Jet Boat Use and Users on the Salmon River in Idaho:
A Descriptive Report to the Salmon-Challis National Forest
and the Western Whitewater Association

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June 20, 2002

This research was sponsored by the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, the
Salmon-Challis National Forest, and the Western Whitewater Association
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JET BOAT USE AND USERS ON THE SALMON RIVER IN IDAHO:
A DESCRIPTIVE REPORT TO THE SALMON- CHALLIS NATIONAL FOREST
AND THE WESTERN WHITEWATER ASSOCIATION

PURPOSE: To summarize recent research conducted to understand current jet boat use and users along the stretch of the Salmon River inside the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness in Idaho.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

A. "Legislative history of jet boat use in the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness"
(For the full report, see Appendix B)

Ms. Meyer reminded us of some of the primary reasons the Central Idaho Wilderness Act (1980) included language assuring the continuing use of jet boats on the Salmon River in the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness (FCRNRW). She presented previous comments, quotes and discussion within a presentation of the assumed relative importance of these kinds of legislative history sources.

Of most importance (beyond clearly stated direction contained in the legislation itself) are Committee Reports. From early Senate and House Committee Reports in 1979, we learn that continuance of "access by .... motorboat" was to assure this "traditional means of access" could still be used to "...see and enjoy this splendid wilderness." Continuing use of jet boats, however, was not intended to preempt the prerogatives of the Secretary of Agriculture (under the provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act) to regulate motorized travel on the river in times of low water, or high fire hazard, or for other reasonable purposes.

During 1980, Committee Reports emphasized that the use of motorboats (including motorized jet boats) within this segment of the Salmon River shall be permitted to continue at a level not less than the level of use which occurred during the calendar year 1978. Committee Reports clarified that the provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and not the provisions of the Wilderness Act would apply within the corridor....the rules and regulations promulgated pursuant to the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act will apply in the river corridor. And, it was clarified that the term "motorboat" includes the motorized jet boats in use on the river in 1980.

To further clarify these primary definitions, an analysis of Congressional Record entries determined that the Secretary of Agriculture would retain the necessary flexibility to increase the use of motorboats on the basis of a management plan, though any increase should not be allowed to result in overuse of motorboats, and use should not be curtailed below the level of calendar year 1978. Senator Church made it clear, in 1979, that he wanted to assure that all river users would be accommodated through development of a management plan - including those using floatboats and those who hike along the banks of the river or fish in it.

One important clarifying comment from a Forest Service staff member at a Committee Hearing, accepted by Senator Church, was that "appropriate regulation" means that there would be some upper limit to the amount of jet boat traffic that the river environment and the experience on it can tolerate, and that some restrictions and regulations will eventually have to be applied, as long as the authority of the Wild and Scenic River Act was used to justify any
regulating of use of motorboats on the main stem of the Salmon.

B. "Qualitative analysis of jet boat users on the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness: Project report for Phase I" (For the full report, see Appendix C)

Dr. Patterson has an excellent reputation for conducting qualitative research to develop deeper understanding of relationships people have with specific places and activities. Previous work in wilderness in Florida for the Leopold Institute and the Forest Service has contributed to better articulation of the unique aspects of these places and how managers’ actions can influence the quality of experiences obtained, leading to greater ability to specify management objectives for the human experience component of wilderness and direct monitoring.

The report included here was not intended to help us understand all jet boat users, but focused on a small group of people intensively involved in jet boating and interacting with the Forest Service on matters relating to regulation of jet boat use on the Salmon River within the FCRNRW. Conclusions from this research should most accurately be seen as a set of hypotheses about the relationship jet boat users have with the activity of jet boating and the setting of the Salmon River within the FCRNRW. Besides providing in-depth knowledge of the meanings these five people associate with jet boating and the Salmon River, the hypotheses developed provide direction to the larger quantitative study of the broad population of jet boat users.

Some Identifiable Hypotheses:

1. Being close to nature is important to jet boaters.

2. Opportunities to experience solitude in a remote setting is valued by some jet boaters.

3. Some describe jet boating as a family experience, or an opportunity to pass on important values to others.

4. Jet boaters exhibit strong attachment to place, or opportunities to spend time in the Salmon River Canyon is important to them (they have a strong personal history, are deeply involved).

5. Jet boating is challenging with a certain amount of risk, as in any whitewater activity, and current regulations influence the perception of safety by limiting the ability of boaters to travel in groups.

