

Chapter 1. Introduction



Community vision meetings during Forest Plan Revision

Location

The Prescott National Forest (Prescott NF) is one of six national forests in Arizona (figure 1). It covers approximately 1.2 million acres in west-central Arizona and is located in Yavapai and Coconino Counties. The Prescott NF consists of two geographically separate land areas (eastern and western) that are administered as three ranger districts: the Chino Valley Ranger District, which covers the areas east and west of Chino Valley; the Bradshaw Ranger District, which covers the area near Prescott and south into the Bradshaw Mountains; and the Verde Ranger District, which covers the area just north of Jerome and Clarkdale and along the southern side of the Verde Valley. The Prescott NF shares boundaries with: the Coconino, Kaibab, and Tonto National Forests; the Agua Fria National Monument; Bureau of Land Management - Hassayampa Field Office; Arizona State Trust lands; and several communities including Prescott, Camp Verde, and Cottonwood.

Role and Contributions of the Planning Area

The Prescott NF is located in a comparatively mountainous section of central Arizona between the forested plateaus to the north and the arid desert region to the south. Roughly half of the Prescott NF lies west of the city of Prescott, Arizona, in the Juniper, Santa Maria, Sierra Prieta, and Bradshaw Mountains. The other half of the Prescott NF lies east of Prescott and takes in the

terrain of Mingus Mountain, the Black Hills, and Black Mesa. Elevations range between 3,000 feet above sea level along the lower Verde Valley to 7,979 feet at the top of Mount Union, the highest natural feature on the national forest.

Water Resources: The purpose of the original forest reserves, now part of the Prescott NF, was to protect and conserve water supplies for central Arizona. The rugged topography of the Prescott NF provides important watersheds for both the Verde and Colorado River systems. Within these watersheds are many important continuously or seasonally flowing stream courses and drainages which provide riparian habitat for aquatic species, including native fish; water supply to local communities, including the Phoenix metropolitan area downstream; and destinations for visitors to enjoy water-based recreation such as kayaking and fishing.

Vegetation: The vegetation on the Prescott NF is complex and diverse. South of the Bradshaw Mountains, there is Sonoran desert dominated by saguaro cacti and paloverde trees. Less than 10 miles upslope from the desert, there are cool mountain forests where conifer trees grow. In between, there are a variety of plant and animal habitats including grasslands, chaparral, piñon-juniper woodlands, and ponderosa pine forests.

Wildlife: There is a variety of wildlife species found on the Prescott NF that offer opportunities for wildlife viewing, hunting, or fishing including: elk, black bear, javelina, pronghorn antelope, mule deer, cougar, bobcat, coyote, bald eagle, roadrunner, turkey, rattlesnake, jackrabbit, rainbow trout, largemouth and smallmouth bass, and roundtail chub. In addition, the forest provides habitat for several federally listed species including: Southwestern willow flycatcher, Mexican spotted owl, yellow-billed cuckoo, Gila chub, Gila trout, and spikedace.

Recreation: A variety of year-round recreation opportunities exist on the Prescott NF. Visitors and local citizens alike enjoy having such opportunities nearby, and during the summer, recreate in the Prescott NF where temperatures are moderate. In the winter, people visit the Verde Valley and other snow-free areas to recreate where temperatures are mild. Increases in population have led to increased demand in trails and other recreation opportunities. If climate changes include continuing increases in temperatures, it is likely that there will also be increases in recreation visitors from hotter areas such as Phoenix. In addition to a host of trails and campgrounds, the Prescott NF has several unique recreation opportunities, including: a hang-glider site atop Mingus Mountain; Alto Pit and Hayfield Draw Off-highway Vehicle (OHV) recreation sites; Granite Mountain National Recreation Trail; General Crook National Historic Study Trail, a portion of the Great Western Trail, which traverses the western U.S. from Mexico to Canada; gold panning on Lynx Creek; and three historic Forest Service buildings which are a part of the “Rooms with a View” cabin rental program. The Prescott NF contains several heritage sites which are protected for their unique cultural values; a couple of popular sites for visitors include the Lynx Creek Ruin and Charcoal Walker Kilns.

