ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Type of Proposed Withdrawal Action:

New Withdrawal

Applicant Agency or Holding Agency: Address: Forest Service Northern Region P.O. Box 7669 Missoula, MT 59807

Location of Lands Involved in Proposed Withdrawal Action:

State:IdahoCounty:ShoshoneBLM District:Coeur d'AleneNational Forest:Idaho Panhandle

Name of Area, Facility, Project: Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedars Botanical Area Withdrawal from Location and Entry under the United States Mining Laws

Legal Land Description:

Boise Meridian,

T. 50 N, R. 5 E.,

sec. 4, NW¹/4NE¹/4 of lot 1, NW¹/4 of lot 1, SW¹/4SW¹/4 of lot 1, N¹/2SW¹/4 of lot 1, SE¹/4NE¹/4, of lot 2, SE¹/4 of lot 2, NE¹/4SW¹/4NE¹/4, NW¹/4SE¹/4SW¹/4NE¹/4, SW¹/4NE¹/4, SW¹/4SE¹/4SW¹/4, SW¹/4SE¹/4SW¹/4, SW¹/4SE¹/4SW¹/4, SW¹/4SE¹/4SW¹/4, SW¹/4SW¹/4, NE¹/4SW¹/4, NE¹/4SW¹/4, NE¹/4SW¹/4, NE¹/4SW¹/4, NE¹/4SW¹/4, NE¹/4SW¹/4, N¹/2SE¹/4NW¹/4SW¹/4, and W¹/2NW¹/4NW¹/4SE¹/4.

T. 51 N., R. 5 E.,

sec. 33, S¹/₂SE¹/₄NE¹/₄SE¹/₄, SE¹/₄SE¹/₄NE¹/₄SE

Total Acres: 183.47

Prepared For:Bureau of Land ManagementOffice:Idaho State OfficeAddress:1387 S Vinnell WayBoise, ID 83709

By: Laura Underhill Realty Specialist, Idaho State Office

1. Background Information:

The Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedar is 183.47 acres of land located in Shoshone County, Idaho, which contains one of the very few stands of old growth western red cedar. It is an important botanical feature on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF) with significant historical and recreational value. To protect the old growth resource and unique recreational experience, Settler's Grove was designated a Special Interest Area in 1970. The area was originally withdrawn from mineral location and entry under Public Land Order (PLO) 6658 (52 FR 36577) on September 30, 1987. PLO 6658 expired on September 29, 2007 and a new withdrawal application, IDI-35965, was filed by the United States Forest Service (USFS) with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on September 18, 2007. The Notice of Proposed Withdrawal and Opportunity for Public Meeting was published in the *Federal Register* on February 17, 2011 (76 FR 9359). This notice segregated the land from mineral entry for a period of two years to allow the Forest Service time to prepare the complete withdrawal application package. This segregation period will expire on February 16, 2013.

2. <u>Public Notice and Public Input</u>:

A Notice of Proposed Action and 30-Day Comment Period for the project was published on June 10, 2009, in the *Coeur d'Alene Press* newspaper. The comment period ended July 10, 2009. Additionally, the proposed action and notice of 30-day comment period was posted on the Forest's website and a letter was sent June 4, 2009 to the planning partners inviting them to view the documents and comment. The proposed mineral withdrawal was also listed on the IPNF quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions notifying the public of this proposal. The Forest received five comments all in support of this proposed withdrawal. The Notice of Proposed Withdrawal and Opportunity for Public Meeting was published in the *Federal Register* on February 17, 2011 (76 FR 9359) and allowed a 90 day comment period. No comments were received.

3. Proposed Action and Alternatives:

The proposed action recommends withdrawing the 183.47 acres of land identified in the PLO from location and entry under the United States mining laws. The mineral withdrawal will prevent mineral entry into the National Forest System Lands which comprise the Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedars Botanical Area for a period of 20 years.

The no action alternative was considered and dismissed because opening the site to mineral entry could lessen the botanical, historical, aesthetic, recreational and research values of Settler's Grove. There is a need to protect this area from mineral exploration and development.

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4. Relationship of the Proposed Action to Land-Use Plans:

The lands involved are National Forest System lands within the Idaho Panhandle National Forest and are not subject to the land-use planning provisions of the BLM. The proposed action is covered in Management Area 13 of the IPNF Forest Plan and conforms to the management goals for this area.

