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Values, Attitudes and Beliefs Toward National Forest System Lands: The Prescott National Forest

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Executive Summary

With approximately 1.25 million acres, the Prescott National Forest (NF) is the tenth largest

beliefs and assessments of the Prescott NF relationship with interested parties and forest users. Prescott NF specific issues include a desire for better use of volunteers and partnerships with publics, a more user-friendly approach to interactions with publics, and improved communication and collaboration with publics about management decisions and planning.

Multiple-Use

Participants expressed concern about the future effects of population growth on demand for recreation and other uses of forest resources. Specific issues and concerns include: rights-of-way access issues, the contributions of ranching to open space, attention to land exchanges and subdivisions to conserve open space, problem behavior associated with recreational use of forest lands, the need for education of users to ensure appropriate behavior, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, effective trail and road management, illegal uses, and the effects of changing values on user experiences.

Resource Issues

Resource issues and values identified by participants include the following: aesthetic and sense of place values; ecosystem services, especially watersheds; existence values; the respite and psychological benefits offered by forest lands; the social value to communities and the nation of having forest lands available to maintain ranching lifestyles; beliefs about the connections among drought, tree density, forest health, and fire danger; the value to communities of roads and trails; and, the importance of maintaining wilderness values, but ensuring there are resources to maintain the environmental quality of any future special designations.

Management Issues and Concerns

There is considerable overlap in the agency-public identification of issues, but there are some noteworthy differences. Public issues about agency processes and procedures addresses a wider range of concerns about how the Prescott NF works with local communities and interest groups, especially the need for a more “user-friendly” approach to working with publics. Working with publics, especially volunteers and other private entities, is also perceived as a means for the Prescott NF to leverage its management resources. There are also additional “institutional-level” concerns about agency procedures that publics desire to see addressed. The multiple-use issues identified by publics and the Prescott NF show general correspondence, although participants include a wider range of recreation issues, especially the importance of trail and road management and design, OHV management, and addressing problem behavior and user safety. Additionally, participants emphasize attention to rights-of-way and access issues, the social and open space values of ranching, and the need for education of users about appropriate behavior and land ethics. Participant and agency resource issues incorporate fire and forest health as among the most important topics for plan revision. Participants have additional concerns about the effects of land exchanges on resources and access, the psychological and respite benefits of forest resources, and the importance of aesthetic resources.

Chapter 1. Prescott National Forest

With approximately 1.25 million acres, the Prescott National Forest (NF) is the tenth largest national forest in the Southwestern Region and the smallest in total area of the national forests in Arizona. Prescott NF managed lands are in two roughly equal land segments on either side of the State Route 89 corridor in Yavapai County. The majority of the Prescott NF is located in Yavapai County, although a small portion of the northeast corner is in Coconino County. The Kaibab NF is to the north of the Prescott NF and the Coconino NF is to the northwest. The Tonto NF is to the southwest of the most eastern portion of the Prescott NF.

The Prescott NF maintains three ranger districts: the Bradshaw District Office is located in Prescott; the Chino Valley District Office is in Chino valley to the north of Prescott along SR89; and, the Camp Verde District Office is located in Camp Verde to the east of Interstate Highway 17. The Prescott NF contains about 100,000 acres in 8 designated wilderness areas that range from about 5,000 to almost 60,000 acres in size.

Table 1: Southwestern Region Forests Ranked by Total Area

Southwestern Region Forests	Rank by Size	Gross Acreage	NFS Acreage	Other Acreage
Tonto NF	1	2,969,543	2,872,935	96,608
Gila NF	2	2,797,628	2,708,836	88,792
Apache-Sitgreaves NF	5	2,761,386	2,632,018	129,368
Cibola NF	3	2,103,528	1,631,266	472,262
Coconino NF	4	2,013,960	1,855,679	158,281
Coronado NF	6	1,859,807	1,786,587	73,220
Santa Fe NF	7	1,734,800	1,572,301	162,499
Kaibab NF	8	1,600,061	1,559,200	40,861
Carson NF	9	1,490,468	1,391,674	98,794
Prescott NF	**10**	**1,407,611**	**1,239,246**	**168,365**
Lincoln NF	11	1,271,064	1,103,748	167,316
National Forests (11)		22,009,856	20,353,490	1,656,366

Source: U.S. Forest Service http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/lar/LAR04/table3_r3.htm

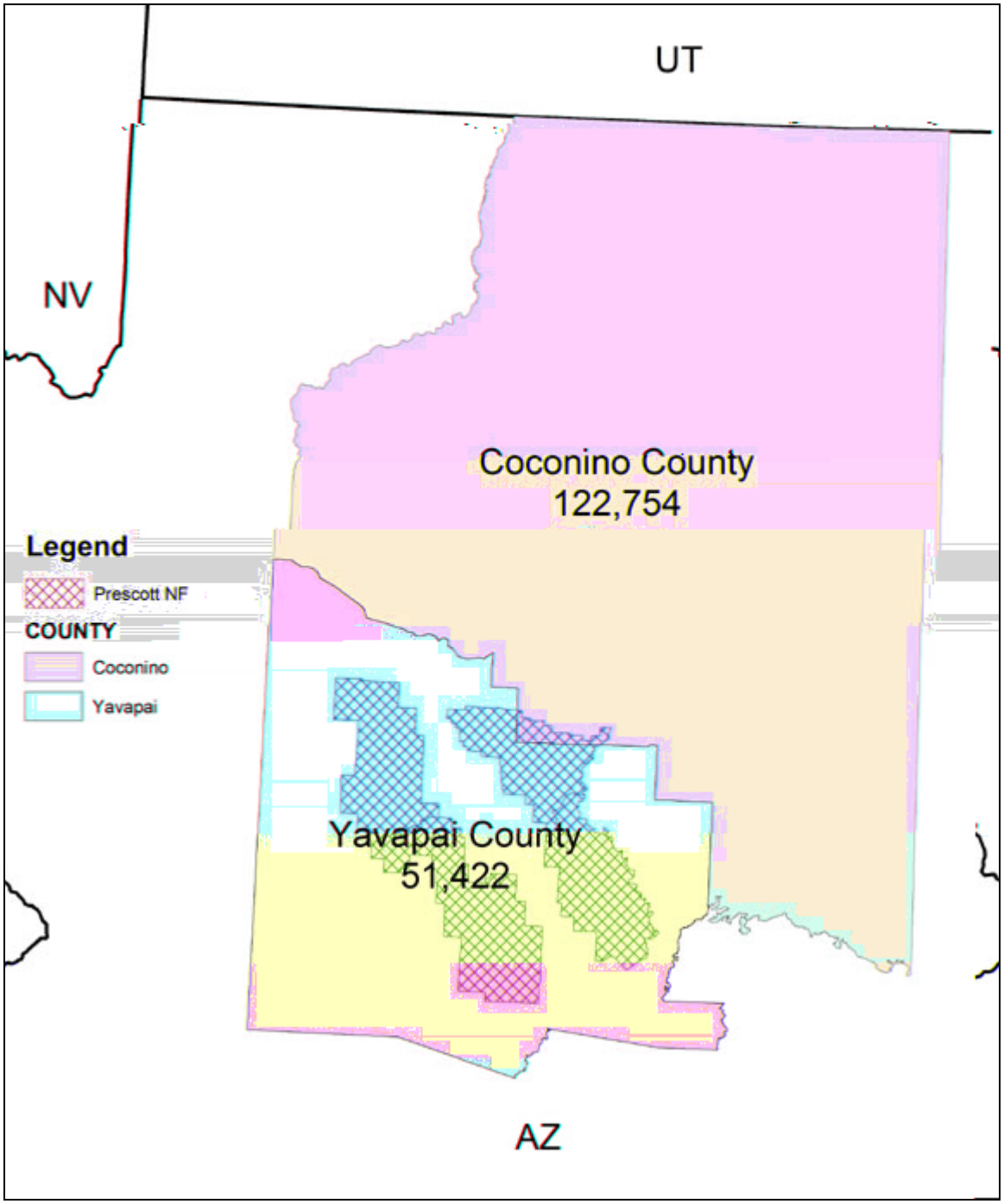

Figure 1: Prescott National Forest Counties

Chapter 2. The Socioeconomic Context

Public assessments of issues and concerns as well as values and beliefs have a social, economic, and cultural context. This context influences and interacts with assessments of how publics assess issues and construct values and beliefs about the agency and how lands and resources are managed. For example, in counties where Forest Service (FS) managed lands are a relatively large percentage of total land area, publics may have a higher level and broader range of interests than in those areas where the percentage is lower. The University of Arizona has compiled a comprehensive socioeconomic assessment of existing and historical conditions for the social environment surrounding the Prescott NF (Arizona National Forests Socioeconomic Assessment Team 2005). That report should be consulted for a complete description of the socioeconomic setting. This discussion presents some basic socioeconomic information regarding the social environment of surrounding counties to provide a context for the discussion of the results from this work.