6. Jet boats are consistent with wilderness/wild and scenic values.

7. Jet boaters appreciate the cultural history of the river corridor.

8. Jet boaters perceive some other users as having unreal expectations about their journeys along the Salmon River.

9. River planning should be addressed from a regional perspective, not river-by-river.
10. Jet boaters believe that environmentally responsible behavior, by all users, is important in order to protect the resource.

11. It is important to teach river etiquette to all users.

12. Jet boaters believe in "responsible shared use" - fair equitable access to the resource and opportunity for growth with other user groups.

C. "Understanding motorboat (including jet boat) use and users on the Main Salmon River (Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness"

Subjects were not taken from a sample. Every effort was taken to census identifiable subpopulations of private jet boat users on the Main Salmon River. Two excepted subpopulations were private land owners and commercial operators. Targeted subpopulations included: 1) Western Whitewater Association (WWA) membership (N=281); 2) Northwest River Runners (N=88); 3) 1996 and 1997 Forest Service jet boat permits (N=72); 4) jet boaters identified by the WWA as users in 1978 (N=168); 5) unaffiliated operators identified by survey respondents (N=98); 6) passengers identified by survey respondents (N=146); and 7) 1983-1984 and 1993-1995 Forest Service jet boat permits (N=42). A total of 895 surveys were sent out, with a post card follow-up reminder following in one week. From these two mailings, a total of 391 surveys were completed and returned. Forty-one had been returned undeliverable, and a follow-up telephone survey of nonrespondents found that about 7.5% had not received the survey, though it was not returned undeliverable. The final response rate is estimated at 48% (391 of 819). Of these 391 respondents, 39 had not been on a jet boat within the boundaries of the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness (Vinegar Creek to Corn Creek) and were dropped from the data analysis. From the follow-up telephone survey of nonrespondents it is estimated that approximately 50% of nonrespondents had not jet boated within the FCRNRW boundaries, implying that the 391 respondents represent 74% of the potential respondents to the mailback survey.

I. Description of respondents:

a. Operated a jet boat between Vinegar Creek and Corn Creek? (391 responded)
   59% (229) YES  41% (162) NO

b. Passenger between Vinegar Creek and Corn Creek? (391 responded)
   72% (280) YES  28% (111) NO

c. Neither an operator nor passenger between Vinegar Creek and Corn Creek:
   39 (10% of respondents), leaving 352 respondents for analysis

d. Self-evaluation of jet boat skills: (336 responses)
   15% expert
   37% advanced
30% intermediate
18% novice, beginner or had never operated a jet boat

e. Owner (or part-owner) of land along the Main Salmon River corridor? (349 responded)
   11% YES  89% NO

f. Age: (350 responded)
   Average age: 51 years
   25% under age 44
   50% under age 51
   75% under age 58
   100% under age 81

g. Gender: (352 responded)
   3% FEMALE  97% MALE

h. Education achieved: (343 responded)
   3% less than high school diploma
   32% high school diploma
   32% with some college
   20% college graduates
   14% beyond BS/BA

i. Annual household income: (334 responded)
   14% less than $35,000
   19% between $35 - 49,999
   25% between $50 - 74,999
   22% between $75 - 100,000
   21% over $100,000

j. Community while growing up: (341 responded)
   30% on a farm or ranch
   13% rural, not a farm or ranch
   15% in a town of less than 2,500 people
   19% in a town between 2,500 and 25,000 people
   18% in a city of 25,000 to 100,000 people
   6% in cities or metropolitan areas of over 100,000 people

k. Current community type: (311 responded)
   6% on a farm or ranch
   8% rural, not a farm or ranch
   16% in a town of less than 2,500 people
   27% in a town between 2,500 and 25,000 people
   24% in a city of 25,000 to 100,000 people
19% in cities or metropolitan areas of over 100,000 people

I. Employment: (352 people responded)
   Employed outside the home?  71% YES  29% NO
   Working from your own home?  14% YES  86% NO
   Retired?  15% YES  85% NO
   Full time homemaker?  100% NO
   Currently a student?  1% YES  99% NO

m. Occupation: (329 responded)
   Representing the following industries in the highest proportions:
     - Construction and building
     - Sales and service
     - Manufacturing
     - Banking

   Representing the following titles in the highest proportions:
     - Manager
     - Owner
     - President
     - Sales