5. <u>Site Data</u>:

The Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedar is an important botanical feature on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. The impressive grove of ancient cedar occupies the flat drainage of a clear, meandering stream and looks today much like the cedar-dominated bottomlands described in historical writings of the early settlers to the area. It is located within Shoshone County approximately 28 miles northeast of Wallace, Idaho. It is within the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, specifically located in B.M., T. 50 N., R. 5 E., Sec. 4 and T. 51 N., R. 5 E., Sec. 33 and 34. The lower end of the site starts at the last bridge crossing on the West Fork of Eagle Creek Road #805 one-fourth mile below Cottonwood Creek and includes the area along the West Fork of Eagle Creek up to and including its confluence with 34 Creek; a distance of 1.4 miles.

Settler's Grove is a popular and historically significant recreation area. It offers the forest visitor an easy 6.1 mile hiking trail into a natural, semi-primitive setting dominated by large and majestic trees for a variety of non-motorized, day-use activities. It draws several hundred visitors each year from the Missoula, Coeur d'Alene, Spokane and the surrounding rural areas. The trailhead contains a concrete vault outhouse, signs, benches, a fence and entryway. There is an adjacent parking area large enough for 15 vehicles. The first two miles of the trail are surfaced and widened for wheelchairs.

6. <u>Mineral Potential Analysis</u>:

A mineral potential report was prepared for the proposed withdrawal area by Raymond R. Wallace and approved on March 2, 1972. Forest Geologist Jeff K. Johnson reviewed the Wallace report on January 11, 2010. Mr. Johnson concluded that the information in the report is still correct. The area has moderate potential for placer gold, lead, zinc and copper reserves.

Before Settler's Grove was withdrawn from mineral entry in 1987, there was a history of unpatented mining claims in the area. Mining activity in the larger Coeur d'Alene mining district has waned since 1972. No hard-rock mineral production has occurred in the area since the Jack Waite Mine shut down in the 1980s. There have been mineral patents issued within 1 mile of Settler's Grove and major mining activity at the Jack Waite Mine 4 miles from the site. Active exploration of the potential deposits to the south and west of the Settler's Grove has continued periodically over the years. Currently exploratory drilling occurs on National Forest lands within 1 mile of the area.

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mining claims presently located on the land proposed to be withdrawn. Refer to the mineral potential report for additional information.

Environmental Documentation: 7.

The proposed action and environmental analysis has been completed by the applicant agency and reviewed by the Bureau of Land Management. Refer to the Forest Service Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedar Withdrawal From Location and Entry under the United States Mining Laws Environmental Assessment for additional information.

8. Recommendation/Rationale:

The purpose of the proposed withdrawal is to protect the unique botanical, historical and recreational integrity of the Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedars Botanical Area within the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. In order to prevent any damage or disturbance to the area, it is necessary to withdraw the minerals from location and entry under the United States mining laws. The Forest Service in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management has demonstrated the need for protecting the land from mineral entry. It is therefore recommended that the withdrawal of 183.47 acres of National Forest System Lands for a period of 20 years be approved under the provisions of section 204(f) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, October 10, 1976. This will segregate the land from location and entry under the United States mining laws.

Review/Recommendation: 9.

a. Review: I, the undersigned, have reviewed the proposed withdrawal recommendations and find that they are technically adequate and that consideration has been given to all resource values. I recommend the withdrawal be forwarded to the Secretary of Interior through the Director of the Bureau of Land Management for withdrawal consideration.

br Chief, Branch of Lands, Minerals and

Water Rights

<u>9/20/2012</u> Date

b. Minerals Policy Review: I, the undersigned, have reviewed the rationale and recommendations on the proposed withdrawal contained in this report and find that the proposed segregation from location and entry under the United States mining laws is adequately justified in view of Bureau mineral policy.

An FPort

Lead Geologist Lands, Minerals and Water Rights Branch

-10-2012 Date

c. Environmental Compliance Review: I, the undersigned have reviewed the applicant's environmental assessment and find it in compliance with the NEPA and satisfies the environmental documentation requirements of the Bureau of Land Management for the proposed action.