Relevant highlights of the data presented in tables 2, 3, and 4 are the following:

- Prescott NF managed lands account for the largest percentage of total land ownership in Yavapai County; and, private lands are 25 percent of the total county land area. This suggests the potential for intensive public interest about forest management issues.
- Population growth in Yavapai county and surrounding communities is above the state average; and, the population growth of Phoenix is also among the highest in the west. Limited private lands combined with increasing population suggest increasing demands for access and recreation.
- The majority of the population is “white” with Hispanics and Native Americans accounting for the largest non-white ethnic populations. The presence of nearby Indian Reservations and a growing Hispanic population indicates diversity in the types of uses, values, and beliefs associated with forest lands.
- In Yavapai County, the number of persons age 18 and under is lower than the state average and the number of persons age 65 and older is higher than the state average.
- Household and per capita incomes are lower than the state average.
- The number of persons below the poverty level in Yavapai County is lower than the state average.

Table 2: County Land Ownership

County	BLM	FS	State	Private	Indian	Other Public Lands	Total Area
Coconino	5.1%	27.4%	9.5%	5.8%	45.7%	6.4%	11,915
Yavapai	10.9%	37.9%	24.3%	25.5%	0.2%	1.2%	5,199
Total	6.9%	30.6%	14.0%	11.8%	31.9%	4.8%	17,114

Source: USDA. 2004 Arizona Agricultural Statistics Bulletin

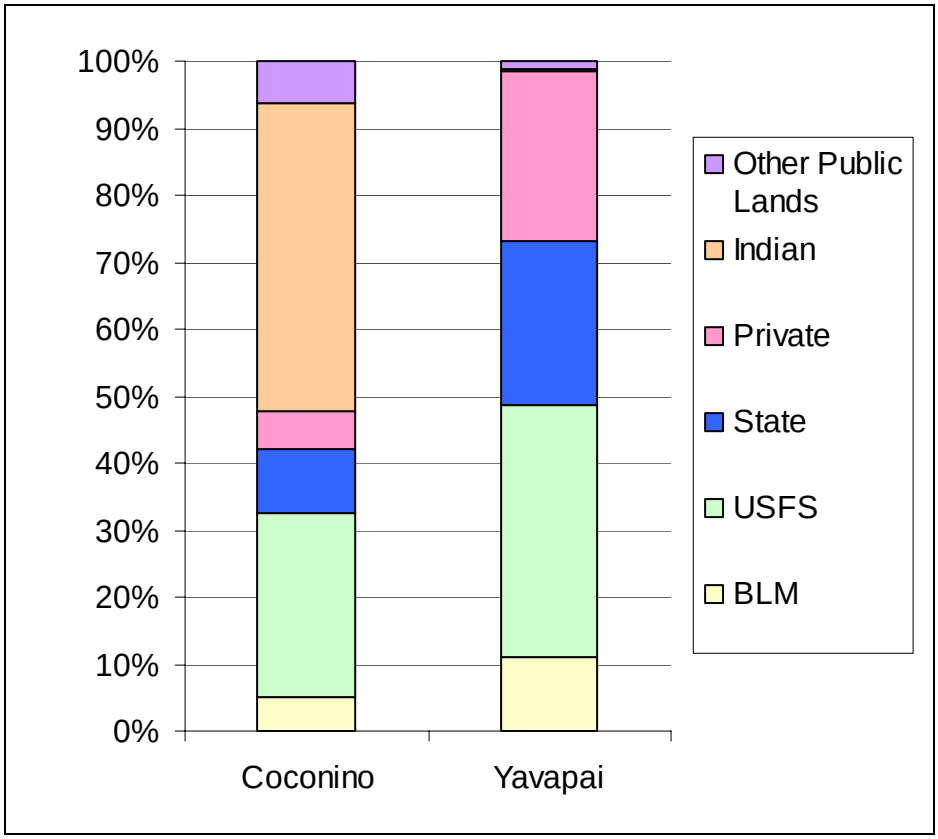

Figure 2: Prescott NF County Land Ownership

Table 3: Prescott National Forest

People QuickFacts	Arizona	Coconino County, AZ	Yavapai County, AZ
Population, 2003 estimate	5,580,811	121,301	184,433
Population, percent change, April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2003	8.8%	4.3%	10.1%
Population, 2000	5,130,632	116,320	167,517
Population, percent change, 1990 to 2000	40.0%	20.4%	55.5%
Persons under 18 years old, percent, 2000	26.6%	28.7%	21.1%
Persons 65 years old and over, percent, 2000	13.0%	7.0%	22.0%
Median Age	34.2	29.6	44.5
White persons, percent, 2000	75.5%	63.1%	91.9%
Black or African American persons, percent, 2000	3.1%	1.0%	0.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native persons, percent, 2000	5.0%	28.5%	1.6%

Table 3: Prescott National Forest

People QuickFacts	Arizona	Coconino County, AZ	Yavapai County, AZ
White persons, not of Hispanic/Latino origin, percent, 2000	63.8%	57.6%	86.6%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, percent, 2000	25.3%	10.9%	9.8%
Language other than English spoken at home, pct age 5+, 2000	25.9%	28.2%	9.7%
Median household income, 1999	$40,558	$38,256	$34,901
Per capita money income, 1999	$20,275	$17,139	$19,727
Persons below poverty, percent, 1999	13.9%	18.2%	11.9%
Land area, 2000 (square miles)	113,635	18,617	8,123
Persons per square mile, 2000	45.2	6.2	20.6
Agriculture			
Number of Farms 1997 to 2002 % Change	-14.3%	-25.5%	-12.1%
Land in farms (acres, 1997 to 2002) % Change	-2.1%	(D)	-9.7%
Average size of farm (acres, 1997 to 2002) % Change	14.1%	(D)	2.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2002 People Quickfacts and U.S.D.A. 2002 Census of Agriculture

Table 4: Prescott NF Study Area Incorporated Places Population 2000 & 2004

Prescott NF	2000	2004	% Change
Arizona	5,130,632	5,743,834	12.0%
AZ, Coconino County	116,320	122,754	5.5%
Flagstaff	52,894	57,038	7.8%
Fredonia	1,036	1,046	1.0%
Leupp, Navajo Nation *	970	1,023	5.5%
Page	6,809	6,818	0.1%
Sedona (Coconino & Yavapai)	10,192	11,067	8.6%
Tuba City, Navajo Nation *	8,225	8,677	5.5%
Williams	2,842	2,969	4.5%
AZ, Yavapai County	167,517	190,628	13.8%
Bagdad *	1,578	1,796	13.8%
Camp Verde	9,451	10,033	6.2%
Chino Valley	7,835	9,160	16.9%
Clarkdale	3,422	3,700	8.1%
Cottonwood	9,179	10,424	13.6%
Jerome	329	340	3.3%

Table 4: Prescott NF Study Area Incorporated Places Population 2000 & 2004

Prescott NF	2000	2004	% Change
Prescott	33,938	38,930	14.7%
Prescott Valley	23,535	30,231	28.5%
Sedona (Coconino & Yavapai)	10,192	11,067	8.6%
Verde Village * & **	10,610	12,074	13.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and Population Estimates Program 2004
= 2004 figures based on county growth rate
** = Verde Village figures reflect Cottonwood-Verde Village CDP

