

Chapter 5 – Developing A Proposed Action And Alternatives

This Analysis of the Management Situation summarizes the identification of need for change to the forest plan based on new information, monitoring and evaluation, Forest Service Handbook and Manual direction, new or regulations, and the working knowledge of Forest Service employees. Our next step is to take this information and develop a proposed action to initiate formal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis in the winter of 2004. At that time a Revised Notice of Intent will be published in the Federal Register and formal "scoping," will be initiated. As stated in Chapter 1, we are encouraging early public participation now to be sure our identified need for change reflects public concerns as well as our own. Comments on this analysis of the management situation will be considered carefully as we develop the proposed action.

Proposed Action

The intent of a proposed action is to start a public dialogue that will allow us to identify issues and concerns and develop alternative courses of action that would address those concerns. The proposed action will generally focus on the need for change topics discussed in Chapter 4 and have enough detail to generate specific issues and concerns. For example, Wilderness Recommendation is one of the need for change topics. Rather than just ask for general public comment on this topic, our proposed action will discuss the wilderness recommendation made in the original forest plans and propose to either:

- Increase the amount of wilderness recommended;
- Decrease the amount of wilderness recommended;
- Make a similar wilderness recommendation as the one found in the original forest plans;

This proposed action is only a starting point for discussion and will not represent any kind of decision. Public comments and further analysis will likely cause significant modification of the agency's preferred course of action as we move through the process.

Alternative Development

Issues and concerns that people express about the proposed action will help us develop alternatives that would be analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) scheduled for publication in early 2005.

Regulations for implementation of the National Forest Management Act require that we formulate a broad range of reasonable alternatives according to NEPA procedures and provide an adequate basis for identifying the alternative that comes nearest to optimizing the mix of public benefits, consistent with the resource integration and management requirements.

The Interdisciplinary Team will begin to identify a range of alternatives that addresses significant issues. During this phase we plan to provide for as much two-way communication with interested citizens as possible.

Work in Progress

Several areas of work are underway. These include:

- Evaluation of inventoried roadless areas for recommended wilderness designation.
- Determination of rangeland capability.
- Determination of tentatively suited and appropriate lands for timber production.
- Biophysical assessments
- Existing condition of vegetation
- Roads analysis
- Wild and Scenic River eligibility