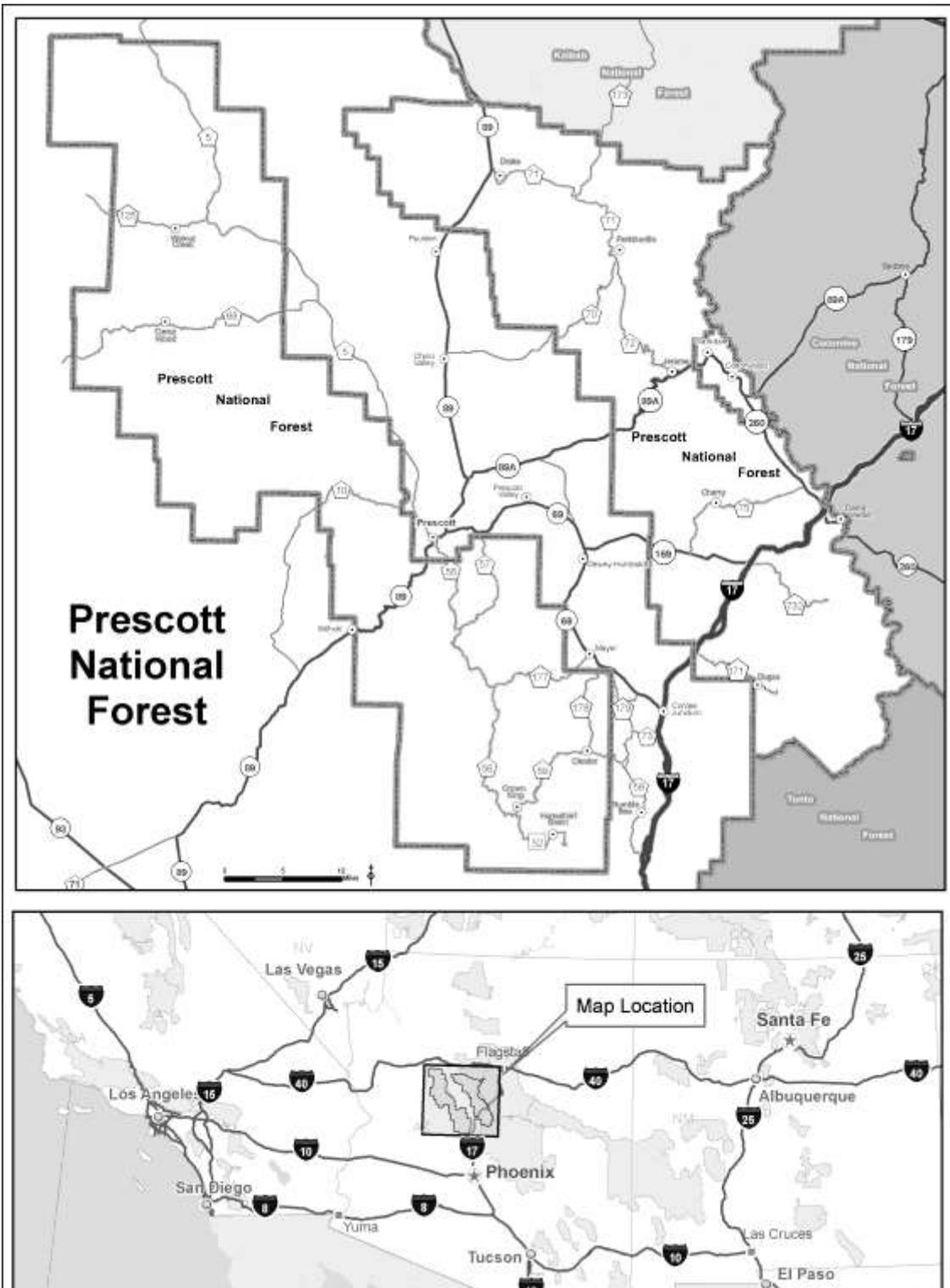


Figure 1. Vicinity map of the Prescott NF

Special Areas: Eight designated wilderness areas—including Pine Mountain Wilderness which is shared with the Tonto NF and Sycamore Canyon Wilderness which is shared with the Coconino and Kaibab NFs—are scattered across the Prescott NF and provide locations where visitors can enjoy primitive recreation experiences. The 800-acre Grapevine Botanical Area, located in the Bradshaw Mountains south of Prescott, contains 12 perennial springs and supports a distinctive alder-walnut vegetative community. Portions of the Verde River have been designated as a part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Uses and Products: Mining has taken place in the mountains within the Prescott NF dating back to the mid-1800s, and today, there is continued interest in both commercial and recreational mining activities. Livestock grazing is also a historical use of the forest which continues today across the forest's 68 allotments. Additionally, the Beaverhead-Grief Hill Sheep Driveway bisects the eastern end of the forest and is still used to move sheep from desert rangelands in southern Arizona to forested rangelands atop the Mogollon Rim. Forest products such as wood fiber, firewood, and Christmas trees are obtained from the forest and contribute to local communities' social, economic, and cultural needs. Several mountaintops on the Prescott NF—including Mount Frances, Towers Mountain, Mingus Mountain, and Squaw Peak—are used, under permit, as sites for government and commercial communication towers.

Prescott National Forest Mission and Vision

The nationwide mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The overall goal of managing [National Forest System](#) lands is to sustain the multiple uses of its resources in perpetuity, while maintaining the long-term productivity of the land.

The Prescott NF's mission is to effectively and efficiently manage National Forest System lands and resources to meet the needs and desires of the public, while enhancing the environment. We foster a collaborative environment internally and externally that values dialogue, community engagement, partnerships, and public education to achieve our stewardship responsibilities within and beyond the Prescott NF's boundaries.

