation, and where will they be located?

**DISPOSITION:** Levels recreation development vary by alternative. This section describing recreation activities is divided into: Camping, the South Fork, Trails, Rafting and Boyden Cave. (Kirch Flat, OHV use, visual quality, and the "Tehipite trail" are covered by their own issues.)

### **Camping:**

In Alternative PNR group camps would move to Keller/Kirch area. Primitive developed campgrounds would remain south of the River in the SMA. Alternative CMD: the designated group camp areas within the SMA would continue to be used, with permittees required to furnish their own portable sanitation facilities. In alternatives ERO, MOA, and NEW, group camps would move to Keller/Kirch area. Primitive developed campgrounds would remain south of the River in the SMA.

**South Fork:**

Alternative PNR: The area along d the South Fork of the Kings would be limited to day use only. The W&SR corridor would not be available as an overflow camping. Additional toilets would be added if required to protect the environment. Alternatives CMD and ERO would permit turnouts to be used for camping. Overcrowding would continue during periods of high use. Toilets would be added if needed to protect the environment. Alternatives MOA and NEW: turnouts would continue to be used as overflow campgrounds; trash collection and toilets would be provided.

**Trails:**

In alternative PNR: no major trail construction other than extending the Kings River National Recreation Trail to Highway 180. Bicycles would be limited to existing roads. Alternative CMD proposed no major trail construction other than angler access and the selected trail alternative, and bicycles would be permitted on all trails outside wilderness. Alternatives ERO, MOA and NEW identify new trail construction, including loop routes and trails to scenic areas, would be emphasized. Separate routes would be developed for bicycles and horses where feasible.

**Rafting:**

Alternatives PNR and CMD: Private rafting would remain unregulated until limits of acceptable change are reached. Commercial rafting would remain at 240 "people at one time" (PAOT). Alternative ERO has private rafting same as PNR. Commercial rafting would increase to allow each of three companies two trips per day for a total of 420 PAOT. Alternatives MOA and NEW: private rafting would be the same as in alternative PNR. Two Commercial rafting companies would be allowed one trip per day on weekdays, and one company would be allowed two trips per day on weekdays (280 PAOT). All companies would be allowed two trips on weekends (420 PAOT).

*See Charlie's  
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is not correct  
was supposed to  
be corrected by  
better to  
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plan.*

**Boyden Cave:**

In alternative PNR Boyden Cave would continue to operate at current capacity with existing facilities. Replacement of toilets would be allowed if needed to protect environmental quality. No new commercial ventures would be permitted in the W&SR corridor. Alternative CMD would continue to operate Boyden Cave at current capacity; toilets would be upgraded as needed. No new commercial ventures would be permitted in the W&SR corridor. Alternative ERO: Permittee would be allowed to expand facilities and capacity if environmental analysis indicates no adverse environmental effects would occur. New commercial ventures would be permitted subject to approved environmental analysis. In alternatives MOA and NEW Boyden Cave would continue to operate at current capacity with existing facilities. Replacement of toilets would be allowed if needed to protect environmental quality. No new commercial ventures would be permitted in the W&SR corridor.

**TEHIPITE TRAIL:** What route will the trail follow? What level of construction is appropriate? What effect will the trail have on the Monarch Wilderness and Kings Canyon National Park (NP).

**DISPOSITION:** An alternative was considered that would have constructed a trail up the Middle Fork canyon to Little Tehipite Valley; this alternative was dropped from further consideration when public and agency comment and analysis indicated it would have irretrievable and irreversible effects on both the Middle Fork Canyon and Kings Canyon National Park. With the elimination of this alternative, no irretrievable or irreversible effects would occur under any of the alternatives. The entire watershed of the SF, MF, and KR above the confluence of the NF at the lower boundary of the SMA has W&SR status and drains lands protected by wilderness status, inclusion in Kings Canyon NP, or the SMA. A few creeks, including Tenmile Creek, originate in general forest land outside the SMA. The level of protection and development proposed by this plan is sufficient to insure that no cumulative effects would occur within the watershed.

