U.S. Department
of Agriculture
Forest Service
Northern Region

U.S. Department
of Interior
National Park Service
Denver Service Center

NEZ PERCE (Nee-Me-Poo) TRAIL

Decision Notice & Environmental Assessment



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N491

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DECISION NOTICE

The Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail Study was conducted pursuant to the National Trails System Act, Public Law 90-543, as amended. An environmental assessment and study plan that recommend Federal legislation to designate the 1,170-mile Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) Trail as a national historic trail and a component of the National Trails System were distributed to 431 individuals, groups, Federal and State agencies, and elected officials.

Based on the analysis and evaluation described in the original environmental assessment and subsequent public review and response, it is my decision to adopt the joint Forest Service/National Park Service preferred Alternative C-1. This alternative best protects a historically significant event, provides additional opportunities for low impact recreation, and responds to public demands. Alternative C-1 designates the entire 1,170-mile route as a national historic trail. It includes marking, for identification and interpretation, along highways and other connecting roads. It also includes development of certain important segments identified in the study as "high potential route segments." (See definition on page 1 of the EA.)

While Alternative A, the no-Federal action alternative, is considered to be the environmentally preferable, it is not responsive to the basic criteria set forth in the National Trails System Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-543), as amended by Public Law 95-625, November 10, 1978, Section 5(b), (11) (A), (B), and (C). Alternative A is also not responsive to additional issues developed through public participation. During the 45-day review period, public response indicated that Alternative D--the most extensive development alternative considered--was felt to require more funding, construction and use of private land than is currently necessary to meet the objectives.

I have determined, through the environmental analysis, that the proposed action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination was made considering the following factors: (a) Marking along highways and trail construction and reconstruction along selected route segments will have only a slight effect on the ecosystem, (b) condemnation procedures to acquire private land easements will not be used by administering agencies, (c) the adverse effects on certain threatened and endangered species in Yellowstone National Park and the Shoshone National Forest are considered to be minimal, and (d) the physical and biological effects are limited to the area of planned development and use.

Implementation of this project proposal is contingent upon Congressional approval.

/s/ Peter C. Myers
Peter C. Myers
Asst. Secretary of Agriculture

JUL 1 1985
Date

COVER SHEET
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail
Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming

Responsible Official: Peter C. Myers
Asst. Secretary of Agriculture

Responsible for Preparation: USDA, Forest Service
USDI, National Park Service

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Abstract:

This Environmental Assessment describes five alternatives (A, B, C, C-1, D) regarding the feasibility and suitability of designating the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) Trail as a component of the National Trails System Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-643). A "Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail Study" completed by the Forest Service and the National Park Service preceded this document and is the basis for preparation of this Environmental Assessment.

In the initial Environmental Assessment submitted for public review, Alternative D was identified as the preferred alternative. Response received during the review period resulted in this revised Environmental Assessment which identifies Alternative C-1 as being the final recommended and preferred development direction. Alternative C-1 is a variation within the range of alternatives analyzed in the initial Environmental Assessment prepared for public review.

The reasoning for the determination that an environmental impact statement will not be prepared is included in the Decision Notice.

COORDINATION WITH OTHERS

Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail

Oregon - Wallowa County; Idaho - Clark, Clearwater, Fremont, Idaho, Lemhi, and Lewis Counties; Montana - Beaverhead, Blaine, Fergus, Gallatin, Golden Valley, Judith Basin, Missoula, Park, Phillips, Ravalli, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Wheatland, and Yellowstone Counties; Wyoming - Park County; Yellowstone National Park