Our vision is to manage the cultural and natural resources of the Prescott NF to provide healthy watersheds, outdoor recreational opportunities, open space, scenery, and traditional uses that sustain the social and economic structure and stability of our communities.

Planning Framework

The "Land and Resource Management Plan for the Prescott National Forest" (hereinafter referred to as the plan) is intended to produce responsible land management for the Prescott NF based on useful and current information and guidance. The plan guides the Forest Service in carrying out its responsibilities for stewardship under the sustainable multiple-use management concept—which is to meet the diverse needs of people, while also protecting the resources of the Prescott NF. Land management plans are required by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 (P.L. 94-588) and the Multiple Use–Sustained Yield Act (MUSYA) of 1960 (P.L. 86-517).

Sustainable multiple-use management means that various activities that have social or economic value may take place, while ecosystem processes and biological characteristics continue to fulfill their natural rhythm of change over time. In order to do that, management needs to be adaptable.

As activities take place, awareness of trends helps to determine needed modification of management actions.

The plan provides broad guidance and information for project and activity decisionmaking on the Prescott NF. The plan has these characteristics:

- It is strategic in nature. It does not include project level decisions. Those decisions are made later, only after specific proposals are identified and analyzed and there is the opportunity for public involvement.
- It includes the following plan components: desired conditions (or goals), objectives, suitability of areas, special areas, standards, guidelines, and a monitoring strategy.
- It is intended to be adaptive, in that new knowledge and information can be analyzed and the plan changed, if appropriate, at any time. Changes to plan components may require an amendment.
- It honors the continuing validity of private, statutory, or preexisting rights.