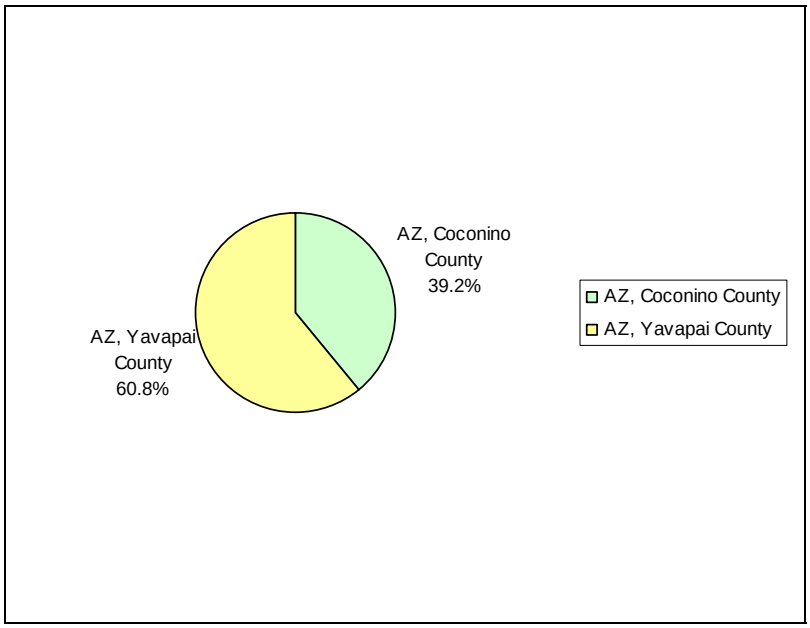

Figure 3: Percentage of Project Area Population by County

Chapter 3. Data Collection Process

Discussion groups or focus groups combined with individual interviews were used to identify issues, values and beliefs associated with the Prescott NF. A morning and afternoon discussion group were organized and held in Prescott at a community facility. Eleven persons attended the morning session that had duration of about 2½ hours. Nine persons attended the afternoon session that also had duration of about 2½ hours. Additionally, five individual interviews were completed. These interviews ranged from about 1 to 2 hours in length. Participants represented the following interest groups and perspectives: ranchers, environmentalists, local business, local government officials, off-road vehicle users, backcountry horsemen, mountain biking, new residents, long-term residents, hiking and trails, economic development, volunteers, and educational interests. The interests and perspectives of tribes associated with the Prescott NF were developed in separate meetings and the results will be presented in a tribal report document that is distinct from the results presented here.

A targeted sampling strategy was used to identify participants for discussion groups and individual interviews. The discussion group moderator consulted with the forest planner and other staff members about persons with knowledge about their community and forest management issues. Persons representing a range of interest groups and concerns were selected to participate in discussions groups no larger than about ten to twelve persons. Persons who were invited to these groups, but who could not attend were asked for individual interviews.

Discussion sessions and interviews were focused by a topic area guide (appendix) with questions about the social environment of the Prescott NF, uses of forest lands and resources, assessments of resource conditions, forest benefits and values, desired futures, and management issues and priorities. Participants were also encouraged to discuss other topics about forest issues and management that are relevant to the relationship of communities and families with forest lands and resources. These discussions are consistent with the techniques of ethnographic interviews in which the purpose is to discover how a topic area is perceived and structured by the discussants (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995; Spradley 1979; Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte 1999; Sanjek 1990; Bernard 1995). In the group discussions, participants are encouraged to talk among themselves about the general topic raised by the moderator. Along with encouraging broad participation, the moderator clarifies and develops the meanings and frame of reference expressed by different participants (Agar 1986; Strauss and Quinn 1997; Agar and Hobbs 1985). In this sense, exchanges between the moderator and participants are guided by the strategy of eliciting the connections among elements of a topic (e.g., issues, effects, remedies) expressed by participants.

With the permission of participants, the discussion sessions were recorded using a digital recorder. Additionally, sketch notes were taken with notations about the digital recording time mark of key topics in the discussion sessions. The sketch notes plus the digital recordings are reviewed and coded using a combination of predefined and emergent codes (Boyatzis 1998; Strauss and Quinn 1997; Strauss 1987; Dey 1993). The predefined codes correspond to the topic areas in the discussion guide. The emergent codes were based on topics volunteered by participants. The analysis identified themes in the topic and emergent codes as well as participant statements to illustrate the content of the issues (cf. Agar and Hobbs 1985). The results of this qualitative approach organize the presentation of results.

Chapter 4. Results

Data from the interviews and discussion sessions are organized for presentation using the following topic areas:

- Forest-Social Environment Interactions. This topic describes assessments of trends and conditions in the social environment and perceptions of forest lands and resources.
- Agency Presence and Procedures. This topic area presents assessments of how the FS performs its role and interacts with stakeholders.
- Multiple-Use Issues. The categories of multiple-use and assessments of issues regarding different issues are presented.
- Resource Benefits, Values, and Concerns. Assessments of the natural and other resources of the Prescott NF are identified and described.

The information presented in this discussion expresses issues, values, and beliefs expressed by participants in this data collection process. These expressions can be interpreted as indicators of a broader framework of beliefs and values about the relationship of humans and nature. This framework is a type of “schema” or explanatory model” composed of propositions about the relationship of humans with nature. These explanatory models entail reasoning about causes, processes, and consequences of the commonplace and extraordinary events in daily life (e.g.

0.00gA8.945 r: andMseshiof 19
cues about xpibeing aeons eesou53 0 Td[n daiionplanato(u)-2(ltip)]TJ0.0007 Tc 0.0101 Tw 18.33)8(asdis h siv

In this statement there are notions about what can be controlled, the element of time in assessing resource health, and the dynamic state of natural systems. This one brief comment expresses a portion of what is more than likely a set of propositions about nature or an explanatory model about how nature works. Such models entail values and beliefs with implications for how management issues are perceived and identified, the functioning of a natural system such as a national forest, and the perceived outcomes or solutions to identified problems. The discussion session process thus extracts values and beliefs from a broader context or framework without full elicitation of the entailed explanatory models.

It should also be noted that in eliciting this information, it may be unevenly developed or ideas may be incomplete. For example, time constraints may limit the development of particular topics. Or, a participant may respond to a comment from another contributor and lead discussions to a different issue without fully developing the original discussion item. Multiple sessions combined with individual interviews provides the opportunity to adjust for incomplete or underdeveloped topics. For example, discussion sessions conducted for the Coconino NF suggested land exchanges are an important topic of public concern. However, this topic received only limited attention in the first Prescott NF discussion group. The moderator constructed a working assumption that publics in proximity to the Prescott NF have limited concern about land exchanges. This assumption was tested by probes and questions in a second discussion session and in individual interviews. Testing this assumption suggested land exchanges are a topic of concern in communities adjacent to the Prescott NF. A combination of individual interviews and multiple group discussions thus offers an opportunity to identify the range of issues and concerns and to “test” or check topic details and development.

Additionally, participants were invited to offer additional issues or further develop their discussion session contributions by follow-up telephone calls or by submitting written comments. Several participants took advantage of this invitation and offered written and verbal comments to supplement or elaborate their discussion group contributions.

About 60 pages of sketch notes combined with about 8 hours of recordings resulted in a significant amount of information to analyze from the interviews and discussion groups. Processing time, budget, and page limitations on this work necessarily require a strategy to present consumable and useable information that also expresses the essentials about participant’s points of view. One strategy is to present a detailed discussion of a few key topics. Another strategy is to present the range of issues discussed, but limit the detail. This presentation uses the later strategy since participants identified a wide range of topics and diverse views about particular issues. The authors recognize this strategy abbreviates and underdevelops complex issues. In choosing to present range rather than depth, the authors assume these findings are a starting point for future refinement and development of these issues by dialogue between the Prescott NF and concerned citizens.

Forest and Social Environment

The details of the socioeconomic characteristics of the area’s social environment are described in the assessment authored by the University of Arizona. Participant assessments of trends and characteristics of this social environment, the perceived characteristics of the Prescott NF, and the interaction of the social environment with the Prescott NF are summarized in this discussion.

Social Environment

Participants were asked an open ended question about changes in local communities within the past twenty years. One participant's response indicates an assessment of significant social and economic changes in this region:

> *Everything has changed. Socially, culturally, and otherwise, everything has changed with the explosion of population. We have changed from a provincial small town to a cosmopolitan area. The big jobs used to be the telephone company and now the people who have come here are ones we would have never expected to show up here, like retired CEOs. When these types of people showed up, the expectation changed about how to use the forest. It went from concerns about grazing cows and cutting wood to organized groups wanting to use the forest for reptpr cu cou ngemove come heclcow Td1newood move come hehin.8TDusveryt use the ulatio6hese types ga we*

There are just so many people coming. In the past when a new person came to town you could visit with them and they learned how we do things and what we believe in. They might attend the Lions Club or something like that and slowly they would become part of the community. But, there are vast numbers of people moving here who are bringing with them what they are running away from. They are expecting to find what they left behind and when they don't they start trying to create those things. And, there are just so many of them we can't integrate them in the ways we used to be able to.