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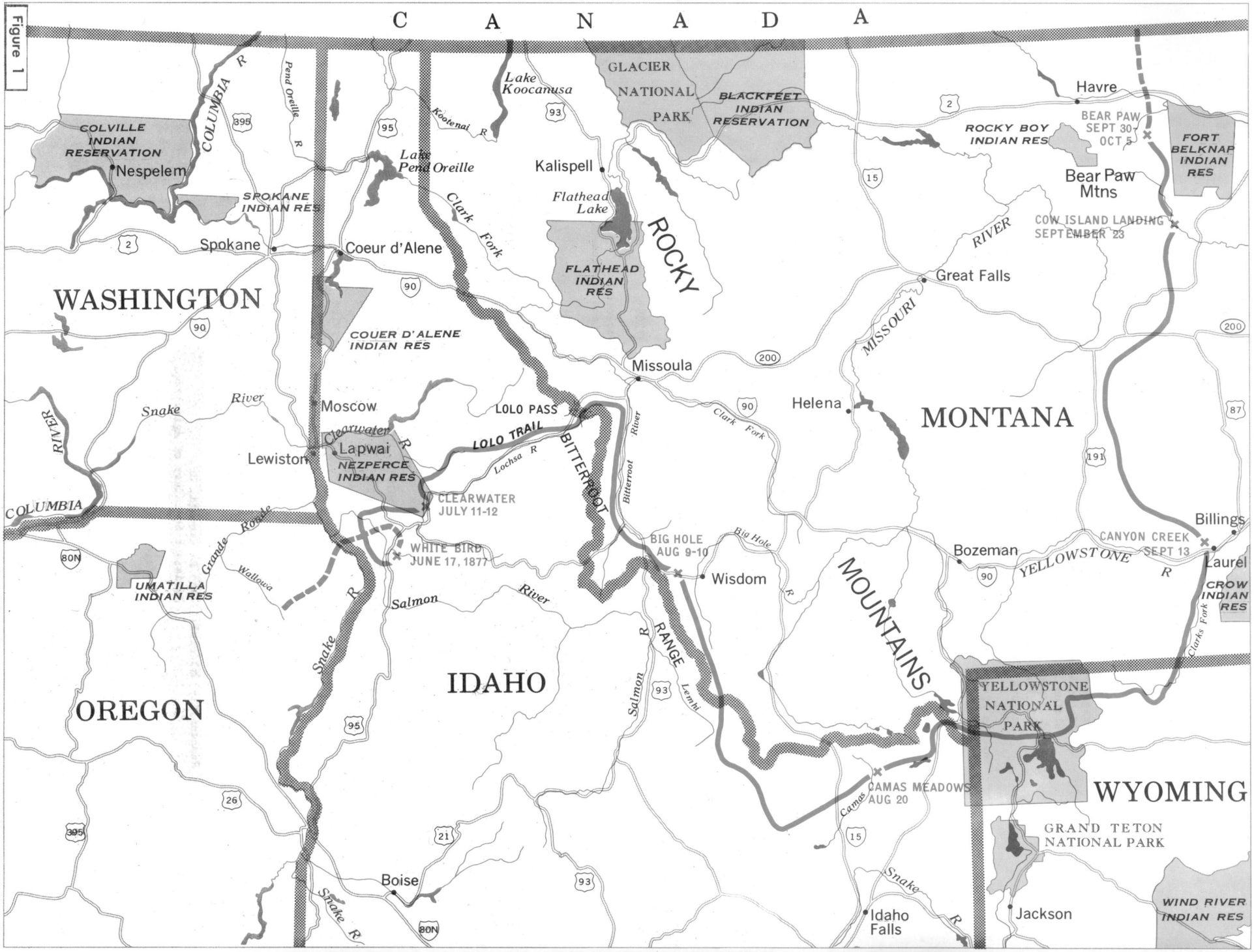
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Figure 1
C A N A D A
COLVILLE INDIAN RESERVATION
Nespelem
COLUMBIA R
Pend Oreille R
SPOKANE INDIAN RES
Spokane
Coeur d'Alene
WASHINGTON
COUER D'ALENE INDIAN RES
Snake River
RIVER
Moscow
Lewiston
Clearwater R
Lapwai
NEZPERCE INDIAN RES
COLUMBIA
Grande Ronde
Wallowa R
UMATILLA INDIAN RES
OREGON
Snake R
Lake Pend Oreille
Kootenai R
Lake Koocanusa
Clark Fork
Kalispell
Flathead Lake
FLATHEAD INDIAN RES
GLACIER NATIONAL PARK
BLACKFEET INDIAN RESERVATION
ROCKY
Missoula
LOLO PASS
LOLO TRAIL
Lochsa R
CLEARWATER JULY 11-12
WHITE BIRD JUNE 17, 1877
BITTERROOT
Bitterroot River
Salmon River
IDAHO
Boise
Snake R
Salmon R
RANGE
Lemhi
MOUNTAINS
BIG HOLE AUG 9-10
Big Hole R
Wisdom
CAMAS MEADOWS AUG 20
Camas
Idaho Falls
Snake R
Helena
Clark Fork
MONTANA
MISSOURI
Great Falls
RIVER
COW ISLAND LANDING SEPTEMBER 23
Havre
BEAR PAW SEPT 30 OCT 5
ROCKY BOY INDIAN RES
FORT BELKNAP INDIAN RES
Bear Paw Mtns
Bozeman
YELLOWSTONE R
CANYON CREEK SEPT 13
Billings
Laurel
CROW INDIAN RES
Clarks Fork
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK
WYOMING
GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK
Jackson
WIND RIVER INDIAN RES
2
15
90
95
93
200
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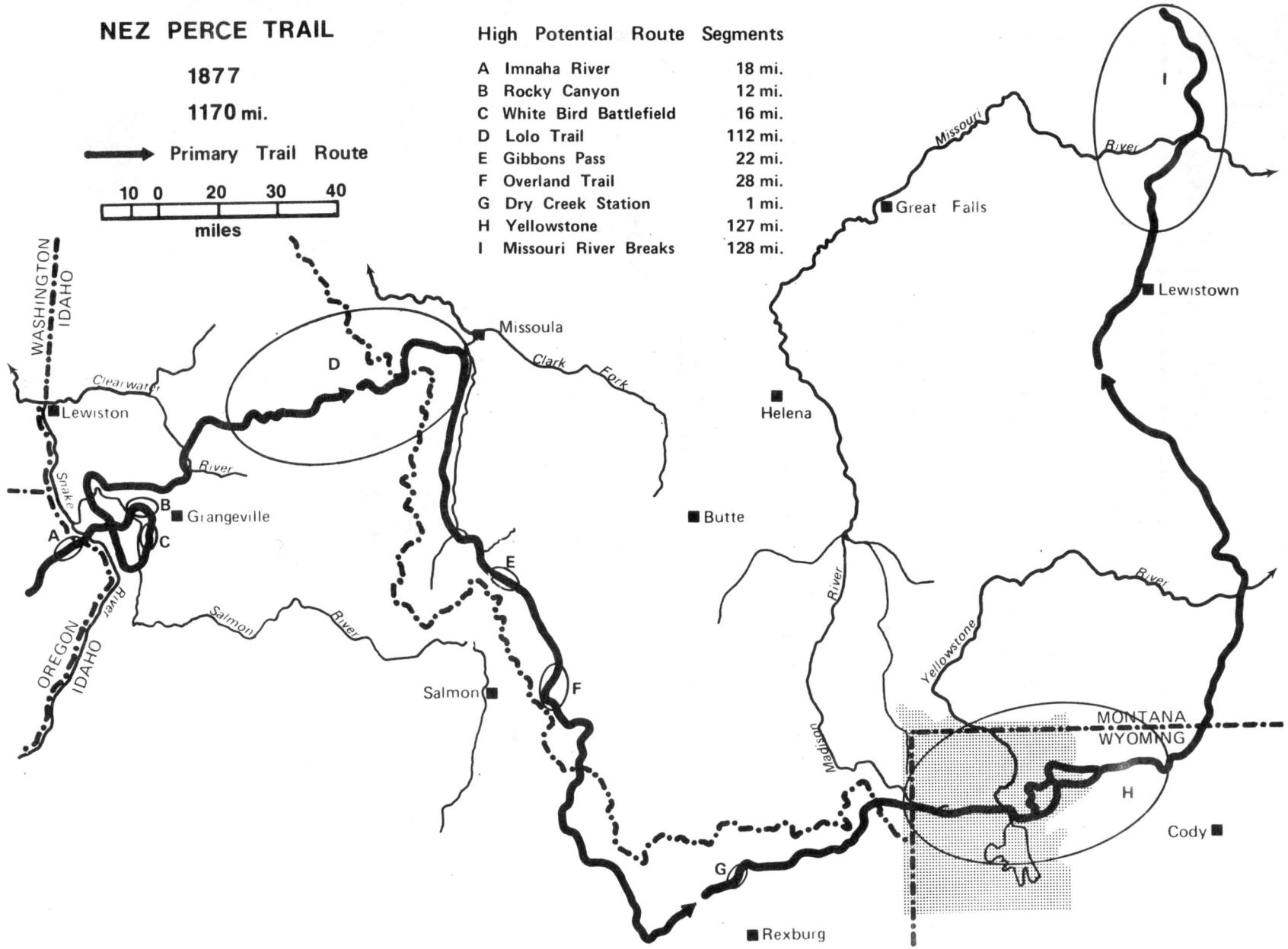
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Figure 1a