NEPA Specialist Division of Resources and Sciences

<u>//-5-/2</u> Date

d. Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record: Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts addressed in the environmental assessment, I have determined that the impacts are not significant and an environmental impact statement is not required. This supplemental information document formally adopts the Forest Service Environmental Assessment pursuant to 40 CFR 1506.3 I recommend the proposed withdrawal be forwarded to the Secretary of Interior through the Bureau Director for issuance of a public land order.

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State Director Idaho State Office

11/6/2012 Date

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT Idaho State Office 1387 S Vinnell Way Boise, ID 83709

Finding of No Significant Impact

Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedar Withdrawal Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District Forest Service EA dated July 2009

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

After considering the environmental effect described in the Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedar Withdrawal Environmental Assessment (EA) written by the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District and dated July 2009, which is incorporated in its entirety by reference, I have determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment based on the context and intensity of its impact (40 CFR 1508.27). Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

INOVEMBER 2012 Date

DAVID H. MURPHY Chief, Branch of Lands, Minerals and Water Rights Idaho State Office

I base my finding on the following:

Withdrawing Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedar from location and entry under the United States mining laws would protect this unique ecological system and be consistent with the area's present and future use identified in the Settler's Grove Zone Management Plan and the Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF) Forest Plan for Botanical Areas. As the botanical features cannot be moved or replaced, there are no means of protecting the resource value other than locatable mineral withdrawal.

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even though the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

Beneficial and adverse impacts associated with the Proposed Action Alternative were considered as presented in the EA. These impacts are within the range of effects identified in the IPNF Forest Plan (1982). I conclude that the specific direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the selected alternative are not significant, and this action does not rely on beneficial effects to balance adverse environmental effects.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The proposal is an administrative action, would prevent mineral activity on the site, and would continue to protect the vegetative resources. Therefore, as related to the proposed action to withdraw from mineral entry Setter's Grove of Ancient Cedar, there will not be effects to public health or safety.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

There are few and isolated occurrences of old growth cedar groves on the IPNF and this is the only significant acreage on the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District. Regionally, old growth cedar groves are fairly unique occurrences. Setter's Grove is easily accessible to the public and is a popular recreation site. The proposal is an administrative action, would prevent mineral activity on the site, and would continue to protect the cedars.

As the ecosystem cannot be moved or replaced, there are no means of protecting the resource value other than locatable mineral withdrawal. If the area is not withdrawn, the botanical, recreational, scenic, historical and aesthetic values of Setter's Grove could be lessened and may be lost entirely should mining activities occur. In the event an operating plan for extractive activities were approved and mining commenced, those activities could adversely affect the old growth trees and valuable hydrologic flowpaths that contribute nutrients and other hydrologic functions to the surrounding ecosystem and to the West Fork of Eagle Creek; this would require a separate NEPA analysis and decision.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. No adverse comments or significant issues were raised in the scoping effort for the project. There have been no new developments since the first withdrawal, therefore, this is not a new endeavor for the Forest Service, and no highly controversial or significant issues related to the human environment have been identified. No significant issues have been raised to date.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

In 1972 and 1987, Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedar was withdrawn from locatable mineral entry. The mineral withdrawal is identified in the IPNF Forest Plan, page K-3. By regulation, withdrawals are subject to a 20-year timeframe, after which, the withdrawal will terminate unless an application for withdrawal is again submitted and approved. It is only due to administrative oversight that the withdrawal expired (EA page 2). There have been no new developments since the first withdrawal, therefore, this is not a new endeavor for the Forest Service and does not pose highly uncertain or unknown risks.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Settler's Grove mineral withdrawal represents a site-specific project that does not set precedence for future actions or present a decision in principle about future considerations. Any proposed future project must be evaluated on its own merits and effects. This is a site specific proposal consistent with the 1987 Forest Plan to keep Settler's Grove withdrawn from mineral entry.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.