These types of statements describe what might be termed a type of "social dissonance" wherein traditional values don't match a changed social environment. This appears to create the experience of fragmentation and social tension.

- A theme about the different beliefs and values of long-term and newer residents concerns knowledge about local conditions and land ethics. Some newer residents are perceived not to appreciate issues about water, fire susceptibility and other environmental characteristics. And, others are perceived to lack a "land ethic" that was often taught as part of the experience of growing-up in these rural communities. These differences are perceived to contribute to some of the "abusive" uses of forest lands; and, they are also contributing to the experience of social dissonance.
- A further contribution to the social dissonance expressed by project participants is an assessment of what is sometimes termed the "gangplank syndrome." One participant described this as follows:

  They come here and then they don't want to see anymore development. They want everything that brought them here to stay the same and they don't want anyone else to come. They are slamming the door behind them.

  This is an often noted process in the literature about the migration to rural communities (e.g., Voss 1980).

- Ranching has been an important contribution to the history, values, and lifestyles in local communities. However, ranching is perceived to be in decline. Some ranches have been sold for subdivision and development.

Forest Characteristics and Conditions

If you had me make a list of the things that make me want to live here Prescott National Forest is in the top three. Without the forest this would be just another Phoenix suburb.

Longer term and newer residents both appear to agree that the Prescott NF is integral to community identity as well as an essential contribution to community quality of life. Several themes express participant characterizations of the Prescott NF:

- The Prescott NF is a 'vast" landscape that "surrounds" the communities of this area with natural beauty and recreational opportunities. This "surround" value is perceived as a significant contribution to community quality of life:

  People like the idea of having the forest around them and they like seeing the forest as they are driving in and out around town, but a lot of the use of the forest comes from out-of-town folks who use it for camping, fishing, hiking, off-highway vehicle use, you name it. There are not an insignificant number of people using it. … I like to ride an ATV and I like to ride out

into the forest to some places I know and just turn off my engine and enjoy nature. Some people find their refuge in a library or a coffee shop and for me it is the woods. For me it is a place to go to erase the tapes …. There are people who never or seldom go out there, but they like that it is there and it gives them that place in their mind without going to it.

- The environmental context of the forest is an important contribution to its present condition and vulnerability. Participants have different constructions of this environmental history and its implications. The following are some of the prominent themes expressed by participants:
  - Some participants suggest these lands were once primarily "savannah" or open lands relatively sparsely populated with trees.
  - Drought is an ongoing climatic characteristic of the region.
  - Ponderosa pine and other tree species are a relatively recent addition to this landscape; and, given the assessment of a history of drought and savannah characteristics, forests are

Summary: Forest-Social Environment Interactions

The social environment is one of increasing complexity in values, lifestyles, and relationships with forest lands. The Prescott NF is perceived to be an important contribution to the quality of life because it offers "surround" value and access to diverse recreational opportunities. However, uses of forest lands have changed from historical times when timber, mining, and ranching were primarily uses of forest lands. The contemporary forest is perceived to have primarily recreational and open space values. Development and population growth is increasing pressure on forest lands and resources; and, development is believed to threaten access to forest resources, deteriorate viewsheds, create fire risks, and contribute to the decline of recreational experiences. Given the assessment of forests as "fragile," "unhealthy," and in danger of a catastrophic fire, participants are concerned about the future of forest lands and resources. This concern is amplified by an assessment of decreasing resources and personnel to manage an at risk resource.

Agency Presence and Procedures

Participants expressed a range of issues and concerns about Forest Service mission, presence, and management processes. The tone of these comments was predominately constructive as exemplified in the following comment:

> *We criticize them a lot … I have had a few big frustrations with them that is not the fault of the individuals I work with, but in general, they are just great to work with and I hope that gets passed on to them. … This is intended to be constructive criticism to help them to improve how they work with us.*

There are two broad themes in public perceptions of Prescott NF management presence and procedures: (1) institutional or Forest Service wide issues and concerns; and (2) Prescott NF specific concerns. The institutional issues and beliefs address agency policies, procedures, and organizational culture. Although participants derive these issues, concerns, and beliefs from their experiences with the Prescott NF, these appear to be institution-wide rather than Prescott NF specific issues. In addition to these institutional issues, participants also expressed specific beliefs and assessments of the Prescott NF relationship with interested parties and forest users. Particular beliefs and concerns in these two categories are summarized below.

Institutional Issues

The following beliefs express themes about Forest Service institutional culture and organization that participants perceive as affecting forest management. These institutional issues include beliefs about the desirability of local decisionmaking, reductions in personnel and resources to complete the agency mission, the necessity for fairness in what is perceived to be a politicized decisionmaking process, and streamlining what some publics evaluate as a cumbersome process for decisionmaking. The specific points are as follows:

- Participants believe there are institutional constraints on effective decisionmaking.
  - Local decisionmaking is a priority over regional or other out-of-area control that may not understand local conditions. Participants emphasize a desire to empower district rangers with more decisionmaking authority to do what is best for the resource.
  - There is a perceived need for more accountability in decisionmaking. Participants perceive there is an agency "mind-set" of "non-management" that is a response to a

politicized decisionmaking process. Decisionmakers can “do nothing” and still receive promotions. Participants believe institutional culture favors “doing nothing” rather than making decisions that may have adverse effects on individual careers. Participants emphasize a desire to see change in what is perceived to be an institutional framework that is summarized as: “Do nothing and get ahead.”

- Participants believe fairness needs to be the foundation of the decisionmaking process. The actions of some interest groups are perceived to result in a politicized process in which undue influence rather than fairness characterizes decisionmaking and planning. Removing undue influence and engaging in transparent decisionmaking is a desired change in management direction.
- Participants desire decisionmaking and planning to focus on the “health of the resource” rather than political or other factors. This is a corollary to “fairness” beliefs, but the emphasis is “doing what is best for the resource.”
  - The “best available science” should be the basis for decisionmaking and planning.
- Agency personnel have the expertise to manage forest resources if sound science is combined with a transparent decisionmaking process.
-

Prescott NF Specific Issues

Participants also suggested some specific concerns about Prescott NF management and decisionmaking, including the following:

- Some participants perceive the primary mission of the Prescott NF should be to "keep the forest healthy and open to the public." This is contrasted with what is perceived to be a management approach that makes too many decisions to "close off" the forest to public access.
- Participants desire a more welcoming and "user friendly" approach to the public.
  - There is some assessment of a "punitive attitude" to publics by agency personnel.

    We have been out on the forest and have had a green truck drive up and three or four people get out of the truck with their ticket books in their hands. You kind of take a deep breathe and wonder what is going to happen. …They have a different attitude toward the public that is different than most public agencies and it is not a friendly one or a cooperative one. … There are some guys we work within the Forest Service that are just great.

  - The permitting process for commercial and group users is perceived to be onerous and unwelcoming.
- There is a perception of troublesome variation of policies across ranger districts and a desire for consistent interpretation of rules and regulations across districts. Leadership is required to ensure management approaches and regulations are consistently applied throughout the forest.
- There is a desire for improved communication with the public that should begin with emphasizing improving internal communication and coordination.

  When I deal with them I get the feeling that the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing. They need to coordinate their communication and get everyone on board with decisions made by the leaders. It is like a great big creature that has many moving parts and they don't all work together….

- Participants desire a more effective use of available volunteer labor. There is also recognition that effective use of volunteer labor requires coordination and management:

  There is an investment of time with volunteers that they have to acknowledge. They take a lot of time and work. If they are going to have a volunteer team, then it takes somebody to manage that, unless they have a volunteer who is a volunteer coordinator.

- Participants desire more collaboration and partnerships with the Prescott NF. Partnerships are perceived to be one means to extend the management capabilities of the Forest Service without additional personnel or resources. There is also some skepticism about the ability of the Prescott NF personnel to engage in meaningful collaboration because of existing demands on their time:

  We have good rapport with them now and that is a basis for future collaboration and partnerships. But, these guys are already over-worked and they are asking all these guys to be touchy-feely with the public and asking them to do additional tasks when they are already over-worked. So, we have to wait and see how it will work.

