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Comments: The Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forests is proposing the Wepah Salvage project on the Palouse Ranger District.

On September 02, 2025 the Wepah Fire was reported within the Meadow Creek subwatershed. The fire origin was approximately two air-miles east of Giant White Pine Campground. This human caused wildfire was eventually contained on September 25, 2025 and held to 1,522 acres. The Wepah Fire burned through mature forest, young forest and established plantations. Fire effects were determined to be moderate to high severity causing a high level of mortality among all age-classes of trees.

A post-fire assessment was conducted to determine survival and mortality of mature forest and to determine the feasibility of salvaging the value from standing dead trees. The feasibility study determined that sufficient volume and value of standing dead trees was present to propose a salvage sale.

The Wepah Fire also initiated the need for further forest restoration actions including reforestation of forestlands.

An evaluation conducted by the Zone Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) found that vegetation and fuels conditions, transportation system and public recreation access were outside the range of desired conditions outlined in the Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forests Land Management Plan. The IDT and collaborators have identified additional resource concerns with potential impacts to watershed health and riparian function. Opportunities have been identified to promote restoration and protect restoration investments. Other opportunities include improve watershed condition by replacing undersized culverts, improve public access for recreation and public safety and remove fuel accumulation to reduce the potential for uncharacteristic fire effects.

To realize the purpose of the Wepah Salvage Project there is a need to salvage dead and dying trees that are in excess of those needed for snags, to recover the economic value, manage forest vegetation to reduce total stand density, improve species composition towards seral species dominance, and improve size class distribution to promote forest resiliency. At the landscape scale there is a need to scale forest vegetation pattern and patch sizes commensurate with historic fire regimes and potential vegetation types. Within the WUI there is a need to reduce surface and ladder fuel accumulations in proximity of highly valued resources and assets such as Giant White Pine Campground and private inholdings.

There is a need to manage recreation access to the Giant White Pine trailhead and associated trail system and improve public safety at the Giant White Pine Campground parking area.

The Palouse Ranger District proposes a suite of activities to respond to the purpose and need for this project, directed by the Nez Perce-Clearwater Land Management Plan:

600 acres of commercial harvest to recover the economic value, manage forest vegetation to reduce total stand density, improve species composition towards seral species dominance, improve size class distribution to promote forest resiliency, and break up continuity of fuels to mitigate the risk of wildfire,

Approximately 20.5 miles of system road maintenance,

Approximately 8.5 miles of temporary road construction,

The bridge on motorized trail #221-A will be replaced to promote public safety and minimize erosion potential

along Mannering Creek. To enhance access and reduce erosion potential, approximately one-half mile of trail #228 will be rerouted to improve the trail alignment. The existing visitor parking next to the Giant White Pine trailhead will be expanded by approximately one-half acre to improve public safety and respond to the increase public demand of the use of the area. The expansion of the parking areas will stay within the existing White Pine Campground administrative site.