The proposal is an administrative action, would prevent mineral activity on the site, and would continue to protect the botanical features.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historical Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The proposal is an administrative action, would prevent mineral activity on the site and would continue to protect the botanical features. Therefore, no districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places would be adversely affected, nor would there be any loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources, EA page 9.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Withdrawal from mineral entry is an administrative action that would prevent mineral activity in the project area. Thus, this alternative would have no short or long-term adverse impacts to species or habitats present, EA page 6-8.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The proposed action was developed in accordance with and, therefore, does not threaten to violate any Federal, State or local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment (i.e. Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and the National Forest Management Act). Discussion in the EA of effects and the related references in the project file document that this withdrawal will not adversely affect soils, water quality, or threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant or animal species. The proposed action is consistent with the IPNF Forest Plan.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Idaho State Office 1387 S Vinnell Way Boise, ID 83709

Decision Record

Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedar Withdrawal Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District Forest Service EA dated July 2009

I. DECISION

After careful review of the environmental assessment (EA) for Setter's Grove of Ancient Cedar Mineral Withdrawal, written by the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District and dated July 2009, which is incorporated in its entirety by reference, the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), public comments, resource reports, and the project file, I have decided to request the Secretary of the Interior, through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), to withdraw Settler's Grove from location and entry under the United States mining laws. The project area is located in Sec. 4, T. 50 N., R. 5 E., B.M., and Sec. 33 and 34, T. 51 N., R. 5 E., B.M. See enclosed map.

II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedar is an important botanical feature on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF) with significant historic, as well as recreational value. The impressive grove of ancient cedar occupies the flat drainage of a clear, meandering stream and looks today much like the cedar-dominated bottomlands described in historical writings and diaries of the early settlers to the area. It encompasses about 183 acres and is one of only a few intact cedar groves remaining on the Forest.

To protect the old growth resource and unique recreational experience offered at Settler's Grove, the site was designated a Special Interest Area in 1970. It is administered as a Botanical Area in accordance with management objectives and guidelines specific to the site. The primary management objective is to preserve the area in as near-natural condition as possible, and still make it available to the public as a recreational, botanical and historical experience.

Setter's Grove was originally withdrawn from mineral location and entry under Public Land Order (PLO) 6658, BLM Serial Number IDI-4966. The Notice of Proposed Withdrawal was dated May 4, 1972 and published in the *Federal Register* on Thursday, May 11, 1972 in Vol. 37, No. 92 page 9501. On September 30, 1987 in Vol. 52, No 189 page 36577, PLO 6658 was published in the *Federal Register* covering the same area. The mineral withdrawal is identified in the IPNF Forest Plan, page K-3 (hereafter, Forest Plan). As required by public law, on June 16, 2004, BLM notified the Forest Service Regional Office that PLO No. 6658 covering Setter's Grove would expire in September 2007. The Forest was notified in June 2007 that the withdrawal was due to expire. In response, the Forest Service submitted a new Withdrawal Application to the BLM, dated September 18, 2007 and December 1, 2010, requesting the lands be segregated from mineral entry under the general mining laws for two years in accordance with 43 CFR 2310.2(a). At the same time, BLM was notified of the Forest Service intent to complete an environmental assessment during this two year period and submit it to the Secretary of Interior in accordance with 43 CFR 2310.3-2. The Forest Service requested the BLM publish this notice in the *Federal Register*. PLO 6658 expired on September 30, 2007 and the two-year segregation from mineral entry will expire on February 16, 2013.

III. SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A Notice of Proposed Action and 30-Day Comment Period for the project was published on June 10, 2009, in The Coeur d'Alene Press newspaper. The comment period ended July 10, 2009. Additionally, the proposed action and notice of 30-day comment period was posted on the Forest's website and a letter was sent June 4, 2009 to the planning partners inviting them to view the documents and comment. The proposed mineral withdrawal was also listed on the IPNF quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions notifying the public of this proposal. The Forest received five comments, all in support of this proposed withdrawal.

IV. DECISION RATIONAL

I have made my decision to implement the proposed action based on:

- Limited environmental consequences as documented in the Finding of No Significant Impact, the EA written by the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District and dated July 2009, which is incorporated in its entirety by reference, and the associated Forest Service resource reports;
- How well the management action addresses the project's purpose and need;
- Consideration of the Forest Plan standards and guidance for the project;
- Consideration of issues raised during the scoping and comments periods.