II. Information to address hypotheses (parentheses contain page number within questionnaire):

1. Being close to nature is important to jet boaters.

   Viewing scenery (6)
   70% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
   3% not at all/slight

   Experiencing nature's intricacies (6)
   45% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
   17% not at all/slight

   Viewing wildlife (7)
   71% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
   4% not at all/slight

   Jet boating brings me closer to nature (8)
   30% strongly agree, 55% agree, 3% disagree

   Jet boating gives me opportunities to be close to nature (9)
   36% strongly agree, 59% agree, 1% disagree
Viewing wildlife is an important reason for jet boating on the Salmon River (10)
38% strongly agree, 53% agree, 2% disagree

2. Opportunities to experience solitude in a remote setting is valued by some jet boaters.

Do you ever run the Main Salmon as a single boat, not as part of a group of jet boats? (2)
73% YES  27% NO

The total number of people I see on the river each day (5)
13% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
52% not at all/slight

The size of float parties that I see along the river each day (5)
19% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
51% not at all/slight

The number of float parties I see on the river each day (5)
15% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
53% not at all/slight

The number of modern structures (buildings, airstrips, bridges, etc.) I see daily (6)
11% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
70% not at all/slight

The number of low-flying aircraft I see each day (6)
4% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
85% not at all/slight

I enjoy solitude when jet boating (7)
25% strongly agree, 41% agree, 7% disagree

Jet boating with large groups is just as enjoyable as with small groups (9)
11% strongly agree, 25% agree, 43% disagree

I enjoy the remoteness and isolation of the Salmon River (9)
44% strongly agree, 52% agree, 1% disagree

3. Some describe jet boating as a family experience, or an opportunity to pass on important values to others.

Being with people of similar values/interests (5)
45% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
14% not at all/slight
Instilling values (e.g., responsibility and self-confidence) (5)
   41% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
   17% not at all/slight

Spending time with my family (6)
   68% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
   9% not at all/slight

Jet boating helps me maintain an important connection with experiences I had as a child (8)
   16% strongly agree, 19% agree, 36% disagree

Jet boating is an important family experience to me (8)
   50% strongly agree, 35% agree, 6% disagree

Jet boating experiences will stay with me throughout my life (8)
   70% strongly agree, 29% agree, 1% disagree

It is important to me that future generations of Americans will be able to jet boat on the Salmon River (11)
   79% strongly agree, 19% agree, 1% disagree

Jet boating on the Salmon River in the summer is important to my family (11)
   32% strongly agree, 40% agree, 7% disagree

4. Jet boaters exhibit strong attachment to place, or opportunities to spend time in the Salmon River Canyon is important to them (they have a strong personal history, are deeply involved).

1st year as an operator on the Salmon River? (1) (220 people responded)
   28% were operating by 1978
   50% were operating by 1986
   75% were operating by 1993

1st year as a passenger on the Salmon River? (1) (266 people responded)
   43% were passengers by 1978
   62% were passengers by 1986
   80% were passengers by 1993

Has your family ever owned (or part-owned) a jet boat? (1) (350 people responded)
   87% YES  13% NO

Year of first jet boat ownership ?(1) (301 people responded)
   29% owned by 1978
   52% owned by 1986
   80% owned by 1993
When was your most recent jet boat trip on the Salmon between Vinegar Creek and Corn Creek? (2) (342 people responded)
  3% have not jet boated on Salmon since 1978
  9% have not jet boated on Salmon since 1986
  17% have not jet boated on Salmon since 1993
  41% have not jet boated on Salmon since 1997

How many times did you jet boat on the Salmon River between Vinegar Creek and Corn Creek in 1998? (2) (347 people responded)
  39% said 0
  15% said 1
  16% said 2
  1 person reported 120 trips
  1 person reported 80 trips
  1 person reported 75 trips
  1 person reported 40 trips
  3 people reported 35 trips

Is that HIGHER or LOWER than usual? (2) (294 people responded)
  52% said it was about the same
  45% said it was lower

Are there any other rivers that provide a similar jet boat experience to the Salmon River between Vinegar Creek and Corn Creek? (2) (326 people responded)
  32% YES  68% NO

Being on the Salmon River (6)
  77% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
  3% not at all/slight

Being in the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness (6)
  49% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
  23% not at all/slight

I think of the Salmon River like it's my backyard (7)
  24% strongly agree, 35% agree, 22% disagree

I would make more jet boat trips on the Main Salmon during the summer if the permit system allowed for it (8)
  47% strongly agree, 25% agree, 6% disagree

