

Bighorn National Forest Plan Revision

Special point of interest:

Even though we have completed the initial round of public meetings, comments are still wanted! Ways to comment are listed on the back page of this newsletter. There will be additional meetings and field trips, and Forest Service people are available to visit with your group or organization.

Recap of Initial Public Meetings

Public meetings were held in Worland, Sheridan, Buffalo, Gillette, Lovell, and Greybull during the past three months. Approximately 300 people attended, and excellent feedback on Plan revision objectives, issues, and effective public involvement strategies was received. People can view summaries of the worksheets and group exercises on the internet at the Forest Plan website (www.fs.fed.us/r2/bighorn/plan_revision/ScopeMeetings.htm) and there will be additional meetings and field trips as the revision process proceeds.

"We had excellent participation by the people that visited with us, and we are especially appreciative of the local support we received from the Conservation Districts, County Commissioners, and the Big Horn Mountain Country Coalition," according to Forest Supervisor Bill Bass.

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People attending the Sheridan meeting on November 27, 2000 discuss Forest Plan Revision issues. Pictured, from left, Victor Ashear, Mike Morton, Sally Morton, Bill Bense, Esther and Roger McKenzie. *Thank you* to those of you who helped plan for the future of the Bighorn National Forest by attending the first round of public meetings! (Photo courtesy of the Sheridan Press)

Recap of Initial Meetings (continued from page 1)

"Those attending recognized the complexity of the management situation, and the inter-related nature of the management of the Bighorn National Forest"

Forest Supervisor
Bill Bass

"Those attending recognized the complexity of the management situation, and the inter-related nature of the management of the Bighorn National Forest," continued Bass. One person wrote that it was important to "...keep as many different perspectives as possible at the table."

The most consistent issues raised by those attending focused on continued multiple use management, access to the Forest, and sustainability of the resource. "Multiple use but preserving forest and waters for future generations" was an important issue to one attendee. Echoing that sentiment was one person's worst imaginable future of a "lock up of the National Forest denying ranchers, loggers, fisherman, hunters, backpackers, tourists, etc, etc, access to multiple use lands they intend to use reasonably." Another person listed "wilderness and roadless areas preservation" as their best imaginable future.

Other responses to the "worst imaginable future" question included "too many people, poor management of recreation" and "closed". Information from the Best and Worst imaginable futures question will be used to help define goals in the revised Forest Plan.

People attending the meeting listed public meetings, newspaper, and newsletter as the most effective communication methods. "We will be scheduling additional meetings later this year to discuss more detailed issues", according to Bass. One or more field trips will occur on the mountain this summer.

Bass also encouraged people to "Talk to your County Commissioners or Conservation District personnel, as they are involved in and knowledgeable of the planning process, issues, and upcoming public involvement opportunities." These meetings are part of the initial round of public involvement for the Forest Plan revision. The revision will take about three years, and there will be many opportunities for people to learn about the planning process and to provide input.

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A Partnership for Revision

The State of Wyoming has been established as a cooperating agency for the Bighorn Forest Plan revision. Cooperating agencies are other federal, state, or local agencies or tribal governments who have jurisdiction in the project area or who have special expertise that pertains to some aspect of the project impact analysis. The authority for cooperating agency status comes from the National Environmental Policy Act.

For the Bighorn Plan revision, the State of Wyoming will be providing special expertise in the social, wildlife, and economic resources. Dr. Audie Blevins and Dr. Katherine Jensen of the University of Wyoming Sociology department will be providing social data and analysis. Their work will include a mail and interview surveys of Big Horn, Johnson, Sheridan, and Washakie county residents on issues pertinent to plan revision. Wyoming Game and Fish Department biologists will be assisting Forest Service biologists on the "wildlife task force", which will provide analysis and input on wildlife issues. The University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service, led by Dr. Tex Taylor and Dr. Roger Coupal, will provide economic information, including estimates of the effects of different revision alternatives upon local economies. The economic study is being funded in part by the Big Horn Mountain Country Coalition, through an USDA rural development grant.

Carol Kruse of the Office of Federal Land Policy is the primary liaison between the State and the Forest Service. "People in Wyoming have long been affected by policy and resource decisions made by federal agencies," according to Kruse. "We believe that cooperating agency status will provide the Bighorn National Forest employees working on the revision, and the public in general, with better information on what the effects of Forest Plan revision will be upon Wyoming citizens," continued Kruse.

While the State is providing technical expertise in the above listed areas, the Forest Supervisor is still the decision maker.

Governor Jim Geringer recently announced the State will share its cooperating agency status with the Big Horn, Johnson, Sheridan, and Washakie County Commissions and the six Conservation Districts in the four-county area. "Because of the impact to people residing in the area, the State of Wyoming has offered to share its cooperating agency status with local governments and they have accepted," according to Geringer in a November 9, 2000 press release.

Other State agencies, such as the Department of Environmental Quality, the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, and the State Forester, will also provide information and technical assistance throughout the revision process.