Multiple-Use Issues, Beliefs, and Values

The Prescott NF is described as a multiple-use environment in transition. The transition is away from what are described as "traditional uses" such as hunting, firewood gathering, grazing, and timber harvesting to more recreation uses such as OHV riding, mountain bike riding, camping, and other recreational pursuits. The traditional uses coexist with emerging recreational uses in this multiple-use environment.

Participants identified a broad spectrum of multiple-use issues, values, and beliefs, including topics such as: rights-of-way access, problem behavior, the conservation of open space, user fees, commercial permits, OHV use, the social value of grazing, trail and road maintenance, and the effects of changing values on forest users. The individual topics suggest areas of interest in forest plan revision. Collectively, these topics suggest a theme about existing patterns of use threatening future uses. This latent theme is expressed in the following quotation from a participant who is a long-term resident of the environs of Prescott:

> *In my life here, I guess I have done most things in the forest except use grazing. The access to the forest is a huge value to us. The challenge is how do we preserve and continue that in the future … without causing unreasonable damage to the resource. … We have people here who want to ranch, others who want to ride mountain bikes, others like to ride their horse or ATV, and we all want to do those things in the future. We are not going to be able to do that if we damage the resource in an irreparable way, whether it is by grazing or riding a horse or an ATV. If we irreparably damage the resource, something is going to stop us from what we want to do in the forest. It might be law enforcement. It might be a fence or a regulation. We have got to take care of the resource and not irreparably damage it or we will not have the forest.*

Another participant expressed a similar sentiment:

> *Our population is exploding while the presence of the Forest Service … is going down. I am sorry, it is not going to work or else we are going to have a barren piece of dirt out there for a forest. … For example, I have heard the road personnel at the Prescott have gone from seven people to two people. What that means is that the roads are not going to be maintained. The bad people, the abusers are not going to stop using the forest. There will be no road and they are going to go where ever they want to. It means the forest is going to be damaged and they may close it for the rest of us.*

Participants are concerned because they live in an social environment in which demand and use is increasing, land-ethics are changing, problem behavior and uses are increasing, and the there is a perception the agency's capability to manage and protect the resource is compromised. This leads to an assessment and concern that future management may restrict access rather than enhancing user access and recreational resources.

Access

Participants perceive the Prescott NF as primarily a recreation resource. There is acknowledgement of some past and ongoing commercial use by grazing and timber interests and the potential for future mining activity. However, participant contributions emphasize a range of beliefs, values, and concerns about access to forest lands and resources for recreational activities, respite, lifestyle, and existence values. As noted in one of the quotations above, there is concern

that existing management is restricting access related to limited resources to respond to the effects of some abusive uses.

There are two other prominent themes about access. One is the importance of the proximity of forest lands to the residential centers of this area. One regular forest user observed,

> *That is one of the important values about living here: from my front door to the forest is about fifteen minutes. That is important to me and to a lot of people moving here.*

A second theme about access is user fees. Some participants cite the Red Rock Pass used on the Sedona Ranger District of the Coconino NF as an example of a "necessary evil." Others suggest such fees are "evil" and unnecessary. The former position acknowledges a decline in resources and perceives user fees as a solution if these monies are used to benefit local resources and not "sucked into some general fund." The opposition to user fees has two sub-themes. The first perceives such fees as a tax in addition to taxes already paid to support public lands. These participants suggest a need for budgeting that ensures the essential mission of the Forest Service is accomplished. The other opposing position suggests such fees inhibit the use of public lands by those who can afford the fees; and, they especially inhibit use by those who cannot. One participant made the following comment:

> *I can afford to pay the fees, but I don't like it. One day I just needed to get away from work and clear my mind with some peace and quiet. I drove to this spot I used to go to and there was this sign about a fee. I just got back in my car and left. There was just something about it that put me off. It is public land and we should all have access to it without having to pay. It is just some fundamental thing about America that we need places for everyone to go to, especially when you don't have the money to buy a view lot or a cabin in the mountains.*

Access issues are among the most important concerns of participants. These issues are also connected with concerns about the rights-of-way access discussed in the section below about conservation of open space.

Commercial Uses

Timber, grazing, and some organized tour groups were identified by participants as the principal commercial uses of forest lands. The following comment represents one prominent theme about such uses:

> *I have not seen anything that is horrible on grazing or timber. You go into an area after it is logged and it looks horrible. But, when you go back in a year or two or three and you look at how things are settling down and how healthy the forest looks after they have thinned some trees and taken some things out, well it is very positive in the long-term. The biggest issues are how humans are recreating and wrecking the forest. That is the most important thing to most of the people. Ranchers may not think that because they are out enjoying open space while they are checking their cattle. But, I have to go out and ride down a trail to have that same enjoyment. That value to me and other recreation users is really important.*

Although grazing and timber harvesting may have adverse effects on forest resources, this quotation suggests a longer term perspective is required to fully evaluate their impacts; and, recreational uses may pose more long-term threats than either timber harvesting or grazing.

Another prominent theme about grazing uses suggests the potential for abuse and the necessity for monitoring grazing allotments:

> *I grew up on a ranch here so I know something about cattle. If you don't manage grazing well then cows create problems. There are places on this forest, especially riparian areas where cows just don't belong. Riparian areas are one of the important resources we have and cattle have to be managed so they do not damage them. We can think about taking water away from the riparian areas and piping it to the cows. There can be other solutions too. Cattle can do damage and we need to be aware of that and monitor what is happening on the forest. But, in the long run I prefer cattle to subdivisions.*

Monitoring and protection of riparian areas are key points in these comments. Additionally, the trade-off of "cattle or subdivisions" expresses another theme about grazing and timber uses: some participants accept these commercial uses as an acceptable trade-off to protect open space or to limit fire risks.

Supporters of timber and grazing emphasize the value to forest health from both of these activities. Ranchers emphasize they practice "responsible stewardship" that benefits the forest and the public. Timber supporters suggest this is a necessary forest management tool that reduces fire risk and promotes overall forest health. These supporters also argue the necessity for a local logging industry as a component of managing for forest health:

> *We have lost our logging industry and it will be hard to get it back. But, we need to have that infrastructure to process timber and use the product that comes off the forest. If we don't have it, what are you going to do when you need to cut trees? Are we going to call the Chinese and ask them to come cut our trees? Getting our industry back is going to take a long-term commitment from the Forest Service to provide trees or else no one will make the investment.*

Supporters perceive grazing and logging as integral to effective management of forest resources. Other participants believe these activities are acceptable trade-offs if they are properly managed, which includes an effective monitoring program.

Conservation of Open Space

Participants expressed intense concern about ensuring open space and limiting development. Forest lands are perceived to have an essential role as open space, which is also believed to be an essential component of the quality of life in this region. As open space, the forest is land that is available for public use that otherwise would be closed; and, it provides a "buffer" against ongoing development that is challenging the rural character of this area. Ranchers and traditional residents as well as conservation interests share beliefs about the importance of forest lands and lands adjacent to the national forest as "open space."

Rights-of-way access and land exchanges are concerns associated with the conservation of open space. Each of these issues are perceived to threaten the availability of open space, access to public lands, and the buffer against development. As ranches and other properties have been sold and then developed for residences, access through those properties to public lands has been eliminated. Participants expressed a desire for attention to rights-of-way access to ensure no further loss of access to public lands. Similarly, land exchanges are generally not supported where the intent is economic benefit and not benefit to forest health or the quality of user experiences.

Education is perceived to be the primarily solution to problem behavior. Participants suggest working with groups such as Prescott Open Trails or local OHV groups are one primary means to offer education to forest users. Other participants suggest appropriate signage is another means to guide unknowing users about appropriate usage and behavior.

Recreation

The Prescott NF is highly valued as a recreational resource. The value of the forest as a resource for mining, timber, and grazing is acknowledged. However, there has been a transition to valuing the Prescott NF for the opportunities offered for hiking, camping, wildlife viewing, off-road vehicle use, mountain biking, horseback riding, and other recreational activities. Several general themes are expressed in participant comments about the recreational use of the Prescott NF:

- There is a perceived "significant" increase in the volume of recreational use, which is a concern because of the effects on forest resources and the quality of user experiences. However, most participants suggested that high quality recreational opportunities continue to exist by mid-week use or by accessing areas that are "backcountry" or not within easy reach of roads.
- As use has increased and enforcement resources have not kept pace, conflicts among users have increased. Off-road vehicle users are described as the source of most conflicts since they generate noise, some tend to ride fast on trails used by hikers or horseback riders, and some do not appear to understand trail etiquette.
- Declining resource conditions combined with limited enforcement resources is perceived to result in a tendency for the Prescott NF to limit access to forest lands. Participants are concerned this trend will accelerate as population grows and use increases. Participants expressed strong concern about restriction of access and declines in the quality of recreation experiences in the future.