I see myself as just a visitor to the Salmon River (8)
  34% strongly agree, 47% agree, 12% disagree
Jet boating on the Salmon River is different from other rivers (8)
   44% strongly agree, 39% agree, 5% disagree

The rapids are more challenging in the Salmon River than on other rivers (8)
   24% strongly agree, 34% agree, 14% disagree

Visiting the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness is just as important to me as visiting the Main Salmon River (8)
   27% strongly agree, 34% agree, 16% disagree

Being a passenger on a jet boat on the Salmon River is much like on any river (9)
   2% strongly agree, 17% agree, 67% disagree

The Salmon River belongs equally to all people (10)
   75% strongly agree, 20% agree, 3% disagree

I get more satisfaction out of jet boating on the Salmon River than from visiting any other place (11)
   26% strongly agree, 30% agree, 11% disagree

Salmon River jet boating means a lot to me (11)
   66% strongly agree, 27% agree, 2% disagree

No other place can compare to the Salmon River (11)
   42% strongly agree, 28% agree, 8% disagree

I wouldn't substitute any other place for the jet boating I do at the Salmon River (11)
   48% strongly agree, 27% agree, 6% disagree

I find that a lot of my life is organized around jet boating on the Salmon River (11)
   18% strongly agree, 29% agree, 20 disagree

The Salmon River is a wilderness river (11)
   18% strongly agree, 31% agree, 31% disagree

The Salmon River is a river running through wilderness (11)
   43% strongly agree, 43% agree, 8% disagree

I feel like the Salmon River is a part of me (12)
   24% strongly agree, 44% agree, 9% disagree

One of the main reasons I now live where I do is that the Salmon River is nearby (12)
   18% strongly agree, 31% agree, 19% disagree
Jet boating on the Salmon River is more important to me than jet boating in any other place (12)
22% strongly agree, 32% agree, 17% disagree

Salmon River jet boating plays a central role in my lifestyle (12)
17% strongly agree, 29% agree, 22% disagree

Jet boating on the Salmon River allows others to see me as I would really like them to see me (12)
10% strongly agree, 22% agree, 26% disagree

I can relate jet boating on the Salmon River to other parts of my life (12)
15% strongly agree, 47% agree, 15% disagree

I identify strongly with the Salmon River (12)
27% strongly agree, 46% agree, 7% disagree

The Salmon River is the best place for a jet boat trip (12)
26% strongly agree, 38% agree, 5% disagree

No other place can compare to the Salmon River for what I like to do in my spare time (12)
25% strongly agree, 34% agree, 11% disagree

I am very attached to the Salmon River (12)
41% strongly agree, 42% agree, 2% disagree

5. Jet boating is dangerous and challenging, and regulations sometimes influence perceptions of safety.

Do you ever run the Main Salmon as a single boat, not as part of a group of jet boats? (2)
73% YES  27% NO

If yes, why? (2)
85% BY CHOICE  14% RESULT OF PERMIT SYSTEM

Using jet boat skills (5)
59% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
11% not at all/slight

Feeling independent/self-sufficient (5)
27% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
26% not at all/slight

Experiencing challenge/risk (5)
38% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
24% not at all/slight

Feeling individualistic (5)
  18% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
  44% not at all/slight

Testing, practicing, enhancing jet boating skills (6)
  51% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
  19% not at all/slight

Learning essential life skills (prepare for and handle emergencies) (6)
  33% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
  27% not at all/slight

Jet boat operators are in it for the adventure (7)
  25% strongly agree, 50% agree, 12% disagree

Jet boat passengers are in it for the adventure (7)
  26% strongly agree, 58% agree, 6% disagree

Operating a jet boat requires more skill than guiding a raft on the Salmon River (7)
  46% strongly agree, 19% agree, 10% disagree

I always feel a sense of respect for the river when riding in a jet boat (7)
  75% strongly agree, 23% agree, 2% disagree

Some people feel whitewater jet boating to be too intimidating and not for them (7)
  26% strongly agree, 47% agree, 10% disagree

I enjoy the thrill and adrenaline rush of jet boating through whitewater (7)
  40% strongly agree, 46% agree, 4% disagree

I have been frightened many times while jet boating (8)
  5% strongly agree, 18% agree, 56% disagree

Many of the rapids make me nervous when jet boating (8)
  9% strongly agree, 38% agree, 29% disagree

