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# DRAFT

## Preliminary Need to Change the Forest Plan

Manti-La Sal National Forest



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# Executive Summary

## Purpose

Under the 2012 planning rule, the responsible official shall review relevant information to identify a preliminary need to change the existing plan. This paper documents the preliminary need to change the 1986 Manti-La Sal National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. It helps define the proposed action for the environmental analysis related to the forest plan revision process, and serves as a bridge between the assessment and the revised forest plan. The preliminary need to change establishes the framework for development of plan components and other plan content.

## Findings

### *Preliminary Need to Change based on the Legal and Regulatory Environment*

There is a need to change the current forest plan to bring it into compliance with law, regulation, and policy. Some examples include:

There is a need to revise the forest plan at least every 15 years.	NFMA 16 USC 1604(i)
There is a need to identify lands not suited to timber production.	NFMA 16 USC 1604(k)
There is a need to inform the forest plan with the best available scientific information.	2012 Planning Rule at §219.3

### *Preliminary Need to Change based on Resource Management Themes*

There is a need to change the forest plan to address numerous resource management themes identified by monitoring; by trends described in the assessment; and by public, cooperating agency, and tribal comments. The Forest identified seven themes:

Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5	Theme 6	Theme 7
Recreation Management	Access & Transportation Infrastructure	Watershed Health	Forest Vegetation Management	Rangeland Health	Terrestrial & Aquatic Species Habitats	Energy & Minerals Management

### *Preliminary Need to Change based on Social and Environmental Conditions*

There is a need to change the forest plan to address social and environmental conditions that have the potential to affect the Forest Service. These are items that may not be under the agency's direct control, but may influence our ability to effectively carry out our mission. The Forest identified six conditions:

Areas of Tribal Importance	Maintain tribal partnerships to protect traditional properties and uses
Climate	Monitor effect of changing conditions on critical resources
Cultural & Historic Resources	Avoid destabilizing and destroying sites by surveying and monitoring
Invasive Species	Mitigate establishment and spread through treatment and monitoring
Wildfire	Protect human health and safety while managing natural fire
Wildlife	Provide conditions to maintain populations while managing for multiple uses

### *Topics the New Forest Plan Will Not Cover*

A revised forest plan provides updated management direction for the plan area, but it does not commit the Forest to any site specific action, does not change boundaries set by legislation or rulemaking, and does not affect valid existing rights.

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## Introduction

### *Background*

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 requires each National Forest to develop a Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP, also referred to as a forest plan) and amend or revise the plan at least every 15 years.<sup>1</sup> The Manti-La Sal National Forest (Forest) LRMP was approved in 1986, and forest personnel are in the early stages of revising it under the guidance of the 2012 planning rule (36 CFR 219). Revision of a forest plan is an iterative process that includes three phases:

1. Assessment (36 CFR 219.6).
2. Developing, amending, or revising a forest plan (§§ 219.7 and 219.13), which includes evaluating the effects of the proposed action and any alternatives under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
3. Monitoring (§ 219.12).

At this time, the Forest has completed a draft of the assessment (phase 1), which is available at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/mantilasal/landmanagement/planning>. The next phase—revision of the forest plan—begins with an identification of the need to change the current forest plan (§ 219.7(c)(2)(i)), after which the Forest will begin the NEPA process by initiating public scoping of the proposed action, which will be a revision of the forest plan.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this document is to describe the Forest’s preliminary need to change the current forest plan. This “need to change” is the transition between the assessment phase and the forest plan revision phase. The need to change is a process for identifying the strategic current plan direction that needs to be revised (added, modified, deleted) to address the conditions, trends, and risks evident from changing law and policy, as well as from the Forest’s on-going monitoring and from the assessment analysis. Thus, the preliminary need to revise the LRMP is driven by the changing conditions identified in the assessment, the changing values associated with public lands, and the requirements outlined in the 2012 planning rule and associated directives. Finally, it establishes the framework for the development of revised plan components and other plan content, including the monitoring program.

### *Document Structure*

This document will begin by describing the process for moving forward into the second phase of forest plan revision, including the development of the preliminary need to change, the opportunities for public involvement, and the adaptive nature of planning under the 2012 planning rule. The second part of this paper will discuss the information on which the Forest’s conclusions are based—relevant laws, assessment trends, monitoring, public comment, etc. The third section of the paper will describe the preliminary need to change analysis, addressing first the changes required by law, regulation, and policy; second, the resource management themes;

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<sup>1</sup>16 USC 1604(f)(5).

third, social and environmental conditions affecting the planning area; and, fourth, the management direction for which the Forest is not planning to change the current forest plan.

## Plan Revision Phase

### *Process*

The Forest's plan revision inter-disciplinary team (IDT) began to develop this document by considering the current legal regime, especially the 2012 planning rule, and determined that elements of the current LRMP should be updated. The team also considered the contents of the draft assessment, past plan revision efforts, and annual monitoring reports, using them to identify resource management themes, as well as environmental and social conditions impacting the Forest. Additionally, public input collected during the 2016 public meetings and information provided by tribes and cooperating agencies have been used to help inform the process. These sources have provided valuable information about changes that are needed to the existing forest plan. As a result, the Forest has compiled broad preliminary need to change statements that are expected to be addressed in the revised plan components.

### *Public Involvement*

According to the 2012 planning rule, when developing or revising a plan, the responsible official will invite public input on the preliminary need to change the plan (36 CFR 219.7(c)(2)(i)) so that:

- Public comments are used to improve the need to change the plan.
- The topics and concerns considered can be broadened or reduced as needed.
- The need to change the plan may support retaining existing plan direction as well as developing new plan components as appropriate.

This preliminary need to change document will be presented to tribes, cooperating agencies, forest users, and interested citizens for feedback and input. In June and July 2017, the Forest will hold a series of open meetings. The public will be presented with key findings from the assessment and the preliminary need to change statements, and asked to provide new or alternative solutions. Public input will help determine what parts of the current forest plan need to be changed, which will ultimately be summarized in the Federal Register, when the Forest publishes a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement to develop a revised forest plan later in 2017. This announcement will convey the Forest's intent to develop forest plan alternatives based on identified needs for change and analyze their respective effects on the environment.

