

Local issues and concerns were identified for the Tonto National Forest. The proposed Forest Plan and alternatives to it were designed to respond to these issues as well as to RPA Program objectives that were assigned to the Forest in the Regional Guide.

Issues, concerns, and opportunities were identified from the Regional Guide and from comments solicited from the public and Forest Service employees. Comments were received at a number of public involvement workshops and in response to an information brochure mailed to the public.

Comments received were analyzed in a scoping process to determine issues and concerns most relevant to the Forest Plan and DEIS [40 CFR 1501.7]. Content analysis was used to extract substantive comment from both written and workshop responses. A computer program, TALLY, was used to determine which issues were most often raised. Results of the analyses were compared and consolidated in a summary of responses. A list of major issues and concerns was compiled, based on whether an issue was:

Specifically relevant to the Tonto National Forest;

Of widespread concern to a great number of people;

Relevant to a specific location on the Forest; and

Long-term in duration.

An initial EIS was published in January of 1983. The public was asked to comment on the alternatives and proposed action, and to verify the identified issues. One new issue, mining, surfaced through this phase of public involvement.

Following the issuance of the initial EIS, the change in economic conditions and production from private plantations has reduced demand for commercial harvesting of jojoba beans to less than one-percent of total production. Conflicts between commercial use of jojoba bean and wildlife/livestock needs was an issue identified in the initial EIS. Because there are no longer conflicting demands between commercial harvesting and the browsing needs of wildlife and domestic livestock, jojoba management was not analyzed in detail in the accompanying EIS.

Direction from the Secretary of Agriculture prompted another public involvement phase relative to the wilderness issue and the re-evaluation of roadless areas. During August 1983, two statewide and 28 local meetings were held on various Arizona National Forests. A total of 210 people attended the meetings. By conclusion of the comment period on September 30, 1983, 102 letters had been received relative to the roadless area re-evaluation.

Refer to Appendix A of the EIS for a detailed discussion of public involvement.

The following describes the major issues and concerns addressed in the planning process, and how the Forest Plan responds to them. Quantifiable comparisons for Periods 1 and 5 are shown. Each period is 10 years in length.

Public Issues and Management Concerns

Recreation Diversity and Supply

Demand for developed recreation opportunity exceeds supply. Quality of dispersed recreation opportunities is declining.

There is an opportunity to meet the needs of handicapped visitors during construction and reconstruction of recreation sites.

With the wealth of cultural resources on the Forest, opportunities exist to provide interpretation of prehistoric and historic sites as a developed recreation experience.

Dev. Rec.	Fifth Period <u>% Demand Satisfied</u>	Period
PAOT*	Dev Rec	Disp Rec

23,092	89	100
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Retains existing sites with rehabilitation beginning in the first period. Provide new sites Forest-wide at popular areas of high existing or potential use. Management and administration of sites aimed at full service level with possible reductions to reduced service levels at some sites based on actual funding levels. Reduced service levels could result in seasonal or complete closure of developed sites, reduced services such as garbage pickup, toilet cleaning, litter cleanup, and visits by Forest officers. Light maintenance could be reduced and most heavy maintenance deferred. Law enforcement services would be reduced. Fee system at all qualified sites. Pursue user fee on Lower Salt River. Moderate to high level management and administration of dispersed recreation. Cooperative and Forest Service law enforcement at high level in areas of heavy public use, moderate level elsewhere. Provides high level of cultural resource protection. High integration of visual resource components in all resource management will result in enhancement of visual quality objectives. Commercial river running permits not to exceed 50% of capacity. Optimum level of commercial recreation special uses to meet public need.

* Persons at one time.

Wilderness Opportunities and Management

Heavy use by people, other non-compatible resource uses, and nonconforming structures are reducing wilderness values. Use in parts of the Superstition Wilderness periodically exceeds wilderness carrying capacities and management standards.

Public Issues and Management Concerns

Wilderness Acres	Wilderness Use MRVD's Period 1	Period 5	
585,990	388	600	Protection of wilderness resource and enhancement of visitor experience provided through a basic management program. Extensive use of volunteers, including wilderness information specialists at major trailheads. Implementation Plans developed and implemented commensurate with funding. Capacity management implemented in Superstition Wilderness. Essential trail maintenance on a systematic basis. Major reconstruction of hazardous and/or eroding trails sections.

Fuelwood Availability Demand for fuelwood exceeds accessible supply. Available fuelwood is not located in areas preferred by the public.
 The Forest lacks a comprehensive fuelwood inventory.
 Total Fuelwood

Production MMBF – Fifth Period

10.1	Through vegetative treatments and intensive fuelwood, wildlife, and recreation management, a moderate level of production is provided. There would be moderate level opportunity to resolve demand conflicts. Increased law enforcement will curtail current level of theft.
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Forage Production and Use Existing forage production is inadequate to support current livestock and wildlife grazing, resulting in declining site productivity, increased soil loss, and declining wildlife populations.