In addition to these general themes, participants also expressed specific concerns and beliefs about off-highway vehicle use and roads and trail use and maintenance.

Off-highway Vehicles: Motorized Uses

Motorized vehicles on forest lands are perceived to be among the most rapidly growing recreation uses of forest lands. And, it appears to be a topic that is a primary concern for many participants. For example, when participants were asked about changes in relationship of communities with forest lands, one participant observed:

> *One of the biggest changes is how many ATVs there are. They power of these things has increased too and they can go just about anywhere. We used to go out and ride forest roads in our pickups, but these new ATVs go everywhere. The Forest Service does not have the people out there to control how they are being used. They need to have designated trails or something so that the problems with them don't get worse. It's the off-trail use that is the real problem, though.*

This response suggests the salience of OHV issues for participants in this project. This comment also expresses prominent themes in the data about OHV use: OHV technology has changed and management should incorporate consideration of OHV capabilities; enforcement of OHV use is perceived to be inadequate; and, off-trail use is assessed as one of the most critical issues to address in OHV management.

- “Social trails” and “spider trails” are expanding and there is a need to address these non-system trails in future planning.
- Trail conflicts are increasing, especially at the “pinch points” in the forest. There is a need for new trails and trails for designated use by OHV and other users. Increasing the number of trails and addressing connectivity and loop designs will disperse use. This is perceived to have beneficial effects for resource conditions as well as for the quality of user experiences.
- Roads and trails are perceived to be in “poor” condition. Some of the smaller non-county roads in the forest are almost “abandoned.”
- The county and the Prescott NF need to coordinate about maintenance of county roads within the forest. Some participants suggest current practices can be characterized as “throwing money down a rat hole.” Multiple participants emphasized the need for improved coordination to address maintenance of these roads.

Safety and Illegal Uses

Illegal uses and uses that impose on the safety of others were raised by a range of participants. Specific types of safety issues and perceived illegal uses were discussed, including the following:

- Unmanaged shooting is perceived to pose a threat to the safety of all forest users. Participants expressed the belief that unmanaged shooting is increasing. Education of forest users about appropriate shooting, restrictions on shooting, and construction of shooting ranges were identified as possible solutions.
- Participants noted the presence of important and valued archaeological resources on forest lands that are being looted and vandalized. Protection of these resources is believed to be a priority issue, especially given the increased use of forest lands.
- Illegal dumping is perceived to be increasing. This is evaluated as a “huge problem” with adverse effects on environmental quality and user experiences of the forest. Education, increased enforcement, and “stiff fine” are perceived solutions to illegal dumping:

  You have to make an example of someone or else people will keep doing it because there is little incentive not to. They should get serious about the severity of the punishment, make it a big fine, catch someone and let others know what the cost is if they do it. I think that will work. Hit them in the pocketbook and get their attention.

- Other illegal activities are described as drug use, the transit of illegal immigrants through the forest, and squatters.
- Mine tailings are perceived to cause a health and safety threat to users; and, there is a need to inform forest users of the potential effects of exposure to these tailings.
- Campgrounds in some areas pose safety problems that deter other users. For example,

  Campgrounds that are in some of the peripheral areas are a concern. I can get on the river in Camp Verde or Beasley Flat and any of the campgrounds in those areas are in pretty good shape. But there are other areas where it is just wasted and trashed. And, it is a disgrace that it is allowed to continue. It is right at the entrance to the Wild and Scenic River area and the Wilderness. At the exit and the bottom of Bloody Basin Road it is as bad or worse. But, boy if you get in at Childs and you want to go down below, you better bring a gun with you. The people camping down there are (a problem). What they have done to that area is a disgrace. You take your life in your hands if you have to stay there before your trip or takeout. It is awful.

Given the increase in volume of users and the types of uses of forest lands, safety issues appear to be ones that are gaining prominence among residents of this area.

Value: Context and Person Centered

A thread in many of the topics discussed by participants about forest use and resources is the notion of a mixture of values among the growing population of this region. Longer term rural residents perceive they have "traditional" values that are based in interaction with natural resources, often through lifestyles such as ranching, timber, or mining. The traditional values have consistency with community structure and interactions with resources. These can be termed "context centered" values because they emphasize the connections of values with a reference community. These traditional or context centered values are contrasted with what can be termed "person centered" values that are not perceived to have any connections to local reference community lifestyles and beliefs. Two examples illustrate these differences.

Traditional values are represented in beliefs about "stewardship" and especially the stewardship of ranching interests. For example,

> *The Forest Service should reward good stewardship. Good stewardship on the ranch is the best management out there. The Rangers do not have the time to manage this resource properly. Good ranchers, good permittees are going to make a difference out there. They are the ones who look over the horse's head everyday at the grass. They analyze what is happening and why it is happening. We are responsible users of the land and we work for the resource.*

Person-centered values are described as disconnected from responsibility to the resource and connection with a community of users:

> *I hear a lot of the people out in the forest talking about their 'rights' to use the land any way that want to. I don't hear them talking about their 'obligations' to take care of the resource and do simple things like not litter. They are the ones that will whiz by you on a mountain bike and never have a second thought that they might be scaring the begeezus out of you. They don't think about anything but what they want to get out of it. We weren't brought up that way here and it's a problem to see what is happening out there.*

Forest visitors from metropolitan areas are described as the epitome of those holding person-centered values. Forest users who express person-centered values are often described as unaware of the consequences of their actions for local reference communities:

> *We were out last weekend to a spot that we thought almost no one knew about. We came across a couple of guys from Phoenix that had a clay pigeon thrower. Here is this beautiful pristine area that is littered with bright orange clay pigeons. They had no concept of what they had done to the beauty of that area.*

The absence of a sense of responsibility to the resource and the effect of individual action on the experience of others is especially troubling to those who hold traditional values. These users perceive an increase in person-centered values in rural places as one factor that is accelerating a decline in the quality of user experiences and resource conditions.

Resource Issues, Values, and Beliefs

Participant responses about forest resources and benefits emphasized a few selected topics summarized in this section.

Aesthetic and Sense of Place Beliefs and Values

There aesthetics of the Prescott NF is an especially valued resource. Two participant contributions illustrate themes about aesthetic resources:

> *When you think of a forest, the first thing that comes to mind is trees. The mountains, the hillsides, the things that you see out in the distance may or may not be trees, but the sheer enormity of the mountainous terrain here is something from which people draw inspiration and awe. Having that visual in your sight … is an important value.*

And,

> *Whether people go out and use it or not, the aesthetic value of having the forest there is important to people who live here. It is pretty to look at. It has kind of an aura about it, kind of like looking at the ocean. It has a vastness to it like the ocean. How else do you explain people who want to have a home with a view of the forest?*

Each of these statements suggests the visual appeal of the forest is not confined to any one feature or characteristic. The “wide-angle” view is itself inspirational. Such statements also suggest the forest “surround” value that enhances the desirability and quality of life for local communities.

Other statements describe a more “telephoto” or “close-up” assessment of forest aesthetics:

> *You can see it from a distance and you can see it up close. If you happen to live on the edge of the forest and you can see trees and things like that then you have a kind of intimacy with it. When you are sitting on your deck and looking out at the forest that may trigger one kind of thought or feeling, but when you are standing in the forest and looking down on a flower, a bug, or a rock with a vein in it, then it is a very intimate experience that has a certain natural feel to it that I really enjoy. Without that, this place would not be nearly as fun to live in.*

The Prescott NF is assessed as having important visual benefits for communities. However, the above descriptions also suggest the forest is essential to community quality of life and creates a sense of place that integrates landscape with community. A clear expression of this inspirational value is expressed in a comment in response to a question about the benefits of the Prescott NF for communities:

> *Just look out the window. Look out there and see what we have here. Some days it is just better than church.*

Ecosystem Services and Watersheds

Some participants suggest forest lands are an important resource for providing “ecosystem services” or beneficial outcomes for ecosystem health and human societies. These types of resource benefits are expressed in the following comment:

> *You think about what happens when we have a healthy rain system or a healthy forest system verses what happens in a developed area. When we have forests rather than developed lands, then water percolates into the ground and then we have water when we need it. When you have paved services, then water just runs away down the river. There is value in having the resource available to us because it cleans the air, it cleans the water, and it is a benefit to all our natural resources.*

The forest benefits water and air quality and other ecosystem functions. The benefits to environmental health contribute to community quality of life and individual health.