### *Current Plan*

The current LRMP was approved in 1986. It has been in place for more than 30 years and has been amended 21 times. Along with 15 management areas and 30 pages of forest-wide management direction, such as standards and guidelines, the current forest plan contains more than 130 statements of intent. These statements were called "goals" and "desired conditions" in the original plan but, under the definitions provided by the 2012 rule, they are all best classified as desired conditions. For reference, those statements are provided here as Appendix A.

### *Revised Plan—What It Is*

A forest plan provides broad, program-level direction for management of National Forest System lands and resources. The purpose of a plan is to address the risks to sustainability of the resources, goods, and services the forest produces and to provide a vision for the future management of the forest. The forest plan: 1) is developed through an ongoing public process; 2) uses the best available scientific, local, and native knowledge to inform the planning process; 3) provides a framework for integrated resource management and for guiding project level decision making.

### *Revised Plan—What It Is Not*

The revised forest plan does not contain a commitment to implement any specific project. Future projects may be designed to carry out the direction provided by the plan, but neither the plan nor the planning process authorizes projects or activities, commits the Forest Service to take action, or regulates uses by the public (in other words, no site-specific decisions are expected to be made by the revised forest plan). Moreover, the forest plan does not repeat laws, regulations, or program management policies, practices, and procedures that can be found in the United States Code, the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), or the Forest Service Directive System. Finally, the forest plan revision does not overturn “valid existing rights,” nor make any changes to permits, contracts, or instruments associated with the revised plan.<sup>2</sup>

### *Adaptive Planning*

Using the assessment information, public concerns identified through public meetings, and the requirements for a land management plan as specified in the 2012 planning rule and its associated directives, the Forest will continue to update the need to change the current forest plan. Not all changes must be addressed now. Using the adaptive approach envisioned by the 2012 planning rule, other changes can be accomplished as needed. All management direction will be examined and modified as necessary to ensure its compliance with the requirements of the planning rule.

## Sources of Information Used to Develop the Analysis

### *Law, Regulation, and Policy*

In addition to the intent of the NFMA that forest plans be revised every 15 years, and the updated language of the 2012 planning regulations, Congress has passed numerous other environmental laws since 1986. Moreover, multiple executive orders, rules, and policies have been implemented or changed in the past three decades. The revised forest plan language needs to reflect these new obligations. Examples of existing or updated legal requirements include:

#### Legislation

National Forest Management Act of 1976: Under the NFMA, forest plans should be revised at least every 15 years. In addition, the law requires the forest plan to “identify lands within the management area which are not suited for timber production,” and to review such determinations at least every 10 years.

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<sup>2</sup>16 USC 1604(i).

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990; the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended in 1992: Sets standards for the protection of cultural and heritage resources.

Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act: Updated coal management planning for federal lands.

Energy Policy Act of 2005: New procedures for processing of oil and gas lease applications on federal lands.

Endangered Species Act: Listed species change over time. Some species included in the original LRMP have since been “de-listed,” while new species have been added.

Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003: Additional tools for protecting watersheds and addressing threats to forest and rangeland health.

## 2012 Planning Rule

New Information and Science: The 2012 planning rule requires that revised forest plans be consistent with the best available scientific information and the most current understanding of ecosystem process and function (36 CFR 219.3).

Public Participation: The 2012 rule recognizes the importance of public participation, government to government consultation with Indian tribes, and coordination with other agencies and state and local governments (36 CFR 219.4).

Wilderness Evaluation: While this requirement is not new to the 2012 rule, the Forest is tasked with evaluating lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (36 CFR 219.7(c)(2)).

Wild and Scenic Rivers: Like wilderness, the planning rule requires the forest to identify rivers that are eligible for inclusion in the national Wild and Scenic Rivers System (36 CFR 219.7(c)(2)).

Species of Conservation Concern: The planning rule requires the Regional Forester and the Forest Supervisor to identify species of conservation concern for the Forest ((36 CFR 219.7(c)(3)).

Required Plan Components: Under the 2012 planning rule, there are specific content requirements for forest plans. These “plan components” are the key elements of the plan, and all projects and activities should be consistent with them. Required plan components include desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, suitability of lands, and where these plan components apply on the Forest (36 CFR 219.7(e)(1)).

- A desired condition is a description of specific social, economic, and/or ecological characteristics of the plan area, or a portion of the plan area, toward which management of the land and resources should be directed.
- An objective is a concise, measurable, and time-specific statement of a desired rate of progress toward a desired condition or conditions.

- A standard is a mandatory constraint on project and activity decision-making, established to help achieve or maintain the desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements.
- A guideline is a constraint on project and activity decision-making that allows for departure from its terms, so long as the purpose of the guideline is met.
- Specific lands within a plan area will be identified as suitable for various multiple uses or activities based on the desired conditions applicable to those lands.

Priority Watersheds: The 2012 planning rule requires every revised plan to identify watersheds that are a priority for maintenance or restoration (36 CFR 219.7(f)(1)(i)).

Ecological Sustainability: The 2012 planning rule emphasizes the need to restore National Forest System lands and waters, including requirements to maintain and restore ecological integrity (36 CFR 219.8).

Social and Economic Sustainability and Multiple Uses: The 2012 planning rule emphasizes the need to guide the Forest's contribution to social and economic sustainability to provide people and communities with a range of social, cultural, and economic benefits for present and future generations (36 CFR 219.8).

Monitoring: The 2012 planning rule requires a sustainable and adaptive plan monitoring program. The program identifies a set of monitoring questions to evaluate whether plan components are effective and appropriate and whether management is effective in maintaining or achieving progress towards desired conditions and objectives (36 CFR 219.12).

## Other Management Direction

Tribal Relations and Cultural Resources: Executive Order 13007: Indian Sacred Sites (1996); Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (2000).

Wildland Fire Management: Fire Management Guidelines for Wilderness, Forest Service Manual 2324; Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy for USDA and USDI, 2009.

Coal Management: Land use planning updates can be found at 43 CFR 3420.1-4.

Travel Management: Updated rules for designating routes and areas for motor vehicle use were promulgated in 2005. The rules can be found at 36 CFR 212.

## Monitoring Data

The current forest plan, in effect since 1986, contains a monitoring program with over 60 monitoring activities. The monitoring program is designed to provide forest managers with information primarily on the effects of forest plan implementation. Monitored items include, among other things, recreation use, infrastructure, soil and water, and rangeland condition. The Forest has periodically assembled and reported on monitoring results. A trio of examples—highlighting some of the key resource management themes from over the decades—is provided:

- “The rapidly growing population of the nearby Wasatch Front and the increasing popularity of outdoor recreation have resulted in dramatic increases in the use of both dispersed and developed sites. Compounded by Utah family and group sizes that are

generally much larger than average, site occupancies often exceed design capacity, particularly in campgrounds and picnic areas.”