Needs for Change

In the “Analysis of the Management Situation” (AMS) (Forest Service, 2009b), the Prescott NF evaluated how management under its existing land management plan (the 1987 plan), as amended, was affecting conditions and trends related to the sustainability of ecological, economic, and social factors. The AMS summarizes key findings from both the “Ecological Sustainability Report” (ESR) (Forest Service, 2009c) and the “Economic and Social Sustainability Assessment” (ESSA) (Forest Service, 2008)—two detailed reports which were developed previously by the Prescott NF to identify current conditions and probable future trends. These documents, and all documents associated with the revision of the plan, can be viewed and downloaded from the Prescott NF plan revision Web site¹.

Potential needs for change identified in the AMS were developed by integrating the key needs for change from ecological concerns in the ESR with the key needs for change from economic and social concerns in the ESSA. This integration considered the Prescott NF recreation niche; the Prescott NF contribution to social, economic, and ecological sustainability; the Forest Service mission; input from public meetings and informal conversations; and community visions.

Internal review of the integrated key findings resulted in a list of eight needs for change topics (Forest Service, 2009b, pp. 32-33). After discussions about the integrated needs for change and the capacity of the Prescott NF, the forest leadership team identified five priority needs for change topics that were recommended to focus the scope of this plan revision.

The five needs for change topics and a brief rationale for the selection of each are listed below:

- 1. Restore vegetation structure and composition and desired characteristics of fire to selected ecosystems, while responding to citizen concerns related to smoke emissions.**

The [restoration](#) of desired vegetative characteristics addresses the following: (1) risk of severe wildland fire that could damage soils, cause uncharacteristic changes in vegetation

¹ www.fs.usda.gov/land/prescott/landmanagement

communities, and impact human health and safety, especially within the [wildland-urban interface \(WUI\)](#); (2) changes in [ecosystems](#) that could affect diversity of plant and animal species, such as spread of invasive plant species or changes in vegetation structure; and (3) identification of desired characteristics of fire as a disturbance, including frequency, severity, intensity, size, and seasonality, for ecosystems that are sustained by fire.

Mitigation of smoke that flows into communities primarily due to [prescribed fires](#) is a connected social concern.

2. Retain or improve watershed integrity to provide desired water quality, quantity, and timing of delivery.

Addressing this need would: provide improved water quality for human health and safety; move watersheds toward maintaining water quantity for both municipal watersheds and maintenance of aquatic and riparian species habitat; and provide timing of delivery that is commensurate with healthy soil and biological function and natural geomorphology.

3. Provide sustainable and diverse recreation opportunities that consider population demographic characteristics, reflect desires of local communities, avoid overcrowding and user conflicts, and minimize resource damage.

Providing sustainable recreation opportunities was the number one concern at public meetings in both the Verde Valley and Prescott areas. With increasing population and numbers of visitors to the Prescott NF, conflicts between various types of activities, overcrowding, and overuse leading to resource impacts need to be addressed.

4. Provide desired habitat for native fish species.

Native fish and other aquatic species are in decline in some watersheds. Furthermore, native aquatic species are no longer known to be present in five watersheds where historically they were present. In order to assist in responding to the decline in native fish species, the Prescott NF can provide habitat and watershed characteristics that will support these species. It could also partner with the State of Arizona in addressing control of nonnative species.

5. Enhance the value of open space provided by the Prescott NF by defining the visual character within areas near or viewed by those in local communities.

Retention of open space (i.e., undeveloped land near or within sight of local communities) is highly valued by citizens for its scenic value and contribution to low population density. The Prescott NF has a unique opportunity to enhance value and identify desired visual character on its lands as population density may increase on other ownership.

Three other topics were considered as needs for change during management review but were recommended for deferral as topics for plan revision. A complete list of the deferred needs for change topics is included in appendix B of the AMS.

Along with new or deferred needs for change topics, new information and changing conditions may call for changes in management. As these needs become ripe for action, iterative and adaptive planning will facilitate the incorporation of new information into potential plan amendments. This adaptive planning approach is in accordance with NFMA which requires the

Forest Service to amend the plan, if necessary, every 10 to 15 years to reflect changing land management needs. This document represents the revised “Land and Resource Management Plan for the Prescott National Forest” (revised plan), and it focuses on the identified needs for change thus far.