Alternative PNR: Kings River National Recreation Trail would be extended from Garnet Dike to Ten Mile Creek. Bridge would connect to Yucca Point Trail and Highway 180. No access to Little Tehipite Valley. In alternative

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CMD there is no current trail beyond Rough Creek; so a preferred route would have to be selected from other alternatives. Alternative ERO: two trails would be constructed. The lower route would be the same as alternative PNR above. The Spanish Mt. route would connect to the NRT at Rough Spur and tie in with the existing trail system to Tehipite Valley at Geraldine Lakes. Would connect Highway 180, Garnet Dike, and Tehipite Valley. Alternative MOA: no lower route would be constructed beyond Rough Spur. The upper route would be the same as alternative ERO above. There would be no connection with Yucca Point trail and Highway 180. In the NEW alternative, the upper, or Spanish Mountain, trail would be the same as alternative ERO above. The Lower trail would extend the current NRT trail to Highway 180 at Yucca Point.

**AIR QUALITY:** Are any management constraints needed to maintain air quality within the SMA?

**DISPOSITION:** The principal factors affecting air quality in the SMA and WSR are smoke from natural and prescribed fires, photochemical smog, and fugitive dust from the San Joaquin Valley air basin. Only prescribed fire, local emissions from campfires, and dust from unsurfaced roads are considered within the scope of the EIS.

None of the alternatives considered would significantly affect air quality; fugitive dust from roads would be insignificant; discharge of smoke from prescribed fire would comply with existing regulations.

**ECONOMICS:** What are the economical implications of management activities within the SMA and the wild and scenic rivers?

**DISPOSITION:** The SMA and W&SRs are located at some distance from any community; management direction would not directly affect the economy of the immediate area. One resort, Boyden Cave on State Highway 180, operates under FS permit. The resort primarily serves visitors to Kings Canyon NP. Three commercial rafting companies operate on KR during white-water season; they would be directly affected by management decisions affecting the W&SR and SMA.

There is one range allotment on Sierra NF and two on the Sequoia NF. Under the provision of PL 100-150, grazing would continue at the current level under all alternatives; some redistribution in both time and location could occur to mitigate the effect of grazing on other resources. Specific direction is found in the Allotment Management Plans (see Grazing).

The economic effect of these alternatives on non-recreation resources can be found in the Grazing, Land Use, and Mining sections.

**FACILITIES:** What structures, facilities, and other improvements are needed to administer the river area?

**DISPOSITION:** Various levels of facility development was considered in different alternatives.

Alternative PNR: Facilities would be minimal, primitive when provided. The natural character of the area would be least altered by this alternative. Alternative CMD: Existing facilities would remain. In alternative ERO, facilities would be upgraded and expanded. This alternative would alter the natural appearance of the area more than the other alternatives; however, the character of the area would remain natural. Alternatives MOA, and NEW: facilities in developed zones would be upgraded and expanded, others would remain as is or be removed. Most development would occur outside the SMA; there would be a decrease in the overnight capacity within the SMA.

**FIRE/FUELS MANAGEMENT:** What strategy of fire and fuels management will complement other management activities within the SMA and the W&SR and provide needed protection?

**DISPOSITION:** Fire management direction for the SMA and WSR is driven by the land and resource management objectives identified under each alternative. Because of the diverse vegetation, steep topography, and variable resource values within the SMA and WSR corridors, the appropriate suppression response may vary from a strategy of prompt control to one of containment or confinement. Any fire occurring within the SMA that has exceeded, or is anticipated to exceed, preplanned initial action capabilities or the fire management direction would be considered an escaped fire and analyzed under the Escaped Fire Situation Analysis (EFSA) process.

Fuels would be managed to maintain a level of fuel loading, vegetative diversity, and age-class mix that complements the sustained productivity of the area's varied resource outputs. Fuelbed conditions would be maintained consistent with the natural fire ecology within the project area. Fuels would be managed to prevent erosion and river siltation.

**FISHERIES:** What is the current condition of fish habitat? How will proposed management activities affect it?

**DISPOSITION:** Much of the area is essentially unmodified and supports a rich diversity of plant and animal life. The Kings River above Garnet Dike has been designated a Wild Trout Fishery by the State of California. All alternatives provide for the protection of the fish habitat, but there was variation in the level of emphasis and development. The type and level of "marketing" or advertising of the angling opportunities was different in different alternatives.