- “67% of Forest roads are at a maintenance level below the objective level for safety, road investment protection, and/or adjacent resource protection. The current level of funding has not allowed for custodial maintenance or surface replacement and sign maintenance to keep up with annual needs.”
- “Each mining company that operates on the National Forest is required by stipulations in the lease and mine plans to monitor the hydrologic conditions including the chemical and physical characteristics of the surface water. There are 12 mines with portals on the National Forest and 4 more with portals off of the Forest that mine under the Forest. Each of these operations conducts monitoring. About 160 stations are monitored in this fashion. About 1600 locations have been sampled as a part of the pre-mining investigations. The mining companies prepare annual reports as a requirement of their leases and generally report that the samples are within the state standards. High phosphates have been detected but are believed to be the result of natural processes.”

### 2017 DRAFT Assessment

Under the 2012 planning rule, the assessment provides the responsible official the opportunity to identify and evaluate existing information applicable to 15 topics. The Forest used these 15 topics to address relevant natural resources using the appropriate scale and indicators (Table 1). After documenting this information in an assessment report, the responsible official may use it to describe the need to change the current forest plan. In the case of the Manti-La Sal National Forest, the assessment report included an analysis of “trends”—the change of conditions over time. A number of these trends provide support for the importance of the resource management themes and social and environmental conditions. The entire assessment is available for review on the Forest’s plan revision web site.

**Table 1. Scales and Indicators by Resource Area (from 2017 Draft Assessment Report).**

Resource	Scales	Indicators
Air	Air Sheds	Air quality; Wilderness air quality
Carbon Stocks	LTAs	Carbon sequestration; carbon storage; benefits obtained by ecosystems
Cultural/Heritage	Watersheds (HUC 5); LTAs; Cultural/Social Scale	Number and condition of sites and eligible sites; types and general locations of tribal activities on the Forest
Engineering	Administrative Forest Boundary	Inventory; maintenance; condition; and expected needs of facilities and roads
Fuels	LTAs; vegetation types; Strategic Community Wildfire Protection Zones	Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC); fuel loading; fire intensity
Hydrology/Water	Watersheds (HUC 5)	Water quality and quantity; watershed function; recharge and discharge points; aquifer water quality
Lands	Administrative Boundaries	Proposals for land exchanges; lands special use permits
Minerals/Geology	LTAs	Landslides/geologic hazards; contribution to economic sustainability
Range/Grazing	LTAs; Geophysical Areas	Ground cover percentage; vegetation species composition and diversity

Resource	Scales	Indicators
Recreation/ Scenery	LTAs; Recreation Zones; County Boundaries; State Boundaries	Consistency with Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes, Consistency with Visual Resource Management (VRM) and Scenery Management System (SMS) objectives
Social/Economic	County Boundaries; State Boundaries	Demographics; economic characteristics; Forest contributions to social/economic sustainability; services provided by the Forest; Forest influence on communities
Soils	LTAs	Soil integrity; erosion/sedimentation and productivity/organic matter; vegetation suitability
Timber/ Silviculture	LTAs; vegetation types	Ecosystem characteristics (composition, structure, function, connectivity); ecosystem integrity/resilience
Vegetation	LTAs; vegetation types	Ground cover percentages; Resource Value Rating (RVR); presence of invasive species; riparian ecosystems; groundwater dependent vegetation; timing and volume of base flows; bank stability; species richness/diversity
Wilderness/ Special Designations	Forest boundary (i.e. wilderness boundary; RNA boundary)	Wilderness Stewardship Performance Elements; consistency with RNA management goals
Wildlife/Aquatics	LTAs; vegetation types; watersheds (HUC 5)	Habitat quality and fragmentation; ecosystem integrity and characteristics (composition, structure, function, connectivity); wildlife populations; water temperature, quality, and quantity; bank stability; sedimentation; timing of distribution; watershed function; essential fish habitat; species richness/diversity

## Public Comment

### 2016 Meetings and Workshops

During 2016, the Forest hosted 16 public meetings and workshops throughout southeast and central Utah which were designed both to provide information about the forest plan revision and to invite public participation. In response to those opportunities, members of the public offered hundreds of comments regarding their views on the management of the national forest. Based on the IDT's analysis of these views, a relatively small number of broad topics generated the largest numbers of comments. From the July/August survey data, the top areas of public interest were access, wildlife, recreation, grazing, biodiversity, fire, timber, and water, in roughly that order. In September, the categories of recreation and access, wildlife, and grazing received the greatest number of comments. At the November workshops, the highest proportion of comments focused on watersheds, recreation, access, rangelands, timber, wildlife, wilderness, and mining, in that order.

### 2016 Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating Agencies are government entities that have either legal authority or special expertise in land management planning or related resource areas. In fulfilling its requirement to coordinate

land management plans with local, state, tribal, and federal plans, the Forest has signed 21 Cooperating Agency Agreements with partners to participate in the forest planning process. In addition to these agreements, the Forest has hosted face to face meetings with Cooperating Agencies to share information and work together on resource management issues. During those meetings, cooperators identified, among other things, the need for forest planning to address ongoing impacts from past wildfires, the effect of wilderness designation on efforts to contain bark beetle outbreaks, the benefits to local economies of multiple uses on the National Forest, and the need to protect sites of historic significance to local communities.

### **2017 Workshop on American Indian Law and Policy**

In April 2017, the Forest held a two-day workshop in Price, Utah to explore many of the concepts associated with the federal-tribal trust relationship. Participants, including tribal officials, discussed concepts such as Indian land rights, Indian sacred sites, and tribal sovereignty. Several tribal leaders emphasized the need for continued cooperation between the Forest and the tribes regarding the identification and protection of cultural resource sites, and other areas important to the tribes.