NEZ PERCE TRAIL
1877
1170 mi.
Primary Trail Route
10 0 20 30 40
miles
High Potential Route Segments
A Imnaha River 18 mi.
B Rocky Canyon 12 mi.
C White Bird Battlefield 16 mi.
D Lolo Trail 112 mi.
E Gibbons Pass 22 mi.
F Overland Trail 28 mi.
G Dry Creek Station 1 mi.
H Yellowstone 127 mi.
I Missouri River Breaks 128 mi.
WASHINGTON
IDAHO
OREGON
IDAHO
Clearwater River
Snake River
Salmon River
Lewiston
Grangeville
Missoula
Clark Fork
Salmon
Butte
Helena
Great Falls
Lewistown
Missouri River
Madison River
Yellowstone River
MONTANA
WYOMING
Cody
Rexburg
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I



Preferred Alternative

I. SUMMARY

This Environmental Assessment of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail was prepared in response to public comments received following announcement of the availability of a Draft EA in the Federal Register April 27, 1981, Vol. 46, No. 80, page 23503. The waiting period has been 45 days as required for administrative review and public response to the initial Environmental Assessment and Study Plan. The original Environmental Assessment identified four alternatives for implementation. Alternative D was presented as the preferred alternative.

Consideration of the public response suggested modifications that would cause less impact to private lands and lower the overall costs of development.* In consideration of public concerns, a joint Forest Service/National Park Service alternative, C-1, was developed as the preferred alternative and is displayed in this Environmental Assessment. This assessment contains an implementation plan for Alternative C-1. Alternative C-1 recommends designating the entire 1,170-mile route as a national historic trail. The assessment also recommends marking along highways and connecting roads and developing only specific portions, primarily on public lands, of the 464 miles which are identified as high potential route segments. See Figure 1a on page vi.

High potential route segments exhibit the following characteristics:

1. Trail integrity (original trail tread).
2. Historic integrity (presence of historic sites related to the Nez Perce flight or culture).
3. Significant recreation potential.
4. Scenic quality.
5. Significant opportunities for interpretation.

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* See Appendix B--Public Response, Analysis and Evaluation.

II. SUPPLEMENTAL ISSUES

In addition to the original issues, several other points of consideration are added in recognition of the public response received during the review period.*

A. The Nez Perce National Historic Trail should be highlighted, preserved, and interpreted for its historical and cultural significance.

B. Impacts to private lands, in the high potential route segments to be developed, should be minimized.

C. Development of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail should, where possible, be coordinated with other trails already in place to the benefit of overall development economics and protection considerations.

D. States should be encouraged to develop high potential route segments on their lands in accordance with the guides to be set by the administrative responsible agency.

III. PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative C-1

Designate the entire 1,170-mile route. Mark along highways and other connecting roads. Develop only specific portions of the 306 miles of identified high potential route segments on Federal lands or lands managed by the States.

The entire 1,170-mile route is designated as a national historic trail under the National Trails System Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-543), as amended. Portions of 464 miles, which are identified by the Trail Study Plan as high potential route segments, will be developed for cultural and historical identification and recreation use. Of the 464 miles, approximately:

30 percent (140 miles) is on private land,
3 percent (13 miles) is on State-owned land,
66 percent (306 miles) is on Federal-owned land.

On those portions to be developed, priority will be given to areas of Federally owned lands where use by the Nez Perce people during this episode can be identified on the ground. Where feasible, minor route variations on certain trail segments will place the recreation trails on public lands and reduce the need for easements. This will help reduce costs and conflicts with private landowners. Condemnation will not be used to acquire route segments that cross private lands. States or local governments may want to secure rights-of-way for those trail components located on private lands within the high potential

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* See Appendix A

route segments. This is encouraged to protect the historic integrity of the trail and to maintain continuity between trail sections. In such cases, planning and development shall be fully coordinated with the administratively responsible agency to maintain consistency required for a single trail system.

Public roads and highways which closely follow the actual historic route would be marked to aid travelers in identifying where they coincide. In the locations where the trail crosses highways, markers will be used to identify the crossing of a historic trail and interpretive signs used where appropriate.

Development emphasis will be associated with foot and horse travel recreation. Use of motorized vehicles on any portion of the route not already designed for general vehicle travel will be discouraged in order to maintain the historic significance of the trail.

The comprehensive trail management plan, when formulated, should promote the historic and cultural significance of this trail. Coordination with existing management plans will be required to recognize high priority resources and the potential for compromise; i.e., if the trail crosses an occupied grizzly bear area, adjustments concerning its exact location and construction standards may be needed to prevent major conflicts with the grizzly bear.

Development plans are to recognize the needs of the disabled and those with limited mobility including elderly and youth. Coordination with the design of existing or planned facility developments will insure providing for their needs.

This historic flight of the Nez Perce Indians will be further emphasized by adequate signs and displays, where appropriate, to interpret points of interest. Recreational facilities affiliated with the trail will be related to points of interest rather than established per se, independent to the purpose of the trail itself. Protection of soil, air, water, vegetation, cultural or historic resources, and visual aspects may require special management if threatened by user impacts.

Extensive construction along the trail or development of recreation facilities over the entire length of high potential route segments is not being considered at the present time. Special planning may be necessary to protect certain features of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail and their surroundings. Every effort will be made to coordinate trail development and use with other resource management considerations.

IV. EFFECTS OF IMPLEMENTING ALTERNATIVE C-1

The effects on the environment will be the same as those described for Alternative D, except there will be fewer impacts to the adjacent resources and privately owned lands.

A. Physical Considerations
(soil, water, air, aesthetics, minerals)

Alternative C-1 will cause varying degrees of impact to the above listed physical considerations. These impacts will range between minute disturbance to detectable disturbance. However, the disturbances will be controllable and limited to short time periods and/or small areas. In no case should they exceed E.P.A. or sound management standards. The long-term effects of increased use could involve subtle impacts and will require monitoring. Application of management practices to maintain a balanced environment may be necessary.