Alternative PNR: fisheries would be emphasized, but not marketed. Use would increase in proportion to population growth. Alternative CMD: fisheries would not be emphasized or marketed. Growth would continue in proportion to population growth. Alternative ERO: recreation would be emphasized in developed areas, fisheries in natural areas. Fishing opportunities would be marketed. Use would increase as a function of marketing.

Alternatives MOA and NEW: Fisheries would be emphasized, but not marketed. Growth in use would be a function of population growth.

**GEOLOGY:** Are there unstable slopes or important geologic formations within the planning area?

**DISPOSITION:** Some geologic hazards exist, principally as a result of mass wasting from unstable slopes passing through or being deposited in the narrow river canyons. This risk has been addressed by minimizing or eliminating development in high-risk zones in all alternatives.

**GRAZING:** What is the best strategy for utilization of the range resource by domestic cattle?

**DISPOSITION:** Management of the range resource varied by alternative.

In alternative PNR grazing allotment plans would be altered to avoid river corridors, riparian zones, and cultural resource sites. This would require mid-slope water development, some structures, and relocation of the permittee's cow camp. Depending on the location chosen for the cow camp, limited new-road construction may be required for access. AUM's would not change. Alternative CMD would not modify grazing allotment plans. AUM's would not change. Emphasis would be on forage utilization consistent with LMP direction for resource protection. The permittee's cow camp would remain in the Riparian Zone at Camp 4 1/2. No new roads would be required. Alternative ERO would modify grazing allotment plans to avoid recreation areas and cultural resource sites. This would require mid-slope water development and some management structures. The cow camp would remain in the riparian zone at Camp 4 1/2. No new roads would be required. The established grazing season would be modified to change the off-date to insure cattle are out of the area by Memorial Day weekend. Alternatives MOA and NEW would modify grazing allotment plans by zone. Emphasis would be on forage utilization consistent with LMP direction for resource protection in the



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Bear Wallow, Converse, Boole, and Verplank zones. In the W&SR corridors, Kings River, and Rough zones, emphasis would be on avoiding recreation areas, protection of fish and wildlife habitat, riparian zones, cultural resources, and scenic values. The permittee's cow camp would be moved out of the riparian zone at Camp 4 ½. Some new road construction may be required for access. The established grazing season would be modified to change the off-date to insure cattle are out of the river corridor by Memorial Day weekend.

**KIRCH FLAT CAMPGROUND:** How are Kirch Flat and the SMA interrelated? Can the Kirch Flat be used to alleviate recreational impacts and congestion within the SMA?

**DISPOSITION:** Even though Kirch Flat campground is outside the SMA, it was considered in different alternatives.

In alternative PNR the Forest Service would develop a seasonal overflow campground to be used during rafting season and closed when not needed. An official raft take-out with road access and parking would be developed. Alternative CMD: no new facilities would be developed. There would be no direct vehicle access to the river. Alternatives ERO, MOA and NEW would provide for the development of a seasonal overflow campground to be used during rafting season and closed when not needed. An official raft take-out with road access and parking would also be developed.

**LAND OWNERSHIP AND USE:** Are there private land owner or permittee interests that must be addressed in the plan? How would management of the SMA be affected if the right to use Kirch Flat or Keller Ranch was lost?

**DISPOSITION:** Seven other agencies have some jurisdiction in or adjacent to the SMA, they are listed in section 3.3.5. of the FEIS. There are no private holdings in the SMA; however, one parcel, Keller Ranch owned by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), is located just outside the northern boundary between the SMA and the head of Pine Flat Lake. Use of this parcel, through acquisition or use-agreement, is key to fully implementing alternatives PNR, ERO, MOA, and NEW.