### ***2007 Draft Forest Plan Revision—Analysis of the Management Situation***

In the early 2000s, the Forest embarked on a revision of the current forest plan (1986) under the provisions of a different planning rule in place at that time. By 2007, the Forest had completed the draft of a revised forest plan and was in the process of finalizing it. At the same time, the planning rule was under litigation in California and, by 2007, had been enjoined by the federal courts. As a result, the work on the 2007 draft forest plan was suspended. While that document was never completed and does not currently provide approved management direction, it was developed with significant input from the public. Under the present forest plan revision process, the IDT has consulted the older material—specifically some of the key management themes that emerged from the analysis of the management situation—and has concluded that it continues to provide insight into the preliminary need to change the forest plan today. At that time, the Forest, working with the public, identified four key topics—Recreation Management, Watershed Health, Minerals Management, Fire and Fuels Management. For the complete text of this ten year old document, please see Appendix B.

## **Preliminary Need to Change Analysis**

The Forest IDT began to identify the preliminary need to change the forest plan by dividing potential needs into four categories. The first—law, regulation, and policy—are the changes required by legislation or by the CFR. We consider these needs to be, essentially, non-discretionary at the level of the individual national forest. The second category—resource management themes—are the changes needed to meet the Forest Service mission to provide grazing, forest products, recreation, watershed protection, and wildlife habitat for the benefit of the public. The third category—social and environmental conditions—are the changes needed to address conditions that, while not specifically associated with the mission of the Forest Service, have an effect on our ability to fulfill our mission. While many of these themes and conditions are addressed in the current forest plan, changes in the environment and the uses of the national forest may indicate a need for updates to management direction. The fourth category—topics the new forest plan will not cover—are the things that we do not plan to address through this forest plan revision process. This does not mean that we consider them to be unimportant but only that

we believe they are adequately covered by current direction or are best addressed at a different level or through a different process. Each of these categories is examined in turn.

***Need to Change the Forest Plan—Law, Regulation, and Policy***

Under the NFMA, forest plans should be revised at least every 15 years. In addition, the law requires the forest plan to “identify lands within the management area which are not suited for timber production,” and to review such determinations at least every 10 years.<sup>3</sup> Based on these statutory requirements alone, it is time for the Forest to update its forest plan. In addition, much of the change associated with the revision of the current LRMP results from the requirements of the 2012 planning rule. The Forest Service has learned much about forest management and forest planning in the past three decades, and has used this knowledge to update its regulations. Thus, revised plans will focus on outcomes rather than outputs; will integrate resource management; and will contribute to ecological, economic, and social sustainability. An “all lands” approach places forest management in the context of the broader landscape. The distinctive roles and contributions of the Forest will be identified, as will proposed and possible actions during the life of the revised forest plan. Finally, multiple laws, executive orders, and policies have been implemented or changed since 1986. The revised forest plan language will need to reflect these new requirements. The revised plan can remove components redundant with existing policy, direction, and programmatic planning documents and incorporate this direction by specific reference only, making the revised plan more adaptable to changing laws and policies.

In sum, the Forest has identified a preliminary need to change the current forest plan to ensure compliance with legal requirements. While the following list is not comprehensive, it provides a summary of the legal and regulatory drivers of the Forest’s need to change the plan (Table 2).

**Table 2. Preliminary Need to Change the Forest Plan based on Law, Regulation, and Policy.**

Need to Change	Based On:
There is a need to revise the forest plan at least every 15 years.	NFMA 16 USC 1604(i)
There is a need to identify lands not suited to timber production.	NFMA 16 USC 1604(k)
There is a need for government to government consultation on agency actions that have tribal implications.	Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance 25 USC 450; Executive Order 13175; Planning Rule at §219.4(a)(2)
There is a need for coordination of plans with Indian tribes, other federal agencies, and state and local governments.	Land Use Plans 43 USC 1712; Planning Rule at §219.4(b)
There is a need to identify areas that are acceptable for consideration for coal leasing.	Federal Land Policy and Management Act 43 U.S.C. 1701; 43 CFR 3420.1-4
There is a need to inform the forest plan with the best available scientific information.	Planning Rule at §219.3
There is a need to conduct a wilderness evaluation.	Planning Rule at §219.7(c)(2)
There is a need to identify suitable wild and scenic rivers.	Planning Rule at §219.7(c)(2)
There is a need to identify species of conservation concern.	Planning Rule at §219.7(c)(3)
There is a need to update the current plan with required plan components.	Planning Rule at §219.7(e)(1)
There is a need to identify watersheds that are a priority for maintenance or restoration.	Planning Rule at §219.7(f)(1)(i)

<sup>3</sup>16 USC 1604(k).

Need to Change	Based On:
There is a need to update the current plan with the required eight part monitoring program.	Planning Rule at §219.12

***Need to Change the Plan—Resource Management Themes***

In addition to the need to change the forest plan due to developing trends in the legal and regulatory environment, the Forest has also identified a number of trends related to the management of natural resources. These resource management “themes” are broad concepts relating to public preferences and forest management needs and will be areas of focus for the team while revising the forest plan (Table 3). The importance of these themes is supported by information gathered through several decades of monitoring, through review of the public comments received to date, by the content of the draft assessment report, and from the previous (2007) efforts to revise the forest plan. Each of these management themes is described in turn.

**Table 3. Resource Management Themes.**

Number	Theme	Based On:
Theme 1	Recreation Management	Monitoring Reports; 2017 DRAFT Assessment; 2016 Public Comment; 2007 DRAFT Plan Revision
Theme 2	Access and Transportation Infrastructure	Monitoring Reports; 2017 DRAFT Assessment; 2016 Public Comment
Theme 3	Watershed Health	Monitoring Reports; 2017 DRAFT Assessment; 2016 Public Comment; 2007 DRAFT Plan Revision
Theme 4	Forest Vegetation Management	2017 DRAFT Assessment; 2016 Public Comment; 2007 DRAFT Plan Revision
Theme 5	Rangeland Health	2017 DRAFT Assessment; 2016 Public Comment
Theme 6	Terrestrial and Aquatic Species Habitats	2017 DRAFT Assessment; 2016 Public Comment
Theme 7	Energy and Minerals Management	Monitoring Reports; 2007 DRAFT Plan Revision

It is also worth noting that, while the Forest considers these themes to be important, the list does not include every resource topic that will be addressed by the revised forest plan. The purpose in identifying these themes is to concentrate IDT resources on topics of high importance related to our agency’s mission. As the Forest moves forward with a proposed action under NEPA, these themes will help to focus the team. Finally, the Forest considers each of these themes to be of equal importance—thus, the order of presentation is not significant.