The specific contribution of the Prescott NF to water quality and water availability was cited by participants as one of the essential resources of the forest.

Existence Value

The presence of the forest is inspiring and it also has an intrinsic or existence value that participants describe as a noteworthy asset for individuals and communities:

> *A side-benefit to the whole ranching way of life for me is you get to spend a lot of time outside looking at the planet and looking at the things that are central to the miracle of life. … The forest provides that kind of place and it is important to preserve some parts of the planet that are not completely dominated and altered by our ability to manipulate the material world.*

This sentiment expresses a theme expressed by other participants who value forest lands as places that create a sense of awe and provide the opportunity to experience natural processes for what they are.

Respite Values

A similar psychological value is expressed in the notion of the value of the forest as a place for "respite." The meaning of respite value is illustrated in the following participant comment:

> *The pace of change in the urban areas, people spend so much of their lives encased in steel and climate controlled structures and for a good portion of their lives, their feet never get off the pavement. … We need to have places where people can get away from the stresses of the world and to just be alone with who they are.*

A "connection with the natural world" is perceived to offer psychological benefits to humans; and, forests are one of the key resources participants perceive as providing the opportunity to experience that connection. As one participant suggested:

> *Forests are places that provide a sense of balance, a sanity balance if you want to call it that. You can go look at the crime rates in cities and the crime rates in little country towns. It is not just about how many people live there. It is about that sanity balance the natural world provides us. I know for me I am stressed to the max most of the time in my work life. I go for a walk in the woods and it (stress) is gone. So there is that huge psychological value. I don't want to live anywhere there isn't that natural world right outside my door.*

Social Value

Ranching is a lifestyle that has emerged in conjunction with the availability of grazing on public lands in this and other areas of the southwest. Some participants, ranching and others, suggest that there are existing ranch operations that would be out of business without access to grazing on forest lands. Diverse participants suggest that there is social value in preserving the ranching way of life in this region. There are two themes associated with this social value. One theme is the contribution ranching makes to preservation of open space adjacent to forest lands. If ranches are sold and subdivided, then development occurs and this reduces open space, wildlife habitat, and the "surround" value of forest lands for local communities. The second theme is about the contribution ranching makes to rural lifestyles and American values. Ranching is described as the epitome of traditional values of hard work, respect for the land, and the production of a necessary product. The preservation of this way of life is thus perceived to make a contribution to community lifestyles and to American values.

> *This is a way of life that is at the very foundation of America. Ranching makes open space that people can come here and experience what Yavapai County was like a hundred years ago. The ability to have those experiences is a treasured resource. And, our access to those lands helps keep that way of life alive.*

Trees: Density, Drought, Beetles, and Fire

When participants describe forest conditions as "fragile" the primary reference appears to be to the ponderosa pine and other tree species. This perceived fragility is a result of (1) assessments of the origin of the forest from savannah lands that transitioned to their current conditions during historical times when there was more water; (2) ecosystem conditions prone to long periods of drought; (3) the contemporary effects of drought and bark beetles on the health of trees; and (4) tree density that is perceived to be much higher now than in the last century exposing the forest to catastrophic fires. Participants associate these four factors and assess forest vegetation as in jeopardy. Perceived solutions include thinning to reduce fire danger and perhaps some timber harvesting, if it is selective and monitored. Others suggest allowing more firewood cutting and other means to reduce tree density has the potential to increase forest health and reduce the risk of catastrophic fire.

Trails and Roads

Participants who visit and engage the forest describe roads and trails as among the most important resources of the Prescott NF. Roads and trails are the means to access other resources and a means to experience forests for a variety of purposes. Although participants describe conflicts among user types, concerns about poor road and trail maintenance, increased demand for trail and road use, and concerns about coordination between the county and the Prescott NF on road maintenance, these concerns express the prominence of roads and trails as important resources. The value of trails and roads as essential resources is expressed in the following statement:

> *I look to the forest here for my quality of life. I don't hike or bike, but I do ride a horse. If were not for the trail system in the forest, there is a lot I would never see. That ability to get out on the back of my horse and take a pack animal if I want and go for as long as I want is important. You don't have to go very far … to be in pretty pristine areas.*

There are several other strategic issues regarding trails as resources that are noteworthy.

- "Appropriate use" by different user types at and during different seasons when trails and roads are vulnerable to damage is a concern among hikers, horseback riders, mountain bikers, and OHV users. Attention to "appropriate use" by different users during different seasons is among the most important concerns of project participants.
- Design criteria for roads and trails are another important strategic issue. Users can point to specific "pinch points" and identify particular trail locations that need attention. However, multiple participants identify design concerns such as "our forest trails are constructed as raceways and not trails" or "connectivity of trails needs to be a priority" as desired changes in the management of trails.
- Encouraging and ethic of "respect" for trails and the needs of different users through education and opportunities for mutual understanding of the needs of different users.

Wilderness and Roadless Areas

Both wilderness and roadless were topics raised as important resources for the Prescott NF. For example,

> *It is important to have wilderness areas close to urban areas because it eliminates the accessibility to mechanized use to an area. Mechanized use rapidly deteriorates a trail system and so if you have an area that is easy to get to with a bicycle or motorcycle, then it goes to hell in a hurry. So, it is important to have wilderness areas close to urban areas.*

Some of the strategic issues regarding wilderness include:

- Existing wilderness is perceived to be sufficient because most areas appropriate for wilderness have already been designated:

  There are nineteen wilderness areas in Yavapai County. To me, you just can't take a space and call it a wilderness area. There needs to be a unique character to it and something we need to protect from change. … All the land that qualifies is more or less already in wilderness.

- Maintenance within wilderness is a strategic issue that needs reconsideration:

  Wilderness is very valuable. But, things like trail maintenance need an exception. Going into Pine Mountain and using a chain saw to cut out all the deadfall is a problem. In the wilderness, that should be a permitted activity. That does not mean someone should not be able to ride a mountain bike or ATV through the wilderness. To a greater and greater degree, trail maintenance is falling on volunteers. You tell a volunteer group to go out and clear three miles of dead fall trees with two man Prescott saws is insurmountable. But, if you can tell that volunteer group you can take chain saws in there and take the dead fall out (off the trails) … then it can be a huge benefit.

- Designation of wilderness or roadless areas should only be made if there are sufficient resources to protect them from the attention that results from any type of "special designation:"

  There are some resources that were designated (special designations). For example, there were some national monuments created without funding to maintain them. So, you have a really valuable resource that virtually nobody knew about. It was being protected because

nobody knew about it, but those who did know about it were the ones who would care for the land to begin with. So, you create this monster, you notify the public about it, and all you have is these little signs out there. It is like saying 'have at it.' There is no protection and no officers out there. The damage is more than if you had just left it alone. You have created a target with national recognition. So, I am not sure I want any more designations. Unless you are prepared to fund it in an appropriate manner, then it is not acceptable.

- Maintaining wilderness areas nearby to urban areas is an important value for the future. Wilderness areas provide the opportunity to experience the forest without encountering motorized traffic. Given the perceived increase in the volume of motorized traffic in non-wilderness areas, wilderness nearby to urban areas is especially important.
- Some participants emphasize that "roads exist in roadless areas" and the use of those roads needs some reconsideration, especially given the increase in demand associated with population pressures.

Chapter 5. Management Priorities and Desired Futures: Agency and Public Perspectives

As part of the pre-planning process in the Southwestern Region, forest managers were asked to identify their perceptions of some of the key issues for revision of existing forest plans. This pre-planning issue appraisal is compared with public appraisals of issues identified in the discussion group and individual interviews. The purpose of this comparison is to identify gaps or different views about what are important issues for the future of the Prescott NF. Such a comparison is one contribution to focus future community-agency collaboration to imagine a future for the Prescott NF. Both agency and public perspectives described here should be considered preliminary, but initial steps toward developing complimentary views about key planning issues.