This revised plan was completed using direction from the 2012 Planning Rule; the transition provisions of that rule allow use of the provisions of the 1982 Planning Rule to revise land management plans. This revised plan uses the provisions of the 1982 Planning Rule.

1987 Plan Direction Included in the Revised Plan

Some components of the 1987 plan, including some of its amendments, are still adequate and timely and have been carried forward into the revised plan.

1987 Plan Direction Not Included in the Revised Plan

Other components of the 1987 plan have been modified or removed, for reasons including: they describe a purely administrative or procedural function; they duplicate direction that can be found in existing law, regulation, or Forest Service policy; they are based on outdated policies, science, or information; or they include out-of-date terminology. In addition, some standards and guidelines in the 1987 plan will not be included in the revised plan because they: were unnecessarily prescriptive about how to accomplish a project; did not support attaining desired conditions or accomplishing objectives; or were duplicative. Finally, much of the monitoring and evaluation guidance in the 1987 plan focuses solely on outputs rather than overall progress toward the desired conditions (or goals).

Decisions Made in the Plan

Plan decisions (also referred to as plan components) include: desired conditions/goals, objectives, standards, guidelines, suitability of uses, special areas, and monitoring.

Desired conditions (or goals) describe the picture for the future of the Prescott NF. They are the social, economic, and ecological attributes toward which management of the land and resources of the plan area is directed. They are aspirations and not commitments or final decisions which approve projects or activities, and they may only be achievable over a long period. “Goals,” as required by the 1982 Planning Rule Provisions, are articulated as “desired conditions” in this plan.

Objectives describe how the Forest Service intends to achieve desired conditions for the Prescott NF. Objectives are concise projections of measurable, time specific intended outcomes. Objectives are the work that we think needs to be done and the means of achieving or maintaining desired conditions.

Standards are constraints that apply when an action is being taken to make progress toward desired conditions. The direction in a standard must be followed exactly, including the intent of the standard. Deviation from a standard requires a plan amendment.

Guidelines are also constraints that should apply when an action is being taken to make progress toward desired conditions. A guideline must be followed, however, unlike a standard, it may be modified somewhat for a specific project if the intent of the guideline is followed and the deviation is addressed in a decision document with supporting rationale. When deviation from a guideline does not meet the original intent, a plan amendment is required.

Special areas are lands within the National Forest System (NFS) which have designations by Congress or other delegated authority. Special areas are designated because of their unique or special characteristics. Examples include: wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, research natural areas, botanical areas, and national recreation trails.

Suitability refers to NFS lands which are identified as “suitable” for various uses. An area may be identified as suitable or not suitable for certain uses depending on its compatibility with desired conditions and objectives for the area. The 1982 Planning Rule Provisions require that suitability for timber, range, and recreation must be addressed.

Monitoring is the part of the adaptive management strategy used to determine the degree to which on-the-ground management is maintaining or making progress toward desired conditions. The monitoring plan includes questions and performance measures designed to inform implementation and evaluate effectiveness.

Plan Organization

Chapter Organization

This plan is organized into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction to briefly describe the planning area, the analysis of the management situation, the purpose of this plan, and the plan decisions and how they are distributed throughout the plan. This chapter does not contain plan decisions.

Chapter 2: Desired conditions (i.e., goals) that apply to all of the Prescott NF and include descriptions of desired outcomes as a result of Forest Service management.

Chapter 3: Objectives are a list of measurable, time-specific actions intended to help the Prescott NF achieve the desired conditions described in chapter 2.

Chapter 4: Standards and guidelines in this chapter apply to all Prescott NF lands and provide direction for future site-specific projects.

Chapter 5: Management area direction provides desired conditions, standards, and guidelines that apply to specific areas of the Prescott NF.