**Theme 1: Recreation Management**

Advances in technology since 1986 have changed the outdoor recreation scene across the Forest. The use and availability of OHVs and over-snow vehicles, coupled with the power and advanced technology for each has provided visitors with greater ability to go places within the plan area that had previously been more difficult to access with motorized vehicles. Many trailers and RVs are now much longer and, with slide outs, much wider than were originally conceived of and planned for. Other innovations include side-by-sides, snow kites, e-mountain bikes, fat-tire bikes designed for use in the snow, and ski and track conversions for motorcycle and ATV snow travel. Each of these new and improved uses can have unanticipated impacts and are often difficult for managers to address.

Moreover, campground reservation data, trail and road use numbers, and the number of commercial recreation permits across the Forest demonstrate a significant upward trend in recreation uses. These recreation demands are being driven by rapid population growth in the vicinity of the Forest. This finding is supported by a recent assessment of the agency's National Visitor Use Monitoring data, which shows that there are now more than one million people living within 50 miles of the Forest—a 30% increase since 2000 (English and others 2015). If public lands are to meet increased demand for recreational opportunities without experiencing unacceptable impacts to resources, emphasis must be placed on effective management solutions.

**Preliminary Need to Change:**

There is a need for plan direction to guide the management of new and emerging technologies that may affect recreation opportunities and build enough flexibility in the forest plan that new technologies can be addressed.

There is a need to be responsive to changing trends in regard to services, activities and types of facilities desired by the public, but balance those with fiscal reality and impacts to natural resources. The trends in demographics such as the expectation for an older and more ethnically diverse population, the need to promote outdoor physical activities, especially among youth, and the desire to support local cultures and economies should all be considered in establishing a path forward for recreation management.

**Theme 2: Access and Transportation Infrastructure**

Road and trail maintenance funding has been decreasing on the Forest for the past 15 years. At the same time, local populations have grown and demands for access to the forest have increased. Moreover, forest users are expecting more diverse and specific opportunities: Trail users expect specific types of trails such as single track mountain bike trails designed specifically for mountain biking; UTV and OHV riders expect trails wide enough for their specific type of vehicle. In addition, as the American public ages, but at the same time remains active, there is more interest and need to provide adequate accommodations for many forms of motorized and non-motorized access. Over time, as routine maintenance is reduced, maintenance cycles are extended, and selective repairs are made, roads and trails may develop severe public safety or resource damage issues, and may need to be evaluated for closure.

**Preliminary Need to Change:**

There is a need for new approaches for managing infrastructure—roads and trails—given the reality of limited maintenance funds combined with the public's desire for access to the forest. This may include considering expanding partnerships for road and trail maintenance, establishing priorities for maintenance to minimize or mitigate resource damage, and promoting public safety. This could involve reducing service levels on low-use roads, or decommissioning them, while maintaining access for non-motorized uses.

**Theme 3: Watershed Health**

Currently, watershed condition for 102 of 120 sixth-level watersheds on the Forest is rated as “Class 1”—exhibiting high geomorphic, hydrologic, and biotic integrity relative to their natural potential condition. The remaining 18 rated watersheds are in “Class 2”—exhibiting moderate geomorphic, hydrologic, and biotic integrity relative to their natural potential condition. Nevertheless, given the importance of watershed health—including water quality, wetland condition, and riparian habitats—to the Forest and to the public, there remains a continuous need for good management. Changes in watershed connectivity and stream flow have occurred from

past land use activities. This not only affects soil conditions, but also can affect the quantity, permanence, function and quality of water flow and water uses.

**Preliminary Need to Change:**

There is a need to base plan components for water, soil and aquatic ecosystems on specific watershed objectives. There is a need for the plan to be flexible under changing conditions, especially for impacts resulting from climate, wildfire, and insect and disease outbreaks.

There is a need to develop standards and guidelines that improve watershed health by restoring vegetative cover and reducing erosion and sedimentation (e.g., reclaiming temporary roads to their natural vegetative condition).

**Theme 4: Forest Vegetation Management**

Spruce-fir communities, with Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, and scattered clumps of aspen, are found on about 55,000 acres of the Forest, mostly at the high elevations of the Wasatch Plateau. During the late 1990s, the Plateau was the scene of a widespread spruce beetle epidemic, which killed much of the spruce. By 2010, most of the damage from the beetle was over, yet these forests may be dominated by subalpine fir for many decades due to the significant reduction in spruce seed sources. Aspen clones, ranging in age from 60 to 150 years, are valued for their beauty, habitat diversity, importance to wildlife, and hydrologic benefits. On the other hand, conifer encroachment, fire suppression, grazing, and drought are affecting aspen stands throughout central and southern Utah. These trends, along with aspen die-back associated with a changing climate, may continue to affect this important forest type. Mixed conifer communities—primarily composed of Douglas-fir, white fir, blue spruce, and limber pine—grow on the Forest’s drier sites. More than 50 percent of the mixed conifer acres are considered to be overly dense, and have high fuel loads. Over the past several decades, the health of these stands has been significantly impacted by epidemics of both western spruce budworm and Douglas fir beetle. Ponderosa pine stands in the southeastern part of the Forest naturally have a frequent fire regime that has been impacted by fire suppression, timber management, and grazing.

**Preliminary Need to Change:**

There is a need for the revised plan to provide direction for achieving sustainability, resiliency, and for minimizing risks to vegetation and its composition and structure (including snags and downed woody material). This includes restoring natural disturbance cycles (e.g. fire and insects) where appropriate.

There is a need to develop desired conditions regarding vegetation structure, composition, and function, as well as objectives, standards, guidelines and management approaches that will promote ecological restoration, support resilience and sustainability, and minimize risks to ecosystem integrity.

**Theme 5: Rangeland Health**

Rangelands are lands producing, or capable of producing, native forage for grazing and browsing animals, and lands that have been revegetated naturally or artificially to provide a forage cover that is managed like native vegetation. Activities related to livestock grazing can impact rangeland plant species through habitat disturbance and modification, associated with grazing or trampling. Before establishment of the Forest in the early 1900s, livestock grazing was not managed with a focus on ecosystem health, causing negative impacts to rangelands. In the years since, the ecological integrity and diversity of vegetation species has since rebounded through

years of proper management of the intensity, duration and timing of grazing. There are, however, ongoing concerns associated with range management when forage resources are affected by drought or fire; the impact of noxious weeds and other invasive plant species on rangeland health; and the maintenance of social and economic settings in communities within the planning area.