Because of less development, the impacts of this alternative will be less than would have occurred under Alternative D.

B. Biotic Considerations
(flora, fauna, habitat)

In Alternative C-1, as opposed to Alternatives A, B, and C, more consideration will be given to biotic factors. Alternative C-1 will recognize and protect the intrinsic values which are associated with this historic trail.

Protecting the habitat of threatened and endangered species and bison-calving areas will receive high management priority; i.e., inclusion of occupied grizzly bear habitat should be considered only when activities such as hiking, camping, or picketing of horses can be accomplished without adversely affecting grizzly bear."

C. Social Considerations
(cultural, historical, economic, employment, minority groups, recreationists)

Alternative C-1 will have about the same social considerations as Alternative D. It will provide nearly the same level of cultural recognition as would Alternative D. The number of developmental facilities will, however, be fewer because there will be less emphasis on development of the 140 miles of private land associated with the trail. Costs associated with fewer dispersed but sensitively sited facility developments will provide some short-term increase to local economies supplying materials and employment. Development however, is not expected to change business patterns in the area. Some long-term economic and employment values may be realized due to an expected slight increase in recreational use associated with the Nez Perce National Historic Trail.



Alternative Actions

I. PROPOSED ACTION

The Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail Study was conducted pursuant to the National Trails System Act, Public Law 90-543, as amended. The study recommends Federal legislation to designate the 1,170-mile Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) Trail as a national historic trail and a component of the National Trails System. The study also recommends trail development to accommodate increased recreation use on nine components which have been considered high potential route segments, including preservation of sections of the historic trail. Recommendations for administration, acquisition, marking, access, and historic interpretation are also given.

The purpose of the study was to determine the feasibility and suitability of designating the 1,170-mile Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) route as a component of the National Trails System under the category of a national historic trail. The Forest Service and the National Park Service jointly undertook the study in cooperation with affected Federal, State, and local governmental agencies, private corporations, the Nez Perce Tribe, interest groups, and individuals. The affected states and counties are:

Oregon - Wallowa County.

Idaho - Clark, Clearwater, Fremont, Idaho, Lemhi, and Lewis counties.

Montana - Beaverhead, Blaine, Fergus, Gallatin, Golden Valley, Judith Basin, Missoula, Park, Phillips, Ravalli, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Wheatland, and Yellowstone counties.

Wyoming - Park County.
Yellowstone National Park.

This environmental assessment discusses the relationship of the proposed Nez Perce National Historic Trail with other Federal actions such as: A linkup with two other national trails--the Lewis and Clark National Historical Trail and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail; related sites on the National Register of Historical Places; the Big Hole National Battlefield and the Bear Paw Battle Commemorative Site; North Absaroka Wilderness (Shoshone National Forest) and Yellowstone National Park.

The major conclusion reached with cooperating agencies' input and public involvement is that the entire 1,170-mile route should be designated a national historic trail. The general feeling of cooperating agencies and the public was that the Nez Perce episode is an important segment of American history and should be commemorated.

II. CONSULTATION WITH OTHERS

Public participation was achieved by means of workshops held in three Regional population centers: Lewiston, Idaho; Missoula, Montana; and Billings, Montana. An informational brochure was developed for use at the workshops. Members of the study team made numerous personal contacts with individuals, the Nez Perce Tribal Council, various government agencies, and other organizations.

Key issues were identified through personal contacts with individuals, groups, agencies, and elected officials. The following issues were identified:

- Is the present "Nez Perce Trail" an accurate name?
- If not, what could this route be called?
- Was the route established through historical use?
- Is the route historically significant as a result of that use?
- Have the events which established this route gained national significance?
- Is there potential historical interest based upon historic interpretation and appreciation?
- What will be the impacts of use on historic preservation?
- Can the actual route of travel be accurately determined on the ground?
- Are there areas adjacent to the route which can be utilized for scenic, historic, educational, cultural, or developmental purposes?
- Does the route and areas immediately adjacent to it have a significant potential for public recreational use?
- What is the current status of landownership on and adjacent to the route?
- Are there present land uses which may encumber the route designation?
- Are there possibilities for purchase or easements for certain uses of these lands or interest in these lands through which the trail travels? What costs would be involved?
- What kind of plans might be needed for developing and maintaining the trail route?

- What agencies or organizations might administer the route or portions of the route?

- What might be the expected visitor use of the trail route or individual portions of the route?

- Would there be seasonal restrictions to trail use?

- Does the type of conveyance (motorized) need to be restricted on the route or portions of the route?

- What type of economic and/or social benefits could accrue from lands devoted to the establishment of a national scenic or historical trail?

The above issues were listed in an October 1978 public information brochure. Although the public workshops attracted only 25 participants, the information received was important to verify the issues and produced the following consensus of opinion:

- The Nez Perce Trail is nationally significant and should be designated.

- The Nez Perce Trail does meet the criteria for national historic trails.

- All were concerned as to how private lands would be affected by the Nez Perce National Trail concept.

- All participants seemed confused about what the term "trail" implied. Everyone seemed to have their own opinion as to what constitutes a trail.

- The trail should not become over-commercialized.

- The terms "minimum development" and "minimum modification to the land" were stressed. However, participants seemed to have a slightly different definition for the term "minimum development."

- All cultural resources along the trail should be preserved.

- All participants felt that the trail should be interpreted, but there was a wide range of opinions as to how this should be accomplished.

The establishment of issues and consensus of opinion resulting from public workshops was helpful in developing the range of concerns and a formulation of alternatives.

The Forest Service-Park Service Study Team is indebted to the cooperation and interest in this project by George Hatley, Executive Director, Appaloosa Horse Club, Moscow, Idaho, and historical information provided by Nez Perce Tribal Historian Allen Slickpoo, Lapwai, Idaho.

III. EVALUATION GUIDES

The following issues surfaced during public participation activities and were considered in the initial development of alternatives presented for public review:

A. Existing trail remnants or historic sites should be protected from land uses or activities that may destroy them.

B. Development of visitor activities should complement historic preservation, appreciation and interpretation, and provide protection of the natural environment.