Alternative PNR would recommend acquisition of Keller Ranch, a private parcel located between the lower boundary of the SMA and the upper project boundary of Pine Flat. Portions of the property are currently being used for a base camp by three FS permitted commercial rafting companies. Acquisition of Keller would permit development of additional overnight capacity to serve the SMA outside the area boundary. Group camps currently located inside the SMA would be moved to Keller, reducing congestion of the river corridor. Keller, the site of a former fish hatchery, has had its integrity of setting previously altered by roadways, terraces, and building foundations. Keller Ranch is also encumbered by at least one prehistoric site. It will be necessary to ensure the protection of this resource, which may reduce the usable size of the parcel. There would be costs associated with land acquisition and construction of facilities. In alternative CMD, there is no current direction to acquire Keller Ranch. The group campgrounds would remain in the SMA; the base camps of the rafting permittees would be on private land; and patrons of two of the companies would continue to park along the Trimmer Springs Road. There would be limited opportunity to expand camping capacity at the end of the rafting run. Congestion in the SMA would be expected to remain the same or increase. There would be no cost associated with land acquisition or construction of new facilities. Alternatives ERO, MOA, and NEW would recommend acquisition of Keller Ranch, a private parcel located between the lower boundary of the SMA and the upper project boundary of Pine Flat. Portions of the property are currently being used for a base camp by three FS permitted commercial rafting companies. Acquisition of Keller would permit development of additional overnight capacity to serve the SMA outside the area boundary. Group camps currently located inside the SMA would be moved to Keller, reducing congestion of the river corridor. Keller, the site of a former fish hatchery, has had its integrity of setting previously altered by roadways, terraces, and building foundations. Keller Ranch is also encumbered by at least one prehistoric site. It will be necessary to ensure the

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protection this resource, which may reduce the usable size of the parcel. There would be costs associated with land acquisition and construction of facilities.

**MINERALS:** Are there existing mining claims in the SMA or W&SR? If so, what steps must be taken to accommodate access and development?

**DISPOSITION:** There are existing mining claims in the SMA. The management of mining claims was treated the same for all alternatives: commercial minerals would be managed according to current direction and the provisions of PL 100-150. No additional access or development is currently planned. Authorized recreational dredging and prospecting varied by alternative. The NEW alternative does not permit recreational dredging.

**NOISE:** What is the acceptable level of noise? What types of activities will affect noise levels in the area?

**DISPOSITION:** Noise levels were treated the same in all alternatives. Outside developed recreation sites, the SMA and WSR would be managed for a high degree of isolation and solitude. Motorized use of the water and aircraft landing, is prohibited except in emergencies. Some military overflights will occur at 2000' above ground level in the Foothill 1 Military Operating Area (MOA) and 200' above ground in the Complex 3 MOA.

**OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLES:** What is the appropriate strategy for off-highway vehicle use in terms of amount, season, and location?

**DISPOSITION:** Off-highway vehicle management is partially directed by PL 100-150, "The plan shall permit off-road vehicular use of off-road trail to the same extent and in the same locations as was permitted before enactment of this Act." The EIS discusses the history of planning around OHV use. Alternatives considered different Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes (See FEIS glossary for further explanation).

Alternatives PNR, and CMD: ROS class for Bear Wallow would change from "Limited Use" (1977 OHV Plan), to ROS Class "Semi-Primitive, Non Motorized". The Verplank area would change from "Roaded Natural" (old system) to "Semi-Primitive Motorized". Alternative ERO would allow evaluation of Bear Wallow Trail for use by motorcycles. In alternatives MOA and NEW the ROS class for Bear Wallow would change from "Limited Use" (1977 OHV Plan), to ROS Class "Semi-Primitive, Non Motorized". The Verplank area would change from "Roaded Natural" (old system) to "Semi-Primitive Motorized".

**PUBLIC INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION:** Who is our public? How will people be involved with SMA and W&SR planning? Who needs to receive information about the area after the plan is completed? What information do they need?

**DISPOSITION:** Extensive measures were taken to reach people who might be interested in the management of the SMA and WSR. Further information on public involvement is listed in ROD section 2.0 Public Scoping and Involvement, and EIS section 7.0 Consultation with Others.

The EIS Section 6.0 Distribution of the Report identifies who received copies of the ROD, EIS and Implementation Plan. Anyone requesting a copy of these documents shall receive one. During Plan implementation, additional information will be available by request. Individual projects will have further public involvement, including the planning and development of the trail to Little Tehipite Valley.

**SOCIOLOGY:** What are current population trends? How will they affect recreation opportunities and natural resources in the SMA and W&SR?

**DISPOSITION:** Six of the eight central valley counties topped the state growth rate between July 1, 1988, and July 1, 1989. Statewide, the population increased by 740,000—to 29,063,000—during the 1988-89 fiscal year. The Southern California growth rate was 2.7 percent. From 1980 to 1989, the population of Fresno County increased from 514,621 to 635,000—or 23.4 percent. Statewide, the population has increased rapidly, with an average annual growth rate of 2.2 percent since 1980 (Fresno Bee:1/23/90:B1).