**Preliminary Need to Change:**

There is a need for plan components to allow flexibility in rangeland management to react to changing conditions such as drought and fire, and social and economic needs.

There is a need for standards and guidelines that emphasize the restoration and conservation of native grass and forb species in ecological types consistent with the respective desired conditions. In some areas, native grasses have been replaced with invasive species which are not as effective in the prevention of erosion or as productive for forage.

**Theme 6: Terrestrial and Aquatic Species Habitat**

While the state of Utah is responsible for the management of fish and wildlife populations, the Forest contains a diversity of important habitats for many fish and wildlife species. In some cases, habitat quality has been modified as a result of road construction, timber harvest, wildfire, recreation, and livestock grazing. The key to maintaining quality wildlife habitat is large blocks of diverse, healthy vegetation communities, as well as high water quality and good stream channel and riparian conditions. In addition, the Forest manages habitat for a number of federally listed plant and animal species, as well as regional species of conservation concern.

**Preliminary Need to Change:**

There is a need to incorporate multi-species and/or habitat-based plan components that are consistent with current science; for example, hiding cover and habitat security. There is a need to provide plan direction that allows for managing toward diverse terrestrial, riparian and aquatic habitat and population connectivity for species movement across the landscape. There is a need to allow for flexibility in wildlife habitat management components to consider natural disturbances, climate change, and changing management issues both on and off Forest lands.

Plan components are needed to provide for habitat for species of conservation concern, including species-specific plan components to provide for sustainable ecological conditions in the plan area. If it is beyond the authority of the Forest Service or not within the inherent capability of the plan area to maintain or restore ecological conditions, the basis for that determination should be documented.

**Theme 7: Energy and Minerals Management**

Economically recoverable deposits of coal, oil, and gas are known to be present on the Forest. Coal is slowly being depleted but several decades of the resource could possibly be recovered in the future. There is also high potential for the development of new oil and gas resources. Exploration and production of oil and natural gas resources are partly dependent on whether new reservoir discoveries within the Forest are lithologically and structurally able to supply an increased demand. Gypsum is present and is being actively mined. There is a high potential for future development of uranium and vanadium, though mining is currently on hold. Potash is present in the Paradox Basin, mainly in the form of sylvite. There is a high potential for occurrence and development of potash deposits on the south side of the La Sal Mountains within the Forest boundary. Finally, there are many sources of salable minerals on the Forest, with high occurrence and development potential.

**Preliminary Need to Change:**

Minerals and energy management guidance is needed for locatable minerals (hardrock and placer), leasable minerals (conventional oils and gas, and coalbed methane), mineral material resources, and related transmission corridors.

There is a need to review coal leasing unsuitability criteria and determine if any additional lands are unsuitable for leasing or if any previously identified suitable areas are now unsuitable. In addition, there is a need to incorporate estimates of remaining recoverable coal reserves; review and clarify/update coal stipulations; and identify areas for withdrawal as appropriate

There is a need for desired conditions that address potential future proposals for transmission corridors and renewable energy generation, including wind, solar, biomass, and geothermal, while protecting natural resources, heritage and sacred sites, traditional tribal activities, and scenery.

***Need to Change the Plan—Social and Environmental Conditions***

Along with the management themes, the Forest recognizes that numerous developing social and environmental conditions have the potential to affect our organization. These are items that may not be under the agency’s direct administrative authority, but may influence our ability to effectively carry out our mission. Some good examples include the list of stressors and drivers found in chapter two of the assessment report. For the purposes of this document, the IDT has identified six of these social and environmental conditions for which there is a preliminary need to change the current forest plan (Table 4). Each of these is discussed in turn.

**Table 4. Social and Environmental Conditions.**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Management Implications</b>
Areas of Tribal Importance	Maintain tribal partnerships to protect traditional properties and uses
Climate	Monitor effect of changing conditions on critical resources
Cultural & Historic Resources	Avoid destabilizing and destroying sites by surveying and monitoring
Invasive Species	Mitigate establishment and spread through treatment and monitoring
Wildfire	Protect human health and safety while managing natural fire
Wildlife	Provide conditions to maintain populations while managing for multiple uses

**Areas of Tribal Importance**

The Forest contains some of the most important ancient American Indian cultural properties in the region. These include individual sites as well as landscapes made up of sites, land forms and natural resources that form the world of ancient as well as modern Indian people. These places have importance both to tribal history and identity as well as to the ritual, social, and economic life of individual tribal members.

**Preliminary Need to Change:**

There is a need for management approaches that integrate forest restoration and tribal needs, for working across boundaries in partnership with tribes to manage landscapes, and to address threats to tribal resources to meet common objectives.

## Climate

While the Forest Service does not manage the climate, there is growing consensus that management decisions need to consider how actions either enhance or detract from a forest's potential to adapt to a changing climate. Planning needs to embrace managing forests for adaptation to new conditions by promoting resistance to change, resilience in the face of change, and response options that facilitate the transition of forests to new and more resilient conditions.

### **Preliminary Need to Change:**

There is a need to consider how management guidance, emphases, and monitoring dovetail with various aspects of the climate, including the effects on types and frequency of wildfire and management methods to adapt to climate dynamics. There is a need to consider climate impacts, mitigation, and adaptation by resource area.

## Cultural and Historic Resources

Trend data indicate that the condition of cultural and historic resources continue to be threatened. Chief among these threats is a significant increase in the number of Forest visitors, which is associated with an uptick in looting, vandalism, and wear and tear on sensitive sites. In addition, the impacts of climate change, including drought and higher temperatures, has increased the threat of uncharacteristic wildfire near sites, a trend that is likely to worsen over the next thirty years.

### **Preliminary Need to Change:**

There is a need for updating plan direction to stabilize, preserve, interpret, and protect historic and sensitive properties (e.g., archaeological sites, historic structures, and traditional cultural properties).

## Invasive Species

Native grasses and forbs on portions of the landscape have been replaced with invasive plant species which are not as effective in the prevention of erosion or as productive for forage. Given the growth of non-native invasive plant populations, climate predictions, and the high costs of control, invasive species will increasingly threaten the composition and function of our terrestrial and aquatic ecological systems. Plan components are needed to address minimum acceptable levels for invasive species infestation, emphasizing prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of high priority ecosystems for at-risk species.