C. Emphasis should be for foot and horse travel use on most trail segments.

D. Development of the trail should permit limited motorized use only on those portions of high potential trail segments that have the environmental capacity for such activities. (Specifically, this involves 112 miles on the Lolo Trail and 5 miles of a truck route on Nez Perce Creek in Yellowstone National Park (see Section IV, E in the Study Report.) Such portions involve primitive "wheel track" roads and would be subject to all provisions concerning vehicular use or specified by the National Trails System Act.)

E. Highway portions that follow as closely as possible to the actual trail should be well marked and provide motorist with interpretations of significant historic sites along the route.

F. Travel on public roads is desirable in areas where the actual route location is unknown or where these public roads approximate the route of known trail segments.

G. Trail development must not significantly disrupt the habitat of threatened and endangered plants or animals.

IV. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED INITIALLY*

The consideration of alternatives began by establishing development alternatives ranging from:

(1) No Federal action, to
(2) Federal acquisition and development of the entire trail.

Initial public comments gave direction for additional and more moderate alternative choices. These were:

(3) Trail designation only. Do not mark or develop any portion of it;
(4) Designate the entire route and mark the roaded segments of the trail; and
(5) Designate the entire route. Mark along highways and other connecting roads and develop the high potential route segments.

After an analysis of all the alternatives was completed, No. 2 was deleted. Development of the entire route as a continuous hiking and/or horse trail was considered not feasible or desirable because of existing land uses and the prohibitive cost of acquiring private land along major portions of the route. The remaining alternatives were titled and further defined as Alternatives A, B, C, and D.

Alternative A

No Federal action.

This alternative recommends that the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) Trail not be designated as a component of the National Trails System. This would eliminate, for an unknown period of time, the need to locate original and existing trail remnants. "No action" would not consider provisions for protection, development, or interpretation. The future could obliterate the location and significance of the trail and event.

Alternative B

Designate the entire 1,170-mile Nez Perce route as a national historic trail but do not mark or develop any segments.

This designation would recognize the route's significance but would provide limited incentive for the preservation and development of historic sites and original trail remnants. Federal involvement would be the minimum necessary. The route would be mapped and described for public and historical reference; physical features would have little protection.

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* The preferred alternative is now C-1 as described at the beginning of this Environmental Assessment.

Alternative C

Designate the entire 1,170-mile route as a national historic trail and mark the roaded segments of the trail. Do not develop any trail segments.

Public roads and highways which closely follow the actual historic route would be marked to help motorists and bicyclists in traveling the appropriate route. Route locations that crossed the highways would be marked and interpreted.

Route segments on Federal lands could be developed by the applicable Federal agencies utilizing national recreation trail criteria and procedures described in the National Trails System Act of 1968. This would become optional and independent actions.

Alternative D

Designate the entire 1,170-mile route. Mark along highways and other connecting roads and develop the 464 miles of identified high potential route segments.

The development would involve 324 miles of public land and 140 miles of private land within the high potential segments. Emphasis would be for foot and horse travel recreation opportunities.

Some minor route variation on certain trail segments could place the trail almost entirely on public lands. This would reduce acquisition, easement costs, and minimize the effects on private land.

It is not considered that condemnation be used to acquire high potential route segments that cross private lands.

V. ASSESSMENT OF INITIAL ALTERNATIVES*

A. THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment affected by the decision to study the Nez Perce's route for inclusion in the National Trails System is within the area included in Figure 1, page vi.

In summary, rugged, mountainous terrain and rolling, high plains characterize the topography. Cold, moist winters and warm, dry summers produce good agricultural conditions on the rocky but fertile soils. Livestock grazing, timber harvesting, and farming for grains and hay are the major agricultural pursuits.

In some locales, mining for precious metals continues on a small scale, along with increasing exploration activities for energy-related resources.

Most of the trail corridor passes through undeveloped forested areas and grasslands. Populations in proximity to the trail are mostly rural with some small community developments. Federal, State, and county governments and regional manufacturing (Lewiston, Idaho; Missoula and Billings, Montana) are the largest employers. The agricultural industry remains a leading source of income for families in the rural regions.

Recreational pursuits cover the spectrum from primitive to developed on both public and private lands. A detailed description of the affected environment appears in the Nez Perce Trail Study Report, which is the basis of this Environmental Assessment.

B. EFFECTS OF IMPLEMENTATION

This section describes consequences of implementing each of the initial alternatives in terms of outputs, costs, and environmental changes. The impacts are grouped into three broad categories: (A) Physical Environment (B) Biotic Environment, and (C) Social Environment. It is recognized that these groups are interrelated, and social and economic impacts are also environmental impacts. Monitoring plans and cost/benefit ratios were not prepared for any of the alternatives.

Because of the conceptual nature of the study, specific site information has not been gathered. The following discussion of impacts does not reflect a site-specific approach, and only general impacts which may be expected are described.

The agencies charged with implementing any future proposal must conform to the provisions of several Congressional acts; i.e., the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969; the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Executive Order 11593; and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's procedures (36 CFR, Part 800). In the development of a comprehensive trail management

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* See footnote on page 9.

plan, the agencies will prepare environmental assessments and, if necessary, environmental impact statements in accordance with NEPA and other legal requirements.

1. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The soil, water, air, public-private land use, and mineral elements are discussed in this category.

Alternative A

No Federal action.

Implementation of this choice will not affect impacts on the physical environment because no new actions are planned.

Alternative B

Designate the entire 1,170-mile route as a national historic trail but do not mark or develop any segments.

No new trail development is planned. Federal agency involvement would be limited to the identification and mapping of the route.

This recommendation would not have a significant effect on the elements in this category because the land-disturbing actions are limited to nonexistent.

Conflicts with air, water, private land, and mineral, oil, and gas resources associated with this action would be the minimum expected when compared to the remaining alternatives.

Alternative C

Designate the entire 1,170-mile route as a national historic trail and mark the roaded segments with interpretive signing and route marking. Do not develop any trail segments.

Developmental activities may increase soil loss and compaction through sign and route marker placement requirements.

Motorized vehicles and equipment operations will produce noise and exhaust emissions. Impacts on air quality are expected to remain localized, temporary, and within the standards established by existing laws.

This proposal is not expected to prevent the development of mineral or oil and gas deposits.

Because of the long-reaching geographic alignment of this trail, there is a potential for conflict with future electrical transmission or pipeline routes. There is no indication that implementation of this alternative would prevent compromise or negotiation that would satisfactorily resolve the conflict.

There are no significant conflicts associated with this alternative in regard to the activities of private landowners, water, and future water developments.