Agency Perspectives and Priorities

Preliminary identification of revision topics specified three issue categories: basic, ecosystem and human-dimensions. Basic issues address the purpose of a forest plan in relationship to ecosystem health; ecosystem issues address the need for information about existing ecosystem conditions that can be used to develop an effective plan; and, human dimensions issues address issues about the interaction of humans with the ecosystem. For comparison purposes, the specifics in these three categories are regrouped into the categories used to organize presentation of information earlier in this report: agency presence and procedures; multi-use; and resources. The content of these categories are similar to the "basic," "ecosystem," and "human-dimensions" categories used by the Prescott NF, although some items have been regrouped as noted in the descriptions below.

Agency Presence and Procedures

This category corresponds with the "basic" category in the Prescott NF identification of issues, which addresses the process of forest planning.

- Develop a forest plan that effectively address the "entire ecosystem health" when making resource decisions.
- Develop a forest plan that incorporates a process to assess resource activities in relationship to "ecosystem health needs."
- Assess how or if criteria are to be used to meet the needs of maintaining ecosystem health.

These topics are specifically focused on the details of what forest plan revision should accomplish.

Multiple-Use

This category corresponds to the "human-dimensions" grouping used by the Prescott NF. Some items were relocated from this grouping to the "resources" category described below.

- Access management for level 1 and 2 roads.
- Fire and fuels.
- Unplanned or "un-enforced" recreation driven resource change, especially "OHV proliferation."

- Assess the mix of recreation opportunities.
- Assess the forest relationship to jobs, commodity production, and community welfare and well-being.
- Assess invasive species issues.

Resource Issues

Items in this grouping correspond to the Prescott NF "ecosystem" issues. For purposes of comparison, three items (in bold) were relocated from the "multiple-use/human-dimensions" grouping to here because they appear to address resource conditions as discussed in this document.

- Develop information about the range of ecosystem conditions within and adjacent to the Prescott NF as a basis to identify areas to address to for improve ecosystem health.
- Assess the status of the "full ecosystem" to identify key issues and desired futures.
- Address "special places" identification and use.
- Assess water resource issues, including demand and supply.
- Restore fie-adapted-ecosystems.

Public Perspectives and Priorities

For convenience of comparison, these topics are organized in the same categories used to present the findings about values, beliefs, and issues of concern to project participants: agency presence and procedures; multiple-use issues; and, resource issues. Many of these issues are discussed in previous sections and they are repeated here for comparison with agency assessments of key issues for plan revision.

Agency Presence and Procedures

The following topics were identified as important issues for consideration about how the Prescott NF manages resources and interacts with community interest groups and individuals:

- There is a desire for improved inter-government coordination, especially with the Bureau of Land Management and the Arizona Department of Game and Fish.
- Collaboration with interested publics to develop a forest plan; and, construct a process to ensure the plan remains a living and viable document.
- Use sound science that is open to peer-review to guide planning and decisionmaking. Publics can provide input into the planning process by offering a common sense perspective that is grounded in local knowledge and compliments sound science.
- Develop a process for more effective use of volunteers. Effective use of volunteers is one perceived solution to addressing some of the resource problems on the Prescott NF. Similarly, enhanced use of public-agency partnership can leverage Prescott NF management resources.
- Local forest managers should be given more authority and control, rather than having intervention from the Regional Office or headquarters in Washington, D.C. "Local control" of decisionmaking and planning will lead to more successful management of forest resources.

- Provide economic development grants and opportunities to smaller unincorporated communities has been an important benefit in the past; and, there is a desire to see these types of opportunities reinstated in the future.
- Participants perceive a need for the agency to become more user-friendly and less punitive in its approach to visitors, permittees, and commercial users.

Multiple-Use

These issues address both strategic and more specific issues regarding the use of forest lands and resources:

- In future planning, consider the effects of over-use associated with population growth.
- Recognize and address the potential for increases in “problem behavior” associated with population growth.
- Address trail and road design and use issues, including user conflicts, unmanaged OHV use, designated trails, technology changes in OHV and mountain bikes and their implications on trails design, the needs of different OHV users, and trail connectivity.
- Address the desirability of closing roads and some trails when seasonal conditions make forest resources vulnerable to damage, e.g., road closures after rains.
- Address unmanaged shooting and needs for shooting ranges.
- Address problem behavior and differences in land ethics by education efforts, including partnerships with community groups, organized clubs, and other private entities.
- Address access issues to forest lands, including problems with rights-of-way access.
- Consider the effects of land exchanges on the potential for development that adversely affects access to the forest and the quality of user experiences.
- Leverage management of ecosystem conditions by rewarding good stewardship among existing permittees.
- Consider the effects on open space and other rural lifestyle values of ranching access to grazing on Prescott NF managed lands.
- Assess the incentives and constraints of user-fees and the potential influences on access to forest resources.

Resource Issues

Forest and ecosystem resources identified as areas for consideration in forest plan revision include the following:

- Sound science that is subject to peer-review should be the basis for decisions about resource conditions in future management and revision of the existing forest plan.
- Address tree density on forest lands, especially the potential for fire. Consider the use of prescribed fire, thinning, natural fire, and wood gathering as management tools.
- Fire management, including urban interface issues and the use of prescribed fire, thinning, timber harvesting, and grazing as fire management tools.
- Address road maintenance and especially coordination with counties on maintenance needs.
- Assess the ecological implications of poor road conditions, especially for water quality.

- Include consideration of how land exchanges may affect special places and wilderness areas.
- Develop a plan to address invasive species that threaten to displace native species.
- Acknowledge and address the psychological value of forest resources and include consideration of these benefits in planning patterns of use and access.
- Consider the effects of management actions on viewsheds and other aesthetic resources that are valued by communities adjacent to forest lands.
- Assess the ecosystem services values of forest resources and assess their contributions to forest and ecosystem health.
- Maintain existing wilderness designations and values; and, consider the potential resource effects of Prescott NF ability to manage any additional designations.

Summary: Agency and Public Issues

There is considerable overlap in the agency-public identification of issues, but there are some noteworthy differences. Public issues about agency processes and procedures addresses a wider range of concerns about how the Prescott NF works with local communities and interest groups, especially the need for a more “user-friendly” approach to working with publics. Working with publics, especially volunteers and other private entities, is also perceived as a means for the Prescott NF to leverage its management resources. There are also additional “institutional-level’ concerns about agency procedures that publics desire to see addressed. The multiple-use issues identified by publics and the Prescott NF show general correspondence, although participants include a wider range of recreation issues, especially the importance of trail and road management and design, OHV management, and addressing problem behavior and user safety. Additionally, participants emphasize attention to rights-of-way and access issues, the social and open space values of ranching, and the need for education of users about appropriate behavior and land ethics. Participant and agency resource issues incorporate fire and forest health as among the most important topics for plan revision. Participants have additional concerns about the effects of land exchanges on resources and access, the psychological and respite benefits of forest resources, and the importance of aesthetic resources.

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Appendix. Topic Areas for Discussion

Please describe where you live and your interest in national forest lands.

Community Character and Recent Changes

How has this community changed in the last 10-15 years? What are the sources of community change?

Have these changes had any consequences for forest lands?

What communities, occupations, or lifestyles are most and least affected by how this national forest is managed?

Uses

Describe your use or the uses of family members of Forest lands. (Please indicate use areas on the national forest map.)

Are there types of uses of forest lands that you feel need to be enhanced or better managed by the Forest Service? (Please indicate on the map)

Are there areas where some types of uses are in conflict? (Please indicate on the map)

Is there anything the Forest Service should do to change how Forests are used in the future?

Resources

What are the special qualities and characteristics of this national forest?

> For example, wildlife, vegetation, vistas, climate, historical structures or sties, timber, grazing, trails, quiet places, etc…

Locate on the map the forest resources that are important to you.

What changes would you like to see in the management of forest resources?

Favorite Places

Do you have a picture or a story about a favorite place on this forest? Can you describe what makes it a favorite place for you?

What are your thoughts about the benefits of Wilderness, Roadless, and similar areas for this national forest?

Do you believe there is a need for additional designations for lands or resources within this national forest?

Desired Futures

How would you compare the conditions in the forest now to how you would like to see them in the future?

What should the Forest Service do to achieve your future vision for these lands?

Key Management Issues and Priorities for Future Forest Management

What do you think is broken and what needs to be fixed in management of this national forest?

What has the USFS done well in its management of lands and resources here?

Are there any additional issues would like the forest to consider or address in future management?