### **Preliminary Need to Change:**

There is a need for plan standards and guidelines to address the presence of invasive species by encouraging the removal of existing undesirable populations, limiting the introduction and spread of new populations while promoting the characteristic composition and condition of native species.

## Wildfire

Increasing temperatures, longer fire seasons, the growth of communities into wildlands, and the buildup of flammable vegetation have made managing fire riskier and more complex. Moreover, the Forest Service does not manage all wildfires in the same way. Responses can range from monitoring a fire that is beneficial to aggressively suppressing a fire that threatens people or resources.

**Preliminary Need to Change:**

There is a need to update current plan direction to allow for an integrated resource approach to increase flexibility for restoration and maintenance of fire as an ecological process in fire adapted ecosystems while developing fire adapted communities to provide for safe and effective wildfire response for firefighters and public, especially in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

**Wildlife**

It is part of the Forest Service mission to manage habitat for the persistence of native wildlife species. Indeed, habitat conservation is consistently identified by the public as an extremely high management priority for forest lands—a fact highlighted in our themes section, above. Beyond habitats, however, the agency is required to ensure that all of its management activities are designed to avoid or minimize adverse impacts to wildlife individuals and populations. For that reason, the IDT identified the presence of wildlife species as a condition that may have a strong influence over management activities on the Forest.

**Preliminary Need to Change:**

There is a need to update plan components to provide for conservation and recovery of federally listed species, as well as to maintain viable populations of species of conservation concern.

There is a need for standards and guidelines that incorporate the best available scientific information and contribute to the recovery and conservation of federally recognized species, maintaining viable populations of the species of conservation concern, and sustain the diversity of plant and animal communities, including common and game species within the plan area.

*Topics the New Forest Plan Will Not Cover*

Some things will not be addressed during forest plan revision or in the revised plan. While a forest plan can set management direction, it cannot change the boundaries or purposes of areas designated by Congress or areas subject to rule making. In addition, a forest plan sets broad direction; it does not authorize site-specific projects or commit the agency to take action.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the forest plan revision does not affect treaty rights or valid existing rights established by statute or legal instruments.<sup>5</sup> Examples of topics that will not change in the revised forest plan include:

**Energy and Mineral Resources**

The Forest is evaluating the acceptability and suitability of lands for coal leasing during the plan revision process (per 43 CFR 3420). In addition, the revised forest plan may include plan components associated with oil and gas development. The plan revision process does not, however, include any site-specific authorizations for new energy leases.

**Travel Management**

A forest plan does not make site-specific travel planning designations such as selection of roads, trails and areas where motorized or mechanized vehicle travel will be allowed, restricted, or prohibited. Transportation decisions are made on a site and project-specific basis and require their own sets of environmental analyses. The revised forest plan may, however, provide

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<sup>4</sup> 36 CFR 219.2(b)(2).

<sup>5</sup> 36 CFR 219.1(d).

guidance for such plans, which may influence access and travel management decisions. In sum, the revised forest plan may establish a context for future travel planning efforts.

### Permitted Livestock

Determining the number of livestock permitted to graze on the Forest is outside the scope of forest plan revision. The revised forest plan will set desired conditions for ecosystems, with which permitted activities will need to be consistent. Permits are, however, managed on a project-specific basis.

### Designated Wilderness

The current wilderness on the Forest—Dark Canyon—was established and defined by Congress and cannot be modified in a forest plan revision effort. Likewise, new wilderness designations will not be part of this forest plan revision. While an analysis is ongoing to determine whether any areas will be recommended as wilderness, the Forest Service has no power to act on those recommendations: Only Congress has the authority to make wilderness designations.

### Roadless Rule

The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule establishes prohibitions and permissions on road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvesting on 58.5 million acres of National Forest System lands. The Roadless Rule can only be modified through a subsequent rulemaking process by the Department of Agriculture or by legislation from Congress. As a result, the Forest Supervisor has no authority to adjust or delete roadless area boundaries on the Forest.

## Conclusion

In 2016, the Forest began the forest plan revision process by conducting an assessment. The assessment report is currently available for public review, and the forest is moving into the next phase of the process. According to the 2012 planning rule, the responsible official should consider updated legal requirements, ongoing monitoring data, results from the assessment, and other reliable information in order to determine the preliminary need to change the current forest plan. In the case of the Forest, this DRAFT document constitutes the approach to defining a preliminary need to change the forest plan. The document also is subject to public review and comment—input which will be used to revise and improve its conclusions—prior to the initiation of the NEPA process.

In general, the Forest IDT has shown that there is a need to change the current forest plan in order to meet the purposes of an evolving legal regime. Numerous statutes—not least the NFMA itself—and executive orders obligate the Forest to update provisions of its LRMP. Moreover, the 2012 planning rule—promulgated by the agency—contains many requirements not anticipated during the development of the original plan in 1986. In addition to this shifting legal environment, the IDT has found that there are several resource management themes that have been brought to the attention of forest managers in numerous forums over the past decades. The first of these—noted time and again—is the increasing demand for recreation, which is being driven by population growth and improving technology. A related issue is the need to maintain safe and efficient transportation infrastructure to ensure appropriate forest access. Other management themes involve watershed and rangeland health, forest vegetation, wildlife and aquatic species, and mineral and energy development. Finally, the Forest has shown that there are a number of social and environmental conditions that may influence our management activities in the future, and which, therefore, point to additional needs to change the forest plan.

## References Cited

English, D.B.K.; Froemke, P.; Hawkos, K.; 2015. Paths more traveled: Predicting future recreation pressures on America's national forests and grasslands—a Forests on the Edge report. FS-1034. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service. 36 p.

National Forest Management Act of 1976, 16 U.S.C. 1600 *et seq.*

National Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, *Planning*: 36 C.F.R. 219 (2012).