If you can operate a jet boat on the Snake River, you can operate one on the Salmon River (9)
  6% strongly agree, 25% agree, 48% disagree

It doesn't take very long to learn how to run the Salmon River (9)
  2% strongly agree, 4% agree, 88% disagree
Jet boating is probably similar in skills and thrills to backcountry flying (10)
17% strongly agree, 44% agree, 12% disagree

6. Jet boats are consistent with wilderness values.

Convenient/comfortable camping (5)
20% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
36% not at all/slight

Testing, practicing, enhancing jet boating skills (6)
51% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
19% not at all/slight

Feeling the power of the river (6)
58% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
9% not at all/slight

Feeling the power of machinery (6)
39% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
25% not at all/slight

Testing equipment (6)
18% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
51% not at all/slight

Teaching jet boating skills to others (6)
29% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
40% not at all/slight

Being in the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness (6)
49% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
23% not at all/slight

Jet boating expresses romance with machinery (8)
10% strongly agree, 28% agree, 26% disagree

Visiting the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness is just as important to me as visiting the Main Salmon River (8)
27% strongly agree, 34% agree, 16% disagree

Jet boaters use the Salmon River for the same reason floaters do (9)
34% strongly agree, 45% agree, 12% disagree
I would go to the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness even if I couldn't get there in a jet boat (10)
  8% strongly agree, 25% agree, 44% disagree

I value jet boat access as a means of traveling to the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness (10)
  65% strongly agree, 31% agree, 1% disagree

Jet boating on the Salmon River is just as much a wilderness experience as riding horses on the trails in the wilderness (11)
  43% strongly agree, 33% agree, 15% disagree

7. Jet boaters appreciate the cultural history of the river corridor.

Interaction with individuals who live along the Salmon River (5)
  31% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
  33% not at all/slight

Exploring historic or cultural sites (7)
  33% very much (influences the quality of my jet boat trips on the Salmon River)
  16% not at all/slight

The cultural history adds to the uniqueness of the Salmon River (10)
  44% strongly agree, 50% agree, 5% disagree

8. Jet boaters perceive some other users as having unreal expectations.

Increase education of river users on types of uses they will encounter (15)
  44% strongly support, 41% support, 2% oppose

9. River planning should be addressed from a regional perspective, not river-by-river.

The Salmon River is the premier whitewater jet boat experience in the lower 48 states (9)
  35% strongly agree, 31% agree, 7% disagree

Coordination among Federal agencies to manage Wild and Scenic Rivers, like the Salmon River, as an integrated system will benefit me (9)
  10% strongly agree, 25% agree, 34% disagree

10. Jet boaters believe in environmentally responsible behavior.

Environmental health should be the primary factor in deciding appropriate use levels on the Main Salmon River (14)
  10% strongly support, 33% support, 23% oppose
Allow natural fires to burn without human intervention (14)
11% strongly support, 19% support, 55% oppose

Control non-native vegetation with chemicals (15)
28% strongly support, 37% support, 9% oppose

11. It is important to teach users river etiquette.

Stronger enforcement of human waste regulations (15)
21% strongly support, 38% support, 12% oppose

Increase education on human waste/sanitation at Vinegar Creek launch (15)
33% strongly support, 42% support, 5% oppose

Teaching whitewater skills, safety, and river etiquette to new jet boaters is important to me (10)
51% strongly agree, 39% agree, 2% disagree

III. Potential Problems (13)

Too much time spent within sight of float parties
45% NO PROBLEM AT ALL

Low-flying aircraft
84% NO PROBLEM AT ALL

Too many campfire rings
63% NO PROBLEM AT ALL

Inadequate disposal of human waste
34% NO PROBLEM AT ALL

Too many float parties passing my campsite
55% NO PROBLEM AT ALL

Too many jet boats on the river
78% NO PROBLEM AT ALL

Too many large float parties seen along the river
37% NO PROBLEM AT ALL

Too many float parties on the river
42% NO PROBLEM AT ALL
Delays at rapids by float parties
   36% NO PROBLEM AT ALL

Delays at rapids by jet boats
   71% NO PROBLEM AT ALL

Too much human-caused vegetation loss and bare ground at campsites
   44% NO PROBLEM AT ALL

Too many modern structures (buildings, airstrips, bridges) along the river
   78% NO PROBLEM AT ALL