Results of Public Involvement Questions

Media/Method	Worland 11/13/00	Sheridan 11/27/00	Buffalo 12/4/00	Gillette 12/5/00	Lovell 1/8/01	Greybull 1/9/01
Newspaper Article/Editorial	5	2	2	3	1	1
Field Trips on Mountain	1	5	2	8	4	4
FS Visit Your Group	2	6	5	4	5	6
Public Meetings	3	1	1	1	2	1
Internet Web Page	7	7	7	5	7	7
Newsletter	4	3	4	2	3	3
Radio Talk Show	8	8	8	7	8	8
Open House	6	4	6	6	6	6

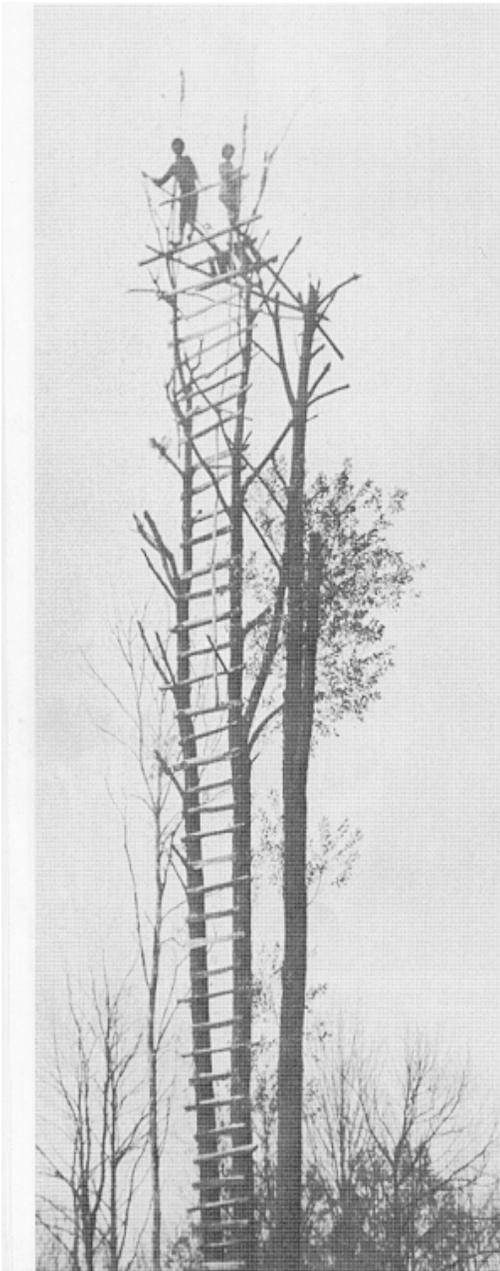
"1" in this table is the "most effective", while an "8" is the "least effective".

At the public meetings, people were asked questions concerning which public involvement methods were the most effective and meaningful. The table above shows how people at each meeting ranked the effectiveness of various public involvement methods. All of these methods will be utilized so that the Revision process is accessible and understandable by a wide variety of Forest users.

The initial meetings included the following "activities":

- Worksheets asking for participant's thoughts on Issues, Public Involvement and the Best and Worst Imaginable Futures.
 - Short presentations by Forest Service personnel describing the Forest Plan Revision process and by the County Commissioners/Conservation District Supervisors describing how people can get involved.
 - Development of a "situation map", as shown on the next page.
 - Small group discussions, where people could discuss important issues with their neighbors. The small groups reported their findings to all participants.
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Where Do We Go From Here in Plan Revision?



You don't have to climb a look-out tree to see where we are headed in the next few months on the Forest Plan revision! Check out the story on this page. This is a lookout tree on Turkey Knob, West Virginia, 1919.

The primary emphasis for the coming year will be on the revision initiation tasks, 36 Code of Federal Regulations 219.9. A copy of the "planning rule" can be found at the National Forest Service website at www.fs.fed.us, click on National Forest Management Act Planning Rule.

The new planning rule emphasizes sustainability of the resource and collaboration with the landowners of the National Forests. The following is a summary of the revision initiation tasks:

- Provide opportunities for collaboration
- Summarize initial revision topics
- Conduct an initial sustainability analysis on the Bighorn National Forest
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the current Forest Plan in contributing to sustainability
- Identify potential Special Areas, which include Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Research Natural Areas, and other special interest areas
- Identify watersheds in need of restoration
- Identify lands classified as not suitable for timber production
- Conduct an unroaded area evaluation
- Develop an estimate of outputs for the next fifteen years if the current Forest Plan remains in effect

We want people to participate in these tasks, so please check future newsletters, the website, or call Forest Supervisor's office at 307-674-2600 for meetings, work groups, or to share information and data.

Where Do We Go From Here in Plan Revision?

Forest Plan Task	Approximate Date	Tasks/Activities
Revision Initiation	2001	Collaboration and relationship building; collect and summarize data; issue identification; other tasks listed on previous page.
Field Trips	Summer 2001	Field trip(s) will allow us to discuss one or two Revision issues in depth.
Draft EIS	January 1, 2003	The pre-revision work will lay the foundation for alternative development, which is scheduled to begin in about a year.
Final EIS	January 1, 2004	



Field trips this summer will allow people to learn about revision issues and discuss them with their neighbors. This picture shows National Forest boundary marking in 1911.

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We're on the web!
www.fs.fed.us/r2/bighorn

Revision Comments Wanted!

Please feel free to comment on the Forest Plan Revision at any time! Although we are beginning to define issues based upon comments received to date, it is nearly a year until we will be designing alternatives - there is still plenty of time to share your thoughts, concerns and data with us! You can:

- e-mail comments to jstrong@fs.fed.us or bbornong@fs.fed.us.
- Mail comments to:
Bighorn National Forest
2013 East Side Second St.
Sheridan, WY 82801
- Call 307-674-2600, and ask for a member of the Revision Team.
- Stop in and visit.
- Ask to have a Forest Service person visit with your group.

Thank you to those of you who have commented to date - we look forward to your continued participation!