Alternative D

Designate the entire 1,170-mile route. Mark along highways and other connecting roads and develop the 464 miles of identified high potential route segments.

High potential routes on public and private lands would be developed primarily for foot and horse recreation travel. There will be some new developments such as: primitive campgrounds, trail heads, access roads, and interpretive facilities located on public lands.

Full implementation of this alternative will produce some environmental change on approximately 324 miles of public lands and 140 miles across private lands.

Impacts on soils will relate to the construction of trails and related facilities. It is anticipated that soil loss and displacement will remain well within acceptable land use guidelines. There is potential for isolated incidents involving intensive soil loss caused by construction activities. With adequate preplanning, these incidents need not be serious should they happen to occur.

Recreationists--both hikers and horsemen--will cause soil erosion on the trails. Certain levels of soil loss are expected with this type of activity and are controllable.

The true impacts on air and water quality will depend on the type and intensity of use. Construction and recreational activities could produce sedimentation in adjacent waterways. Significant increases in the number of people and recreation livestock use within this area will cause some loss of water quality. The amount of degradation expected is not known or easily projected. Existing water quality standards can be maintained by managing recreation activity to safeguard against unacceptable degradation.

Motor vehicles and equipment operating near this trail will cause noise and contribute exhaust emissions. The impacts will be localized and of minor significance.

This proposal will not affect the development of mineral or oil and gas deposits necessary to achieve the national goal of energy self-sufficiency.

Because of the geographic spread of the trail segments, some conflict may occur with future electrical transmission or pipeline routes. There is no indication that this alternative will prevent compromise or negotiations to satisfactorily resolve such conflicts.

Known water resource developments will not be affected by this proposal.

Private landowners would be asked to negotiate or perhaps donate 200-foot (or less) use easements for access through their property for the purpose of protecting original route remnants and providing public foot and horse

travel. This action is limited to approximately 3,360 acres covering a distance of 140 miles. Condemnation procedures to acquire private land will not be used.

Due to acquisition of use easements, there may be some inadvertent conflict between landowners and recreationists using the trail.

2. IMPACTS ON THE BIOTIC ENVIRONMENT

The vegetation and wildlife, including threatened and endangered plant and animal species,* are discussed in this category. Threatened and endangered animal species known to exist within, adjacent, or transient to the study areas are: Peregrine falcon, prairie falcon, whooping crane, grizzly bear, and black-footed ferret.

Alternative A

This choice will not produce impacts on the biotic environment because no new actions are planned.

Alternative B

This action will not significantly affect the elements in this group because the land-disturbing actions are limited to identifying and mapping the trail route.

Some vegetative disturbance and loss may occur from administrative and mapping activities.

It is doubtful that this activity would cause any harm to wildlife or threatened and endangered plant-animal species and their habitat.

Alternative C

Implementation of this alternative would have a minor effect on the biotic elements because of new interpretive sign and marker placement and maintenance.

Peregrine falcon, prairie falcon, whooping crane, and black-footed ferret populations are known to exist in areas adjacent to this trail in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. Present management

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* An inventory of plants that may be in this category or unique to the geographic areas is not availabe. However, during preparation of a comprehensive trail management plan, a complete inventory will be obtained and all planning and management actions must conform to laws and regulations protecting such species.

options would have to be kept open and incorporated into a comprehensive trail management plan. It is doubtful if this alternate would create a new conflict or expand an existing one between the grizzly bear and people in certain areas on the Shoshone National Forest and Yellowstone National Park or would have any effects on the other known threatened and endangered species and their habitat.

Alternative D

This alternative calls for the construction or reconstruction of 464 miles of trail, along with new interpretive facilities, trail head and stockhandling facilities, and primitive campgrounds. This may cause vegetative damage and loss. This is especially true of construction standards requiring the removal of vegetation and soil to accommodate new trail alignment and facilities. Impacts from necessary directional and interpretive signing would be minimal.

As both horsemen and hikers begin to use the trail more frequently and in increased numbers, some additional vegetation loss, damage, and manipulation will occur. This will happen primarily as a result of man-caused fires, grazing, camping, and carelessness. Damage-causing activities, however, can be managed to minimize its effects on the biotic community.

A significant increase in unregulated horse use can cause problems, not only with the appearance of vegetation but with wildlife habitat requirements, and domestic livestock grazing programs, as well. Recreation livestock may also cause vegetative damage if proper overnight holding methods are not used by their owners. It is not anticipated that such damage will exceed acceptable limits.

Trail and other construction activities will remove some wildlife habitat and displace some wildlife species. Plant and animal species on the threatened and endangered list can be safeguarded against this happening.

An increase in visitors may also displace some wildlife species and provide new or increase existing conflicts with the grizzly bear within portions of the Shoshone National Forest and Yellowstone National Park. The total amount of conflict will depend upon the number of users and the management guidelines developed to protect the grizzly bear population and habitat. This problem will be given full attention in a comprehensive trail management plan. As previously mentioned, conflicts among wildlife, threatened and endangered plant and animal species, and this trail would be resolved during development of a comprehensive trail management plan which would favor wildlife threatened and endangered species and their habitats.

3. IMPACTS ON THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The cultural, economic, employment, minority groups, and recreation elements are discussed in this category.

Alternative A

Implementation of this alternative would cause a loss of opportunity to allocate a land route associated with an event of national and historic significance. There would also be a loss in the development of a major recreation opportunity that ranges from primitive to developed experience levels. This alternative would not capture for the public an event that had far-reaching effects on not only the Nez Perce culture but also national responses to the Nez Perce flight.

Local economies would not have an opportunity to provide commercial services to the people, both local and tansient, who would use the route for recreational and educational purposes. Additional recreational and educational services would also generate new local employment based on a segment of the recreation industry that is basically nonenergy-consuming.

Federal agencies would not program new dollars for trail construction and maintenance and site development.

There could be a loss of historical perspective pertaining to the cultural accomplishments of the Nez Perce people.

Alternative B

Implementing this alternative would designate and partially preserve the events of the Nez Perce episode by identifying and mapping the route. It would not, however, recognize and provide significant recreation opportunities associated with the event.

Local economies would not benefit and new employment would not substantially increase from this alternative. Federal agencies would program dollars to map the route. It is doubtful that their action would provide much in the way of employment for local or transcient workers.