Chapter 6: Monitoring and evaluation supports the adaptive management strategy for determining the degree to which on-the-ground management is maintaining or making progress toward desired conditions.

Chapter 7: Suitability of acreages for timber and range as well as recreation opportunity suitabilities are found in this chapter.

Chapter 8: Additional plan direction includes direction which is not a part of the plan decisions but nevertheless must be followed to implement the plan. These include: (1) projects' consistency with the plan, (2) changes to the plan, and (3) other vital documents which must be followed to implement the plan.

Organization of Plan Decisions

Plan decisions are contained in chapters 2 through 7 and are visually distinguished within boxes. Information not included in these boxes (e.g., introduction and background sections within chapters 2 through 7) are not plan decisions; they provide additional information or further clarification about the plan decisions.

To reference plan decisions more easily, a numbering scheme is used in the plan consisting of three parts: (1) type of plan decision (e.g., a desired condition, objective, guideline); (2) resource area (e.g., vegetation, recreation, heritage); and (3) number. Abbreviations are used to shorten these labels. The following examples illustrate this scheme: "DC-Veg-1" relates to the first listed desired condition for vegetation; "Obj-7" relates to the seventh objective listed²; and "Guide-AF MA-1" relates to the first listed guideline for the Agua Fria Management Area. See Figure 2 below for an example.

DC-ResourceArea-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan decision language.
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Figure 2. Visual example of a plan decision

Hypertext

Hypertext is used throughout the plan; it allows the user of the electronic version of this plan to click on a word (indicated by underlined text, for example [glossary](#)) and be redirected to another area of the plan or an external reference. Users can then click on the word again and be redirected back to their original location. The first occurrences of words that are found in the glossary are hyperlinked.

Concept Descriptions to Improve Reader Understanding in the Revised Plan

This section was placed in the introduction in an effort to respond to questions and feedback we received related to technical terminology and concepts that were used in development of this plan. By gaining some understanding of these concepts early on, plan clarity may be improved. The concepts are organized according to the five needs for change statements.

Need for Change Statement 1

Restore vegetation structure and composition and desired characteristics of fire to selected ecosystems, while responding to citizen concerns related to smoke emissions.

² The numbering scheme for objectives does not include abbreviations for individual resource areas.

Vegetation structure and composition and the frequency and severity of disturbances (e.g., fire) need to be modified to restore and maintain the health and sustainability of terrestrial ecosystems.

Concepts for Understanding

During plan revision efforts, a framework was needed to classify and map areas on the Prescott NF based on associations of ecological factors. The Prescott NF used **Potential Natural Vegetation Types (PNVTs)** as a basis for classifying and mapping similar units of vegetation, soil, climate, and disturbance on a forestwide scale. The PNVT classifications were developed from data available in the “[Terrestrial Ecosystem Survey](#) of the Prescott National Forest” (Robertson et al., 2000) and from information on vegetation dynamics and natural variability compiled by The Nature Conservancy³ and the Landscape Fire and Resource Management Planning Tools Project⁴ (commonly called LANDFIRE).

PNVTs represent the vegetation type and characteristics that would occur when natural disturbance regimes and biological processes prevail. Each PNVT can be described by its unique ecosystem dynamics, made up of “states” and “transitions.” States describe the life forms, composition, age or size, and relative density of the vegetation at different life stages. Transitions are events that modify the existing vegetation in various ways based on their magnitude, frequency, and extent. Transitions also include biological processes such as growth, development, and death. A “states and transitions” framework allows for simulating and testing vegetative dynamics using computerized models.

[Reference conditions](#) that identified the relative amount of each state, and the frequency of transitions between states, were estimated based on scientific literature (Schussman and Smith, 2006) and Forest Service experience within the western U.S. (Hann et al., 2008). Comparisons of the current situation to these reference conditions and the desired conditions were made to identify the extent of departure for each PNVT. The level of departure for the PNVTs was considered during development of the objectives in chapter 3.