Permitted use in excess of capacity continues to result in over-utilization of the forage resource on many grazing allotments. Balancing permitted numbers of livestock to range capacity and implementing proper management is a major task. Many people think this balance must be done through adjustments in permitted numbers and the implementation of improved management. Ranchers who graze livestock on the Forest think improvement of the range is dependent on coordination between the resource managers and themselves as well as development of structural range improvements and vegetative type conversions to grassland.

<u>Fifth Period</u>				
Permitted Use MAUM's	Management Closed	Intensity – M Acres Extensive Intensive		
278	54.8	895.9	1011.4	Balances permitted use and forage capacity in second period. Forage production for wildlife and livestock use is emphasized through integration of resource management practices.

Public Issues and Management Concerns

Water Quality and Quantity

Demand for water use on and off the Forest exceeds the supply. Opportunities exist in the chaparral vegetation type to increase water yield. Some impacts on other resources are anticipated if water yield is increased.

Forest management activities have the potential to significantly alter water quality. Physical, chemical, and biological qualities of water can limit its uses. Currently, isolated pollution problems on and off Forest produce conflicts with water uses.

Percent Change From 1980 Yield (%) (349 acre feet)	Water Yield MMacFt		
	Period 1	Period 5	
	+13	356	

Transportation System Management

Many existing roads and trails are substandard. The Forest is not meeting prescribed minimum standards for road and trail maintenance.

There is a continuing conflict between providing user access to Forest resources and minimizing road density.

Fifth Period

Miles of Road System by Road Maintenance Levels

1	2	3	4	5	
242	2246	480	140	95	Road maintenance will be at a level that provides for user safety, protection of investments, and soil and water resources.
					Substandard roads will be closed.

Level 1 – Roads are not open to traffic; they are maintained to protect the road investment and its surrounding resources. These roads may be opened for a specific activity and returned to Level 1 upon completion of the activity.

Level 2 – Roads are maintained open for limited passage of traffic. Roads in this maintenance level are primitive type facilities intended for high clearance vehicles. Passenger car traffic is not a consideration.

Public Issues and Management Concerns

- Level 3– Roads are maintained open and safe for travel by a prudent driver in a passenger car. However, user comfort and convenience is not considered a priority.
- Level 4– Roads are maintained to provide a moderate degree of user comfort and convenience at moderate travel speeds.
- Level 5– Roads are maintained to provide a high degree of user comfort and convenience. These roads are normally two lanes with aggregate or paved surface.

Trail System				
Avg. Annual Miles of Maintenance/Rehabilitation for Periods 1 – 5		Avg. Annual Miles of Construction/Reconstruction for Periods 1 – 5		
Wilderness	Non Wilderness	Wilderness	Non Wilderness	
96	37	2.8	4.0	

Wildlife Habitat

Existing wildlife habitats are currently inadequate to supply basic food and cover requirements. Present levels of integration of wildlife habitat management prescriptions have failed to provide the basic needs, especially in riparian habitat, where conflicts with other resource needs are amplified.

Wildlife Recreation MRVD's		Acres Allocated to Wildlife Emphasis Prescription	
Period 1	Period 5		
688	1,030	436,000	Habitat improvement and increased wildlife populations resulting from management activities is anticipated as a result of high budget levels. Therefore, species requiring early to mid-successional stages will be favored while providing adequate habitat for those requiring late successional stages. Wildlife habitat diversity will be increased through coordinated management activities and direct habitat improvement projects. Wildlife use will increase in consumptive areas more than non-consumptive. Competition between livestock and wildlife will be reduced as range forage conditions improve. Threatened and Endangered

Public Issues and Management Concerns

species habitat management and enhancement will be increased over current levels and recovery of listed species will be accomplished at a high rate. Wildlife use demand will exceed supply. Wildlife generated benefits in terms of RVD's and revenue will be at a moderate level in the first decade and are expected to increase 50 percent up to a high level by Period 5. Arizona State Comprehensive Wildlife Plan goals will be met at a high level.

Riparian Habitat

Riparian areas on the Forest are heavily impacted by livestock grazing and recreationists. Many roads and recreation sites are located in riparian areas. Livestock tend to concentrate in and overuse riparian vegetation. Riparian areas provide essential habitat requirements for a variety of wildlife.

Acres in Acceptable * Ecological Condition	
Period	Period
1	5

12,500	25,900
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Complete riparian recovery and management of this unique and valuable habitat will approximate optimum under this alternative. Budget levels will encourage not only a high level of coordination with other uses such as recreation and range, but allow rehabilitation and re-establishment projects to accelerate recovery. Conducive weather patterns that basically control natural re-establishment and recovery cannot be predicted, but are assumed to occur at times within the 50-year planning period. As permitted use is balanced with forage production Forest-wide and grazing pressure is reduced, riparian recovery is expected by the end of Period 3 or 4. Management emphasis in riparian areas will feature wildlife needs over recreation and grazing.

* Defined as being in fair or better condition by a riparian survey contract in 1981, by Arizona State University.

Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Use

Vehicle use on the land, trails, and primitive roads directly provides or is integral to needed recreation for some users. OHV use in the Forest continues to increase. OHV use damages the environment in some areas or results in conflicts with other users. In some areas, under the right conditions, the use is compatible and acceptable.