It can be expected that use of the SMA will increase in proportion to the population growth of the central valley. Growth may occur at a faster rate as the edge of the metropolitan area moves east and access is improved by completion of the Highway 180 freeway corridor across Fresno.

Alternative development addressed the needs and expectation of different social groups.

Alternative PNR would tend to favor the environmental subgroup. Emphasis on maintaining the natural character of the area. Alternative CMD would accommodate the needs of affected user groups at the current level. Alternative ERO would tend to favor the regional recreationist. Emphasis would be on providing a broad mix of recreation opportunities. Alternatives MOA and NEW would vary emphasis according to zone designation.

**SOILS:** Will management activities impact soils, cause erosion, or loss of productivity?

**DISPOSITION:** Impact to soils in the SMA and WSR was discussed in the vegetation management, Geology, Water quality sections of the ROD, EIS and Plan.

**THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES:** What must be done to protect threatened, endangered, and sensitive species? How will protection be integrated with development and utilization of the W&SR and SMA?

**DISPOSITION:** Two listed threatened and endangered species are known to occupy or inhabit the area: Bald eagle, and Peregrine falcon. The California spotted owl is a USFS, Pacific Southwest Region Sensitive Species. Two USFS Pacific Southwest Region Sensitive plants occur in the area: Kings River buckwheat and Tompkins sedge.

For all alternatives the habitat of threatened, endangered, rare, and sensitive plants and animals would be identified, including—but not limited to—those identified by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as being present in the area. All administrative activities would be designed to avoid or mitigate their effect on these species and their critical or essential habitat.

Biological Evaluations will be completed prior to implementation of all construction projects, or other undertakings, that have the potential to affect any of the listed or sensitive species. Formal consultation with Fish and Wildlife Service will be initiated if administrative activities or project proposals "may affect" federally listed threatened and/or endangered species.

**TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM:** What standard of road and trail development is needed to provide access for recreation, to private holdings, and valid mining claims?

**DISPOSITION:** The majority of the SMA is without roads; however, it is accessible on the south by State Highway 180 and by two natural-surface forest roads—all are subject to seasonal closure during periods of bad weather. Principle reason for closure is slope failure and falling rock. Much of the area is inaccessible by either trail or road due to extremely rugged terrain.

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In alternative PNR roads would be unobtrusive. New roads would be limited to those required to implement the plan. Trail-head parking would be developed at Yucca Point. Alternative CMD: existing roads would remain; no new roads would be constructed; maintenance would be at the current level. Alternative ERO would add turnouts at critical points in existing one-lane roads for safety. Surface maintenance would remain at current level. No new roads would be built. Trail-head parking would be developed at Yucca Point. In alternative MOA road standards would remain the same; turnouts would be added for safety. Some new road construction would be required to access the relocated cow camp. The NEW alternative would be the same as MOA above except that improved trail heads would be required at Garnet Dike and Yucca Point.

**VEGETATION MANAGEMENT:** How will vegetation be managed to benefit visitors, wildlife, and domestic livestock?

**DISPOSITION:** Vegetation zones range from alpine to oak woodland and chaparral.

All alternatives prohibit commercial timber harvest, except to the extent necessary to establish fuel breaks, control outbreaks of insects and diseases, or remove hazards. Trees that could endanger irreplaceable features within the area, or cause substantial damage to significant resources adjacent to the area, may be removed as necessary.

The SMA would be closed to fuelwood cutting. Gathering dead and down material for local use in campfires would be permitted within the limits of acceptable change.

Giant Sequoia groves in the SMA would be preserved according to direction in the Sequoia NF Sequoia Management Plan.

Riparian zones would be managed according to standards set in "*Riparian Management for the Kings River Special Management Area.*" These guidelines will apply to all riparian zones in both Forests within the SMA and W&SR. Best Management Practices apply--and all new and current activities would be evaluated to determine if conflicts need mitigation.

Management actions in the Implementation Plan were designed to maintain maximum biological diversity in the SMA and the W&SR.