There would be a minor increase in educational benefits and awareness of the Nez Perce Indian culture.

This action would provide limited opportunities to promote minority group objectives through the recognition of Nez Perce Indian cultural and historical achievements.

Alternative C

This alternative would provide a noticeable increase in public awareness of an event of national and historic significance by the placement of identification and interpretative signs along roads and highways.

Educational and recreational benefits would increase in various locales situated along the trail.

Federal agencies would program funds for the construction and placement of signs. This would provide some employment for local and transient populations. Local commercial services may benefit from increased employment and from people following roaded portion of this route for recreation or educational purposes.

Advertisement of historic sites may increase levels of vandalism, the removal of artifacts, and site deterioration. The level of impact will depend on the number of visitors. None of these impacts are unavoidable, but they are manageable.

This action would provide advantages in furthering minority group objectives through national recognition of the cultural and historical achievements of the Nez Perce Indians.

Alternative D

This alternative provides the most substantial recognition of the commemorated event and associated recreation opportunities.

It accomplishes this by either constructing or reconstructing trails across 140 miles of private land and 324 miles of public land, providing identification and interpretative signing, and construction of trail head and trailside facilities.

Hiking, horseback riding, and camping opportunities would be made available to the public. Some motorized recreation vehicles may be permitted in specific locations, as previously identified.

There would be a major increase in educational benefits and awareness of the Nez Perce Indian culture.

Federal agencies would program significant increases in funds for construction projects necessary to implement this alternative, providing employment opportunities for local and transient workers. Local commercial services would benefit from increased Federal agency activity and visitors using the trail for recreation purposes.

Increased access and advertisement of historic sites may cause higher levels of vandalism, removal of artifacts, and site deterioration. The level of impact will depend on the number and frequence of visitors permitted. These impacts are not unavoidable, but they are manageable.

There may be little or no change in revenue produced from Federal lands due to restrictions placed on activities such as timber harvesting and grazing. If these economic losses occur, they will be more than compensated for by increased recreation revenues.

This alternative will provide connecting links to two existing National Trails--the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. It will also provide a tie-in with two existing national recreation trails--Lone Pine Saddle National Recreation Trail in Oregon, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, and that portion of a national recreation trail located in Big Hole National Battlefield, Montana.

Implementation will also provide a recreational and historic link to the terminus of the trail located in Montana at the Bear Paw Battle Commemorative Site.

Recreation use of connecting roads and roadside interpretative sites will increase. There will be a public demand for increased interpretative signs.

The route development essentially will follow existing trails, roads, and highways to provide low-cost, but high-yield recreational/cultural benefits.

By increasing both minority employment and national recognition of the cultural and historical achievements of the Nez Perce Indians, this alternative would help achieve civil rights and minority group objectives.

VI. EVALUATION OF INITIAL ALTERNATIVES*

This section discusses and compares the initial alternatives in terms of the issues shown in Section III and provides the basis for identification of a preferred alternative. The evaluation of alternatives followed the guidelines set forth in the National Trails System Act.

The study concluded that the Nez Perce Trail is historically significant and should be designated as a national historic trail. With this basic assumption, only one of the four initial alternatives met the requirement of the National Trails System Act criteria.

Alternative A
No Federal action.

The study concluded that the Nez Perce movement over land had national historical significance. Alternative A does not provide for the establishment of a national historic trail.

Alternative B
Designate the entire 1,170-mile route as a national historic trail but do not mark or develop any segments.

Alternative B would provide for recognition of the route's significance but would not provide development opportunities to travel within and for enjoyment and appreciation of these outdoor recreation resources. It will not provide for preservation and interpretatation of a significantly historical event of national importance.

The costs and benefits associated with this alternative would be low.

Alternative C
Designate the entire 1,170-mile route and the roaded segments of the trail. So not develop any trail segments.

This alternative provides identification to a significant historical event of national importance. It does not protect or preserve high potential segments remaining on public and private lands. It will provide an increase in public awareness of the cultural and historical achievements of the Nez Perce Indians.

The costs associated with this alternative are limited to the route mapping and installing route markers and interpretation signs. The benefits received by the public would exceed the costs of implementation.

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* See footnote on page 9.

Alternative D - (The previously preferred alternative)
Designate the entire 1,170-mile route. Mark along highways and other connecting roads and develop the 464 miles of identified high potential route segments for hiking and horse recreation travel opportunities.

Trail development could involve 324 miles of public land and 140 miles of private land. Emphasis would be for foot and horse travel recreation opportunities.

The historic trail corridor would be protected and the more important historic sites and overlooks interpreted--both along the trail and feasible highway portions thereof.

The designation of high potential trail segments in existing or potential wilderness will not be permitted to conflict with the management of those wildernesses. The comprehensive trail management plan will recognize existing and potential conflicts and provide solutions that favor the wilderness resource.

The costs associated with this alternative would involve construction or reconstruction of approximately 464 miles of trail and marking of the 1,170-mile route. It proposes development of a trail located primarily on public land. The benefits to the general public would be high, because it would provide protection for a nationally significant historical event, as well as provide new recreation opportunities. The costs to develop would equal the preservation and recreational benefits realized.

This alternative was developed from comments submitted by cooperating agencies and public participation activities. (Note: See pages 5, 6, and 7.)