Public Issues and Management Concerns

Fifth Period

Acres – Thousands

Open *	Closed**	Miles of Road Open Forest-wide to Vehicle Travel
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914.7	1,958.6	2,961
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Provide for **OHV** use commensurate with resource management objectives and budget levels.

* Open areas are primarily located in the pinyon-juniper and ponderosa-pine types of the Payson and Pleasant Valley Ranger Districts.

** The ORV policy in the desert will be implemented gradually over the first ten years after the Plan is approved. Priorities for implementation will be in areas of highest use near the Phoenix metropolitan area.

Timber Management Intensity

Current timber harvest levels may be exceeding productive capability of the timber resource. Allocations to other resource emphases may reduce the amount of available timber.

Total Average Annual Harvest

Sawtimber and Roundwood Products

Suitable Acres	MMBF	
	Period 1	Period 5
109,492	7.9	16.7

Silvicultural practices and harvest schedules apply to current suitable acres to achieve high level of wildlife, recreation, and timber management. No harvest in Sierra Ancha Experimental Forest or Pinal Mountains.

Unauthorized Use

The level of Forest Service law enforcement is generally perceived as inadequate to handle the problems associated with burgeoning unauthorized use on the Tonto. The level of enforcement does not meet public expectations. Officials of Gila County think the Forest Service cooperative law enforcement program is inadequate and therefore the visitors and problems on the Forest belong to the Forest Service. Protection of cultural resources, ORV use, occupancy trespass, fuelwood theft, and vandalism are the major problems identified.

There will be a high level of emphasis to control unauthorized use in areas of high recreation use and fuelwood production. Action will be initiated to resolve backlog of trespass cases by year 2000 and keep up annually to prevent or solve problems.

Soil Productivity and Stability

Land uses have created some areas on the Forest that have unacceptable soil erosion and watershed conditions. Soil productivity is being threatened in these areas.

Public Issues and Management Concerns

Fifth Period

MM Acres In
Satisfactory Condition

2.8

Erosion potential will be increased in areas of commodity production. Overall opportunity to reduce erosion is good. During the planning period there will be high opportunity for maintenance or enhancement of watershed condition and soil productivity. The impetus to this will be the range program, which will provide for improving range forage conditions and putting all allotments under appropriate levels of management.

Mineral Development

Conflicts exist between proponents of mineral development and other resource considerations, which constrain both the opportunity for and method of mineral exploration and development.

M Acres Open for
Exploration

Locatable Minerals	Leasable Minerals
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2,073.0	2,287.3
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The variation between locatable and leasable acres open is due to leasing with limited or no surface occupancy in special areas such as roadside zones which are withdrawn from locatable mineral entry.

Other Opportunities

Several other management opportunities have been identified through public involvement and during the planning process. These are:

Fire Management

Recently revised suppression and prescribed fire policies provide more flexibility in use of fire. Prescribed fire is being used more commonly to benefit all resources. Use of the Escaped Fire Situation Analysis allows weighing the cost of wildfire suppression against values at risk, and design of fire control that is cost efficient. As the Forest gains experience and knowledge in these areas, the confidence level will rise and prescribed fire will be managed to meet sound resource objectives.

Land Ownership

~~Adjustment~~

Land ownership adjustments within and adjacent to local communities need a continuing emphasis to significantly increase efficiency in resource management and to satisfy the needs of expanding communities.

The Plan provides for accomplishment of property boundary surveys, elimination of backlog rights-of-way surveys, and approximately 300 acres of land exchange per year. The base-for-exchange land is reduced by 4,500 acres near Payson and increased by 600 acres near Young.

Public Issues and Management Concerns

Special Area
Designations

Opportunities were identified to provide areas for scientific study and protection through establishment of research natural areas, botanical areas, or designation as natural areas under the Arizona Parks Board Natural Area Program. Proposals have been presented to provide protection to the Picket Post Mountain area adjacent to the Boyce Thompson Arboretum, to an area of Sonoran desert to be managed cooperatively with the Desert Botanical Garden, and to provide an area for development of a museum and interpretive facility near the Superstition Mountains.

The Plan provides for designation of the following special areas.

Special Area Recommendations

<u>Area and Kind *</u>	<u>Vegetative Type</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Bush Highway RNA (E)	Creosote bush, Palo Verde	488
Buckhorn Mountain RNA (E)	Interior Chaparral	2,810
Upper Forks Parker Creek RNA (P)	Woodland/P. pine	1,288
Picket Post Mtn. RNA (P)	Desert/Chaparral	1,120
Haufer Wash RNA (E)	Semi-desert Grassland and Desert scrub	680
Desert Botanical Garden BA	Desert	1,200
Blue Point Cottonwoods BA	Desert Riparian	480
Sycamore Creek NA	Desert Riparian	60
Fossil Springs NA	Riparian	20
Superstition Museum	Desert	60

* RNA (E) - Existing Research Natural Area; RNA (P) - Proposed Research Natural Area; BA - Botanical Area; NA - State Natural Area

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