**VISUAL RESOURCES:** How will the visual quality of the area be maintained?

**DISPOSITION:** Visual quality of the area is outstanding; however, some of the finest features are inaccessible and little known. Utilization of well-known features is heavy during a limited season. Examples of infrequently visited features are the main stem Kings River between Garlic Meadow Creek and Tenmile Creek, the western slopes of Spanish Mountain, spring wildflower displays, remote waterfalls with no trail access, and isolated redwood groves. The nearly inaccessible wild river segment below Spanish Mountain flows in the deepest canyon in North America.

Alternative PNR: all new and reconstructed facilities would be upgraded to meet highest visual quality standards when complete. Management activities would be visually not evident or subordinate to the existing landscape. In alternative CMD facilities upgraded for health and safety or resource protection would meet partial retention and modification visual quality objectives. Facilities would be visually evident, but subordinate to the characteristic landscape. Alternative ERO: Facilities would be designed to be visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape. In alternatives MOA, and NEW all facilities would be upgraded to meet retention or partial retention visual quality objectives. Management activities would be designed to be visually not evident, or subordinate, to the characteristic landscape.

**WATER QUALITY:** How will water quality be protected?

**DISPOSITION:** Water quality of the Kings River and its tributaries is excellent.

All alternatives protect water quality of all existing streams through use of Best Management Practices (BMPs). Some specific BMP's are identified in the Implementation Plan. Stream-side management zones (SMZ) and riparian management areas would be established. Motorized vehicles within streamside management zones, except at approved put-in and take-outs for water craft would be prohibited. All necessary facilities and services would be located outside the riparian zone. Grazing would be managed to protect water quality of the streams and river and their riparian ecosystems.

All alternatives propose the construction of sanitation facilities at selected rafting put-in and take-outs to facilitate water quality protection. Rafting permittees would be required to provide portable sanitation facilities for their put-ins, swimming holes, and lunch stops that do not have permanent facilities.

To protect water quality, appropriate BMP's would be implemented to manage dispersed campsites adjacent to rivers and streams.

**WILDLIFE:** What kinds and amounts of wildlife habitat are found in the area? How will proposed management activities affect them?

**DISPOSITION:** Much of the area is essentially unmodified and supports a rich diversity of plant and animal life. All alternatives provided for the protection of wildlife habitat as mandated by PL 100-150, but there was variation in the level of emphasis and development.

Alternative PNR: consistent with the recognized river attributes, wildlife habitat would be given priority over other uses. Measures would be taken to prevent behavior modification of wildlife. The area would be available for cooperative studies. The number, timing, and type of visitor use could be restricted if monitoring indicated it was necessary to protect wildlife. In alternative CMD the management of wildlife habitat would continue at the present level. Existing wildlife-use areas would be maintained, with little emphasis on creation or enhancement of habitat. In alternative ERO the management of people and habitats would be equally emphasized in accordance with provisions of law. Measures would be taken to prevent behavior modification of wildlife. Watchable wildlife areas would be designated. Sensitive areas would be protected. Habitat enhancement would be done where compatible with recreational use and visual objectives. In alternatives MOA and NEW natural zones would be designated according to site-specific value for wildlife. A few selected areas would be designated watchable wildlife/educational areas. Sensitive sites would be protected by inclusion in natural zones. Measures would be taken to prevent behavior modification in wildlife. Hunting would not be permitted in developed zones.

### 5.0 The Decision

It is my decision to adopt FEIS alternative NEW, for the management of the Kings River Special Management area, Kings, South Fork Kings, Kings Middle Fork, Wild and Scenic Rivers. This alternative was formulated with the purpose of meeting the intent of PL 100-150 by providing outdoor recreation use and enjoyment of the special management area; protect the area's natural, archaeological, and scenic resources; and provide for appropriate fish and wildlife management within the area. This alternative also provides for the development of hiking trails in the special management area and includes a trail from Garlic Creek to Little Tehipite Valley in compliance with direction in PL 100-150.

### 6.0 Rationale for the Decision

This section describes the basis for my selection of Alternative NEW. These considerations were derived from the issues identified during the scoping process, the review of previous planning efforts, as well as from public comments on the DEIS, and Implementation Plan.