A. Purpose and Need

PLO 6658 dated September 30, 1987 withdrawing Setter's Grove of Ancient Cedar expired on September 30, 2007. The segregation from new claims will expire February 16, 2013. The 183 acre area of ancient cedars is a unique botanical resource that has been designated a Special Interest Area to be managed for protection of the old growth cedar and for roadless recreation. The botanical, aesthetic, historical, and recreational values of Settler's Grove could be lessened and may be lost entirely should mining activity occur. Thus, there is a need to protect the area from mineral exploration and development pursuant to the locatable mineral laws of the United States. The purpose of the Settler's Grove Withdrawal Project is to protect this Botanical Area from location and entry under the United States mining laws as identified in the IPNF Forest Plan (USDA, 1987). By regulation, withdrawals are subject to a 20-year timeframe, after which, the withdrawal will terminate unless an application for and extension of this withdrawal is submitted and approved.

The Forest Service has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. The EA discloses the project's foreseeable environmental effects for consideration in determining whether or not to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement or a Finding of No Significant Impact document (40 CFR 1508.9).

B. Forest Plan

Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedar is allocated to Management Area 13 in the Forest Plan, pages III (56-60). This management area includes areas and sites on the Forest with special attributes or features meriting special management. The management area goal is to "manage classified natural landmarks, special areas and cultural resource sites for educational, scientific, and recreational purposes." The standard for Botanical Areas is to "manage to maintain the significant specimens or group exhibits of plants, plant groups or plant communities related to the area's botanical features". The management area standard for mineral management reads: "withdraw areas as needed".

C. Consideration of Issues Raised during Scoping & 30-day Comment Period

All comments received were in support of the proposed action, through two suggested the need for further protection. One issue expressed is to expand the area of mineral withdrawal. This issue is considered outside the scope of the proposed action, which is administrative in nature and results in no change in current conditions. Expanding the withdrawal area would require further scoping and effects analysis and delay implementation of the proposed action. Considering the urgency with which this action must proceed to protect the ancient cedars, a delay in implementation would put Setter's Grove at risk of resource damage. Another issue is to make the withdrawal permanent. Again, for the reasons stated above, it was determined to be outside the scope of this action.

V. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

After considering the environmental effects described in the Forest Service Settler's Grove of Ancient Cedar Environmental Assessment and the associated documents, I have determined the selected alternative will not have significant impact on the quality of the human environment based on context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. The Finding of No Significant Impact is included with this decision notice.

VI. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

To the best of my knowledge, this decision is in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies (FONSI, page 3; Forest Service EA, pages 5-9).

National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

The selected alternative is consistent with the NFMA and the IPNF Forest Plan (FONSI, page 1, EA, page 5). This proposal does not require Forest Plan amendments.

Clean Water Act

The selected alternative ensures the continued delivery of clean water from National Forest System lands. It preserves hydrologic conditions that currently exist by precluding industrial mining uses thereby reducing the risk of affecting subsurface flowpaths and downstream changes in stream morphology and functions (FONSI, page 31; EA, page 8).

Endangered Species Act (ESA)

Section 7 of the ESA directs Federal agencies to ensure that actions authorized, funded, or carried out by them are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of their critical habitat. The selected alternative is consistent with ESA (wildlife, fisheries, and threatened, endangered and sensitive plant reports). The selected alternative will not adversely affect threatened, endangered and sensitive species or their habitats (FONSI, page 3; EA, pages 6-8).

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The selected alternative complies with NHPA (FONSI, page 3; EA, page 9). The selected alternative is an administrative action; no districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places would be adversely affected, nor would there by any loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources (EA page 9).

Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898

No disproportionate impacts to minority or low-income populations were identified during scoping or during any other portion of public involvement over the course of this analysis. The selected alternative complies with Executive Order 12898 since Settler's Grove cannot be moved or replaced there are no alternative locations where the action can be taken.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Implementation of this decision may occur immediately following publication of the legal notice of this decision in the paper of record, *The Coeur d'Alene Press*.

VIII. REVIEW AND APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12(e)(1). The documents cited in this decision notice can be obtained from the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, Fernan Office, 2502 E. Sherman Ave., Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814 or on the IPNF website: www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/eco/manage/nepa.

For more information or to review the project planning record, contact Barbara Hansen, Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, Fernan Office, (208) 769-3050.

DAVID H. MURPHY

I NOVEMBER 2012

Date

Chief, Branch of Lands, Minerals and Water Rights Idaho State Office