The remaining alternatives are not responsive to the guidelines set forth in the National Trails System Act. The practicality or feasibility of on-the-ground implementation, including economic costs and benefits, was weighed for all alternatives. Cost estimates are shown in the Nez Perce National Historic Trail Study Report.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Issues	ALTERNATIVES* Alt. A	Alt. B	Alt. C	Alt. D	Alt. C-1
1. It must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use. The route need not currently exist as a discernible trail to qualify, but its location must be sufficiently known to permit evaluation of public recreation and historical interest potential. A designated trail should, generally, accurately follow the historic route but may deviate somewhat on occasion of necessity to avoid difficult routing through subsequent development or to provide some route variation offering a more pleasurable recreational experience. Such deviations shall be so noted on site trail segments no longer possible to travel by trail due to subsequent development, as motorized transportation routes may be designated and marked onsite as segments which link to the historic trail.	--	+	+	++	++
2. It must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history such as trade and commerce, migration and settlement, or military campaigns. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far-reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture. Trails significant in the history of native Americans may be included.	--	+	+	++	++
3. It must have significant potential for public recreation use of historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation. The potential for such use is generally greater along roadless segments developed as historic trails and at historic sites associated with the trail. The presence of recreation potential not related to historic appreciation is not sufficient for justification under this category.	--	0	+	++	++
4. Existing trail remnants or historic sites must be protected from land uses or activities that may destroy them.	--	0	+	++	++
5. Visitor activities should complement historic preservation, appreciaton and interpretation, and the protection of elements of the natural environment.	0	0	+	++	++
6. Emphasis should be on foot and horse travel forms of recreational use on most trail segments.	0	0	0	++	++
7. Permit limited motorized use only on those portions of high potential trail segments that have the environmental capacity for such activities. Specifically, this involves 112 miles on the Lolo Trail and 5 miles of a truck route on Nez Perce Creek in Yellowstone National Park (see Section IV, E in the Study Report). Such portions involve primitive truck "wheel track" roads and would be subject to all provisions concerning vehicular use or specified by the National Trails System Act.	0	0	0	+	+
8. Any highway portion of the route should follow as closely as possible the actual route. It should be well marked and provide the motorist with interpretation of significant historic sites along the route.	0	+	+	+	++
9. Travel on public roads is desirable in areas where the actual route location is unknown or where the public roads approximate the route of known trail segments.	0	+	+	+	++
10. Trail development must not significantly disrupt the habitat of threatened and endangered plants or animals.	++	++	++	0	0
11. Effects to private ownership lands.	0	0	0	--	0

* Ratings were assigned as follows:

++ Significant positive contribution to issues.
+ Minor positive contribution to issues.
0 No significant positive or negative contribution to issues.
- Minor negative contribution to issues.
-- Significant negative contribution to issues.

Appendix A

PUBLIC RESPONSE ANALYSIS

to the

NEZ PERCE (NEE-ME-POO) NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

As Submitted With the

Federal Register, Vol. 46, No. 80, p. 23503, April 27, 1981

As stated in the above-referenced Federal Register, there is a review period of 45 days for comments by other agencies and the public. The response period began April 14, 1981. Eleven responses, in the form of letters, were received and the contents analyzed July 3, 1981. The following analysis was reviewed and evaluated considering application to the development of an alternative responsive to public concerns.

SUMMARY

Eleven responses were received; of these, six showed no alternative preference. There was one recommendation for each of the Alternatives A and C, and for a compromise position between Alternatives C and D. Two responses were in favor of Alternative D, and three specifically stated opposition to Alternative D. There was one response which questioned the use of an environmental assessment under the premise of "No Significant Impact." The respondent expressed concern for the potential of extensive impacts to the existing transportation system and recreation facilities of the Idaho area should the plan increase user numbers in the area.

There were 15 general comments, both pro and con, in context. Some supported selection of alternatives; others were not related to specific alternatives. Five comments appeared to be more in the form of suggestions for answering specific issues when developing future statements or plans.

ANALYSIS

CHOICES

ALTERNATIVE	PREFERRED	OPPOSED	NOT DEFINED
A	1		
B	2		
C	1		
(Between)	1		
D		3	
No Alternative			6

CHALLENGE "NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT" OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

CHALLENGE 1 (State of Idaho Transportation Department: Further analysis and evaluation of specific items suggested.)

COMMENTS ON THE ISSUES

1. Unreasonable use of taxpayers' money to develop Alternative D.

2. Alternative D would result in negative impacts to:
   -- Environment
   -- Land users
   -- Private property owners
   -- Trail's original integrity and setting
   -- Cause impacts to heritage properties within proximity to the trail

3. Alternatives between C and D would:
   -- Designate entire route
   -- Mark highway segments
   -- Segments entirely on Federal land could be developed. Results:
      -- Would minimize conflicts with private
      -- Be more cost-effective than Alternative D
      -- Would commemorate the important historic event

4. Management that promotes recreation tends to increase conflict with timber management.

5. States or counties involved should be encouraged and allowed to designate the historic trail.

6. Develop trail segments only where coincident with Federal and State highways.

7. If using either Alternative C or D, identify agency to place and maintain interpretive signs.

8. Ensure handicapped accessibility wherever possible.

9. Opposed to opening trails invading grizzly habitat and some areas of wild country.

10. A trail system should minimize its impacts on private land.

11. Coordinate closely with Lolo and Lewis and Clark trail planning.

12. It's necessary to protect this trail route for its national historic significance and recreation opportunities.

13. Not convinced that a passable whole trail is necessary.

14. Designation, but not development, will better preserve greater historical significance.

15. Development would obliterate original trail tread, and vandalism often occurs to developed recreation sites.

GENERAL COMMENTS

1. E.A. failure to address impact of the trail on timber management activities.

2. Must detail costs associated with things such as buffers and other restrictive measures.

3. Analysis of energy use is insufficient.

4. "Energy-free recreation" is not an appropriate term.

5. Costs relating to different alternatives is not available.

RESPONDENTS

Industry	Government	Individuals	Wilderness Association
3	5	2 (3)*	(1)*

1.	Idaho Cattlemen's Association	Boise, ID
2.	Champion International Corp. (Rocky Mtn. Oper.)	Milltown, MT
3.	Burlington Northern (Rocky Mtn. Dist.)	Missoula, MT
4.	Montana Historical Society	Helena, MT
5.	Missoula County	Missoula, MT
6.	Citizen	Missoula, MT
7.	State of Idaho Transportation Department	Boise, ID
8.	Spencer Ranch, Inc.	Grangeville, ID
*9.	Citizen (Montana Wilderness Assn.)	Hamilton, MT
10.	U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Equal Opportunity	Washington, DC
11.	Montana Department of Highways	Helena, MT

* This person, who is known by the analysts, didn't identify his/her position as a representative of the Montana Widerness Association. Therefore, the response should be identified by letter content only and regarded as an individual.

The following list shows the mailing distribution for the first draft of the Environmental Assessment:

	No. of Copies
Elected Officials	28
Bureau of Indian Affairs	4
Bureau of Land Management	12
National Park Service	8
USDA, Forest Service	16
Tribal Councils	4
Other Federal Agencies	31
State Agencies	26
County Agencies	16
City Agencies	27
Heritage, Historical Conservation and Museums	45
Environmental Associations and Members	34
Industry	41
Recreation Clubs	24
Colleges and Universities	18
Individuals	94
Miscellaneous	3
	431

Appendix B

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