Need for Change Statement 2

Retain or improve watershed integrity to provide desired water quality, quantity, and timing of delivery.

Watershed condition is defined as the state of a watershed based on physical and biological characteristics and processes affecting hydrologic and soil functions. Watershed condition integrity is a wholeness or completeness of the watershed function in providing water quality, quantity, and timing of delivery. It is influenced by soil function, biological function, and geomorphology. In addition, vegetation structure and composition, disturbance regimes, and recreation activities can all affect watershed integrity.

Concepts for Understanding

During any discussion of watersheds, scale needs to be identified. The U.S. Geological Survey has created a hierarchical method of mapping and identifying watersheds using [hydrologic units](#),

³ www.azconservation.org/downloads/category/southwest_regional/

⁴ www.landfire.gov

identified by hydrologic unit codes (HUCs). Within this method, the numbers used for HUCs increase as the size of the watershed decreases (see table 1 for an example of this hierarchy). Within the Prescott NF, twenty-two 5th level hydrologic units (watersheds) help to make up eight 4th level hydrologic units (subbasins) that overlap the Prescott NF to some degree.

Table 1. Example of the hierarchal structure in hydrologic units

Hydrologic Unit	Level	Hydrologic Unit Code	Example
Region	1 st level hydrologic unit	15	Colorado River
Subregion	2 nd level hydrologic unit	1506	Salt River
River Basin	3 rd level hydrologic unit	150602	Verde River
Subbasin	4 th level hydrologic unit	15060202	Upper Verde
Watershed	5 th level hydrologic unit	1506020207	Cherry Creek
Subwatershed	6 th level hydrologic unit	150602020701	Bitter Creek

In preparation for plan revision, watershed conditions were analyzed at the 4th, 5th, and 6th level hydrologic units. Desired conditions were developed to cover all three levels. At the 4th and 5th levels, only a portion of most hydrologic units overlap with Prescott NF land ownership. Although the 5th level units range from about 150 to 360 square miles in size, the watershed integrity objectives only refer to the 1 to 230 square mile portions within the boundaries of the Prescott NF. Map 2 in appendix A displays the 5th level units (watersheds) that intersect the Prescott NF.

Need for Change Statement 3

Provide sustainable and diverse recreation opportunities that consider population demographic characteristics, reflect desires of local communities, avoid overcrowding and user conflicts, and minimize resource damage.

With increasing populations and numbers of visitors to the Prescott NF, conflicts between types of activities, overcrowding, and overuse leading to resource impacts need to be addressed.

Concepts for Understanding

The **Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)** is a classification system that identifies a continuum of settings, activities, and recreation experiences. It is used to inventory and classify large areas based on national criteria involving physical, social, and managerial attributes. The ROS map can be found in appendix A (map 3). For the most part, it classifies recreation opportunities as they exist. The classifications range from remote and undeveloped (primitive) settings to populated and developed settings (urban). These are based on a number of factors, including access, remoteness, social encounters, amount of visitor management, type of recreation development, and extent of visitor impacts. The ROS classifications are as follows:

- **Primitive (P)** - The experience includes isolation from manmade sights, sounds, and management controls in an unmodified environment. Motorized use is not present. There

is no primitive classification on the Prescott NF because there are no areas on the forest that meet the criteria.

- **Semiprimitive Nonmotorized (SPNM)** - There is some isolation from manmade sights, sounds, and management controls in a predominantly unmodified environment. Few visitors are present, but some evidence of use is expected. Motorized use is rare or not present.
- **Semiprimitive Motorized (SPM)** - This is very similar to semiprimitive nonmotorized except that both motorized and nonmotorized use is present.
- **Roaded Natural (RN)** - There are about equal opportunities for isolated experiences and opportunities to interact with other groups. The landscape is generally natural. Onsite managerial controls are subtle. Both motorized and nonmotorized use is present. The expectation is that visitors will drive to facilities.
- **Roaded Modified (RM)** - The natural environment is substantially modified by management activities such as mining and utility corridors. Some evidence of other users is likely.
- **Rural (R)** - The natural environment is substantially modified. Interactions with other visitors prevail. Sights and sounds of people are readily evident and user numbers are moderate to high.
- **Urban (U)** - A substantially urbanized area is present, although the background may have natural elements. There are high levels of human activity, concentrated development, and developed sites and roads are designed for high use.

