

Watershed/Ecosystem Health

Helena and Lewis & Clark National Forests, Forest Plan Revision

Overview

This broad topic includes watershed, water quality, riparian areas and wetlands, soils, fisheries and other aquatic organisms, air quality, and mineral resources. These individual elements are all inter-related and function together as part of the overall ecosystem. The understanding and effective management of these resources is the basis for successful forest management.

What's Changed Since 1986?

- Climate-induced changes
- Better data and data analysis tools, including GIS
- Increased emphasis on native species as well as aquatic invasive species
- Greater numbers of recreationists and other forest users

What Needs to Change in the Forest Plan?

- The best available science and policy should be incorporated into plan components.
- The differences between the two existing plans need to be resolved.
- Forest plan components for watershed and ecosystem health, including soil functioning, should be considered at the watershed or planning level as well as project level.
- Update guidance and direction for:
 - Groundwater and riparian area management
 - Non-native fish
 - Aquatic invasive species
 - Analysis and monitoring
 - Soil quality standards and the use of soil function as an indicator
 - Soil and water impacts from past and
 - Municipal watersheds
 - Water quality impacts
 - Geology and mineral resources present mining activities management



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