Too much human damage to historical sites
   37% NO PROBLEM AT ALL

Too much litter
   38% NO PROBLEM AT ALL

IV. Support for Management Actions (14-17)

Increase parking spaces at launch sites (14)
   24% strongly support, 42% support, 10% oppose

Establish raft launch schedules to avoid up/downriver congestion (14)
   19% strongly support, 36% support, 12% oppose

Establish recreation use fees (14)
   8% strongly support, 23% support, 46% oppose

Provide separate jet boat and float boat launch/takeout sites to reduce congestion (14)
   26% strongly support, 39% support, 12% oppose

Change current use restrictions on private jet boats above Ludwig Rapid (currently 6 Boat Use Days/week) (14)
   41% strongly support, 19% support, 13% oppose (24% were neutral)

Change the allowable number of jet boats traveling together during the control season (currently 3) (15)
   23% strongly support, 20% support, 19% oppose (35% neutral)
   (For the 130 respondents who recommended a change, the mode was 6, and 9% wanted unlimited)

Change the length of the control season for float boats (currently 6/20-9/7) (15)
   9% strongly support, 12% support, 24% oppose (50% neutral)
Change the length of the control season for jet boats (currently 6/20-9/7) (15)
   19% strongly support, 15% support, 23% oppose (41% neutral)

Change the limit on the number of commercial jet boats allowed on the river per day (18 in control season, 19 all other seasons) (16)
   12% strongly support, 14% support, 20% oppose (50% neutral)

Change the number of allowable persons per private float party (currently 30 during control) (16)
   20% strongly support, 20% support, 15% oppose (40% neutral)

Reduce the maximum number of private float boat launches/day (currently 4 during control season, other seasons unlimited) (16)
   6% strongly support, 8% support, 31% oppose (50% neutral)

Reduce the maximum number of commercial float boat launches/day (currently 4 during control season, other seasons unlimited) (16)
   12% strongly support, 14% support, 23% oppose (49% neutral)

Set a limit on the number of jet back trips per day (currently no limit) (16)
   13% strongly support, 9% support, 22% oppose (38% neutral)

Set a limit on the number of float boats allowed per party (currently no limit) (16)
   29% strongly support, 20% support, 14% oppose (33% neutral)

Define quotas for jet boat use during the control season in terms of jet boat launches/day instead of Boat Use Days/week (17)
   22% strongly support, 22% support, 17% oppose (34% neutral)

Change the number of allowable persons per commercial float boat party (currently 30) (17)
   18% strongly support, 22% support, 13% oppose (41% neutral)

CONCLUSIONS:

   It is clear that jet boat use, as a traditional means of access to see and enjoy the wilderness, can not be restricted below 1978 use levels on the Main Salmon River within the boundaries of the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness. It does appear, from pre-legislative testimony, that the Forest Service intended to retain some authority to avoid overuse of motorboats by applying some upper limit to the amount of jet boat traffic the river environment and experience could handle. The committee report, however, clearly supports heavy recreational use, with jet boat use continuing at a level not less than the level in 1978, but does not intend to allow overuse by any group.

   The interviews conducted by Dr. Patterson provide much greater insight into the meanings jet boat users attach to this activity on the Salmon River than is normally provided to managers interacting with an interest group of this type. We hope the thoughtful discussions
supply managers with greater understanding of this subpopulation of river users and establish
common ground for discussions of how management actions can detract from or contribute to
these meanings. While this knowledge pertains mostly to the leadership of the Western
Whitewater Association, a group of people actively engaged with Forest Service management to
influence management direction, it provides us with many researchable questions related to the
larger population of jet boat users.

In the mailback survey minimal efforts were made to obtain high response rates from jet
boat users. There were time constraints on obtaining this information in order for it to be useful
in the planning process, but higher response rates were expected due to assumed high interest
levels in the topic among those contacted. From the telephone follow-up of nonrespondents it
was learned that about half of those not responding had never been on that stretch of the river of
most interest and likely perceived the value of response most applicable to those who had jet
boated the Salmon River. Assuming responses adequately represent 74% of the targeted
subpopulations, the sample is considered adequate. Additional analysis of responses obtained by
telephone from those nonrespondents who had jet boated on this stretch of the river may
contribute to further understanding if any bias exists in response.