No single factor determined the decision. Among the many factors I considered, were how well the various alternatives would meet the stated purpose and need, the evaluation of direct, indirect (off-site) and cumulative effects, including effects associated with the development of a trail to Little Tehipite Valley, and the potential impacts to Kings Canyon National Park. Additionally, I considered adverse effects which cannot be avoided, short-term uses versus long-term productivity, and identification of irreversible or irretrievable actions. These factors are described in detail in the alternative comparison section of Chapter 2.0 and Chapter 4.0 of the FEIS.

In my judgment, Alternative NEW best satisfies the overall mix of public and Forest Service issues, objectives and opportunities. It strikes a reasonable balance between providing outdoor recreation opportunities and protecting the natural, archaeological, and scenic resources, and providing for appropriate fish and wildlife management.

Many of the issues were satisfactorily disposed of by all of the alternatives considered, including alternative NEW. There are negligible differences between alternatives for the issues of air quality, fire, fuels management, geology, minerals, noise, soils, Threatened and Endangered Species, and vegetation.

For other issues, differing environmental impacts either supported my selection of Alternative NEW, or persuaded me not to select another alternative. Important components of my selection of Alternative NEW for the SMA and WSR include:

The NEW alternative provides a plan for a trail to Little Tehipite Valley (in compliance with PL 100-150) that minimizes the potential impacts to the character of the area, and potential impacts on Kings Canyon National Park.

The NEW alternative includes increased opportunities for all season use of the National Recreation Trail. The expansion of this trail would offer spectacular views of scenery along the Kings river.

Hikers and stock users would be able to travel to Spanish Mountain from Highway 180 (on the Sequoia National Forest.)

The NEW alternative offers increased opportunities for commercial rafting.

The NEW alternative protects water quality by the relocation of the permittee's cow camp at Camp 4 ½.

Kirch Flat would be developed to increase developed recreation opportunities within the vicinity, and it would provide attractive overnight facilities for visitors outside the SMA, thus, diverting use and potential impacts.

There are no changes in the SMA boundary.

The NEW alternative has the versatility, in terms of multiple management zones, to respond to the different resource, social and managerial needs within the SMA and WSR.

Along with the environmental factors, I also felt that there was a show of consensus by the public comment on the Draft EIS and Plan. Nearly all the comments received are accommodated in the NEW alternative.

### 7.0 Environmentally Preferable Alternative

In accordance with Federal regulations 40 CFR 1505.2(b), I am required to identify those alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable.

Based on physical and biological factors, Alternative PNR (Preservation of the Natural Resources) is the environmentally preferable alternative, since it proposed a reduction in recreation activities and related impacts. Alternative PNR was not selected for several reasons. The principal reason is, in my judgement, it does not adequately contribute to providing for the development of outdoor recreation opportunities as required by PL 100-150. This alternative does not respond to the increased demand for commercial rafting opportunities, nor does it provide additional winter hiking opportunities (ei. the extension of the National Recreation Trail). Management actions in the Implementation Plan employ all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from recreation activities in the NEW alternative.

### 8.0 Implementation and Monitoring

The NEW alternative will not be implemented sooner than 30 days after the Notice of Availability of the EIS, Plan, and Record of Decision appears in the *Federal Register*. The time needed to implement all activities as described in the Implementation Plan will vary depending on the type of action, and the amount of further planning needed for specific activities.

The construction of the Spanish Mountain Trail will not occur until there is additional planning and design.

Monitoring for the NEW alternative is described in the Implementation Plan. The monitoring plan identifies: standards for resource quality, monitoring procedures, monitoring personnel, frequency, and variability signaling further action. Specific resources that will be monitored include: cultural resources, water quality, trail and roads, threatened and endangered species, recreation activities, soil erosion and others. The Monitoring Plan is based on the process of "Limits of Acceptable Change," and a description of this process is included in Appendix A of the Implementation Plan.

## 9.0 Appeal Rights

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of a Notice of Appeal", including the reasons for appeal and must be filed with:

F. Dale Robertson, Chief  
Forest Service - Appeals  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
14th and Independence, S.W. 201 14th Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250,

Notice of Appeal must be filed with the Reviewing Officer within 45 days of the date legal notice of this decision appears in the Sacramento Bee, Sacramento, California. Appellants must submit two copies of a Notice of Appeal.

For further information contact:

James L. Boynton  
1600 Tollhouse Road  
Clovis, CA 93612  
(209) 487-5155

  
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RONALD E. STEWART  
Regional Forester

6/30/91  
Date