Need for Change Statement 4

Provide desired habitat for native fish species.

Native fish and other aquatic species are in decline within several watersheds. Native aquatic species are no longer found in five watersheds that overlap with the Prescott NF. The Prescott NF can provide habitat and watershed characteristics that will support native fish species. The Forest Service can also cooperate with the State of Arizona in addressing control of nonnative species.

Concepts for Understanding

The Forest Service is required to plan for retaining **species diversity** and to provide habitat needed to maintain **viable**, well distributed populations of existing native and desired nonnative species within the functional capacity of the landscape (FSM 1926.15, requirement 13). Species diversity is a measure of the number of species in an ecological community and the range or variation in the abundance of individuals per species within the community. A viable population is one that has the estimated numbers and distribution of reproductive individuals to ensure its continued existence is well distributed within the planning area. All else being equal, communities with more species are considered to be more diverse.

For species affected by Forest Service management, potential threats that could impact species' distribution and abundance were identified and screened to determine which species warrant more detailed consideration in the plan. For many species, trending toward aquatic and vegetative desired conditions listed in chapter 2 will maintain species diversity and viability. For others,

specific plan components, such as objectives or standards and guidelines were developed to respond to diversity or viability concerns.

Need for Change Statement 5

Enhance the value of open space provided by the Prescott NF by defining visual character within areas near or viewed by those in local communities.

The Forest Service has an opportunity, via the plan, to ensure that open space and scenic values are taken into consideration on Prescott NF lands as population density is expected to increase on other ownerships.

Concepts for Understanding

The **Scenery Management System (SMS)** provides a systematic approach for determining the relative value and importance of scenery on national forest lands. It analyzes a landscape's attractiveness, visibility, [intactness](#), and value to the public to determine the scenic integrity objective (SIO) for the area. Map 4 in appendix A displays the SIOs for the Prescott NF. An area with a very high or high SIO has highly-valued scenic qualities and its integrity should be maintained. Within areas of high or medium SIOs, guidelines help retain scenic qualities. Plan direction for meeting SIOs can be found in the desired conditions in chapter 2, and the standards and guidelines in chapter 4. The five scenic integrity objective categories are described below:

- **Very High** – A scenic integrity level that generally provides for ecological change only. The landscape character is intact. Examples would include all designated wilderness areas.
- **High** – A scenic integrity level meaning human activities are not visually evident; the landscape character appears intact. In high scenic integrity areas, activities may only repeat attributes of form, line, color, and texture found in the existing landscape character. Examples would include the Black Hills area west of the Verde Valley and areas southeast of Granite Mountain Wilderness.
- **Moderate** – A scenic integrity level meaning human activities must remain visually subordinate to the attributes of the existing landscape character. Activities may repeat form, line, color, or texture common to these landscape characters, but changes in quality of size, number, intensity, direction, pattern, and so on, must remain visually subordinate to these landscape characters. Examples include areas immediately west and south of Prescott along the forest boundary.
- **Low** – A scenic integrity level meaning human activities begin to dominate the attributes of the existing landscape character, but they borrow from naturally established form, line, color, or texture so that its visual characteristics are those of natural occurrences within the surrounding area. Examples include areas on the eastern end of the Santa Maria Mountains along the forest boundary.
- **Very Low** – A scenic integrity level meaning human activities of vegetative and landform alterations may dominate the original, natural landscape character but should appear as natural occurrences when viewed at background distances. Examples include certain areas disturbed by flagstone quarries northeast of Drake.