The respondents were kept in a single data set which included both operators and
passengers. While there is an ability to separate these two groups into distinct response
categories for future analysis, this first descriptive report allows us to talk generally about this
population of people involved in this activity at this place. They differed from common
descriptions of wilderness users in that they were mostly a little older, with only 25% under age
44; they were almost all male; income distribution was higher than for private float boaters in the
FCRNRW, but not as high as commercial customers; they have strong rural or small town roots
which have gravitated with increasing urbanization to more urban environments; and they are
mostly not college or university students with 15% retired, 14% working from their home, and
71% employed outside the home.

Jet boaters do generally place high value on viewing scenery and wildlife, though with
lower importance attached to nature items than seen among private and commercial floaters in
the FCRNRW. Appendix A presents results of a factor analysis procedure on the items from
pages 4 and 5 of the questionnaire. The purpose of inclusion of these items was to allow some
direct comparison to results from earlier studies of private and commercial floaters and steep
creek boaters. From earlier work (Appendix D), 6 factors were developed that linked individual
items into summative scales that measured the importance of an aspect of a river experience to
enjoyment of a river trip. These factors are defined on page 155 of Appendix D. Applying this
factor structure to the data obtained from the jet boaters suggests that jet boaters place value on
different aspects of the trip than do these other river users. The companionship factor is the most
important factor for jet boaters, emphasizing the importance these boaters place on being with
others of similar interests, experiencing closeness in my group, and being with
friends. The factor escape from civilization rates much higher for other floater groups,
suggesting that escaping noise, experiencing peace and tranquility, feeling a part of nature,
experiencing solitude, getting away from crowds, taking care of the earth, and experiencing
natural cycles of the earth isn’t as dominant a part of the jet boater experience as hypothesized.

Most jet boaters who had experienced the Main Salmon as a single boat party had done it
out of choice, with nearly half recognizing large groups are not as enjoyable as small groups on
the river. Numbers of contacts with floaters, modern structures and aircraft do not greatly influence enjoyment of jet boat trips on the Salmon River. One of the highest influences on trip quality is the opportunity to spend time with family, exceeded only by the importance attached to keeping jet boating opportunities available for future generations as a way to enjoy this place.

Only about 1/4 of the respondents to this study indicated they had operated a jet boat on this river prior to its establishment as wilderness; another 1/4 just started in the past 5 years. But, nearly half had ridden a motorboat on this stretch of river before wilderness protection. Well over half have jet boated on the Salmon in the last 5 years, and over 2/3 feel there are not available substitutes for the experiences they receive on the Salmon inside the wilderness boundary. They place more importance on being on the river than being within the boundaries of the wilderness, and they tend to think of the Salmon more as a river running through wilderness than as a wilderness river.

Most feel that running the Salmon River takes quite a bit of time to learn, and while it is not a frightening experience they do feel respect for the river when jet boating. Experience jet boating on other rivers does not necessarily mean you are prepared to jet boat on the Salmon River. Some operators have operated on the Salmon in a single jet boat group as a result of permit restrictions (14%), but most have done it by choice.

If they couldn't jet boat on the Salmon River, nearly half wouldn't access the FCRNRW, though they do highly value jet boat access as a means of traveling to the Wilderness. Most believe that jet boating provides just as much a wilderness experience as riding horses on trails in the wilderness. Nearly 80% agree that jet boaters and floaters use the Salmon River for the same reasons.

About a third of jet boaters don't place importance on interaction with folks who live along the Salmon River inside the wilderness, but about 1/3 place very high importance on this interaction and exploring historic and cultural sites along the river. Almost everyone agrees that the cultural history of the river adds to the uniqueness of the place.

Interestingly, while about 2/3 agree that the Salmon River is the premier whitewater jet boat experience in the lower 48 states, about 1/3 do not believe that they will benefit if Salmon River management is decided within the context of an integrated system.

While jet boaters do not seem to have problems with low-flying aircraft, too many jet boats on the river, or modern structures, response is not quite so positive toward time spent within sight of float parties, too many large float parties along the river, delays at rapids by float parties, litter, and human damage to historical sites.

Surprisingly, there are high percentages of neutral responses to some of the proposed management options included in the survey. For instance, 35% were neutral (and 19% opposed) to changing the allowable number of jet boats traveling together during the control season (currently 3). Also, 41% were neutral (and 23% opposed) to changing the length of the control season for jet boats; 50% were neutral (and 31% opposed) to reducing the maximum number of private float boat launches/day; and 34% were neutral (and 17% opposed) to defining quotas for jet boat use during the control season in terms of jet boat launches/day instead of Boat Use Days/week.