## Appendix A: Goals and Desired Conditions from the 1986 Forest Plan

The entire text of the current (1986) Manti-La Sal Forest Plan—including amendments—can be found at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/mantilasal/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5383364>

**Table 5. Current Manti-La Sal National Forest LRMP Goals and Desired Conditions.**

Desired Condition	Page Number	Resource
Manage selected historical and archeological sites for public use, while still protecting the values of the site.	III-2	Cultural, Historic
Locate and determine the significance of paleontological, historical, and archeological sites and, as appropriate, nominate sites to the National Register.	III-2	Cultural, Historic, Paleontological
Make select paleontological, historical and archeological sites available for study by agencies involved in research and education.	III-2	Cultural, Historic, Paleontological
Recognize the significance of recreation in proximity to population centers and national attractions.	III-2	Recreation
Offer a broad range of dispersed and developed recreation opportunities by providing appropriate recreation experience and setting levels.	III-2	Recreation
Provide the opportunity for developed recreation sites to be operated by public concessionaires.	III-2	Recreation
Provide more cost-effective service.	III-2	Recreation
Provide appropriate developed recreation capacity where demand exists and private sector cannot meet the demand.	III-2	Recreation
Generally place priority on restoration of existing facilities presently below standards.	III-2	Recreation
Maintain, enhance, and/or rehabilitate visual resources to the planned VQO.	III-2	Recreation
Design interpretive service programs where it will help resolve management problems, reduce management costs and obtain visitor feedback, increase public understanding of Forest Service management, enhance visitor use, and provide safe use of the Forest.	III-2	Recreation
Certain vegetative types are to be managed such that varying successional stages will be present to provide for a high level of vegetative diversity and productivity.	III-2	Vegetation
Aspen is to be managed, with commercial or noncommercial treatments, with the goal of maintaining 13 percent of the Forest in aspen type or increasing the aspen type toward the 19 percent it represented in 1915.	III-2	Vegetation
Protect from theft and/or vandalism cultural, historical, and paleontological resources.	III-3	Cultural, Historic, Paleontological
Maintain or improve fisheries habitat.	III-3	Fish, Habitat
Provide a stable supply of fuelwood opportunities.	III-3	Forest Products
Bring livestock obligation in line with rangeland carrying capacity.	III-3	Range
Invest in range improvements where they will provide the greatest benefit.	III-3	Range

<b>Desired Condition</b>	<b>Page Number</b>	<b>Resource</b>
Provide commercial timber sales of sufficient quantity and quality to maintain local timber industry and accomplish desired vegetation treatment goals.	III-3	Timber
Ensure that programmed reforestation is kept current.	III-3	Timber
Maintain a healthy Forest by applying appropriate silvicultural treatments.	III-3	Timber
Meet as much of the demand for wood fiber and Forest products as possible, consistent with multiple-use objectives.	III-3	Timber, Forest Products
Control noxious weeds and poisonous plants in cooperation with Forest users and State and local agencies.	III-3	Vegetation
Manage aspen stand for forage as well as wood fiber.	III-3	Vegetation, Forest Products
Maintain upward or stable trends in vegetation and soil condition.	III-3	Vegetation, Soils
Manage to protect the wilderness character.	III-3	Wilderness
Rehabilitate areas showing evidence of unacceptable physical and biological impacts of past use.	III-3	Wilderness
Increase visitor awareness and appreciation of wilderness values.	III-3	Wilderness
Maintain or improve habitat carrying capacity for elk or deer.	III-3	Wildlife
Cooperate with the State in keeping wildlife populations within the habitat capacity.	III-3	Wildlife
Protect, maintain, and/or improve habitat for threatened or endangered and sensitive plants and animals.	III-3	Wildlife, Fish, Plants
Provide habitat for viable populations of the existing vertebrate and invertebrate species found on the Forest.	III-3	Wildlife, Fish, Plants
Maintain or improve wildlife habitat diversity.	III-3	Wildlife, Habitat
Provide for the interpretation of surface and subsurface geologic conditions and processes such as landsliding.	III-4	Geology
Exchange lands and consolidate ownership when in the public interest.	III-4	Land Status
Acquire necessary rights-of-way to facilitate public access to National Forest System lands and to meet resource management objectives.	III-4	Land Status
Acquire scenic or partial easements whenever Federal ownership is not required to meet management objectives.	III-4	Land Status
Locate, identify, and mark National Forest property lines and protect land survey monuments.	III-4	Land Status
Provide appropriate opportunities for and manage activities related to locating, leasing, exploration, development, and production of mineral and energy resources.	III-4	Minerals
Ensure that adequate reclamation of disturbed areas is accomplished.	III-4	Minerals
Manage geologic resources, common variety minerals, ground water, and underground spaces (superficial deposits, bedrocks, structures, and processes) to meet resource needs and minimize adverse effects.	III-4	Minerals, Geology
Protect and enhance riparian areas including dependent resources.	III-4	Riparian
Protect soil and water productivity so that neither will be significantly or permanently impaired.	III-4	Soils, Water

Desired Condition	Page Number	Resource
Use timber management to meet other management or resource needs.	III-4	Timber
Provide wood products usage in the management of pinyon-juniper and oak stands.	III-4	Vegetation, Forest Products
Provide favorable conditions of water flow (quality, quantity, and timing).	III-4	Water
Protect National Forest System lands or resources from unacceptable damage caused by the development of water uses.	III-4	Water
Provide sufficient water for multiple-use management by securing favorable flows of water, which is interpreted to include those flows necessary to maintain stable and efficient stream channels as required by the Organic Act of 1897, and provide for fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, and livestock use as required by the Multiple Use Act of 1960.	III-4	Water
Maintain satisfactory watershed conditions.	III-4	Watershed
Improve deteriorated watershed conditions where feasible.	III-4	Watershed
Manage Forest activities so that air quality is compatible with Federal and State standards.	III-5	Air
Charge "use fees" for products and services to provide the highest return consistent with maintaining and encouraging existing local operations and attaining goals of the management units.	III-5	Economic
Within the Forest's capability, provide the opportunity for sustained economic growth of industries and communities dependent upon Forest outputs.	III-5	Economic
Minimize hazards from flood, wind, wildfire, and erosion.	III-5	Fire
Suppress wildfire based on values, risk, and management unit prescriptions.	III-5	Fire
Reduce the accumulated fuels to a tolerable risk level.	III-5	Fuel
Manage the transportation system to safely and economically transport people, products, and services to accomplish planned management unit programs and goals.	III-5	Infrastructure
Manage the transportation system for increased cost-effectiveness and efficiency.	III-5	Infrastructure
Provide for energy efficiency in structure and equipment management.	III-5	Infrastructure
Maintain facilities at a level that protects investments in the facility and adjacent resources.	III-5	Infrastructure
Manage to provide public (user) health and safety.	III-5	Infrastructure
Reduce total road miles while emphasizing improvement on remaining miles.	III-5	Infrastructure
Locate facilities so as to minimize travel while efficiently accomplishing long-range management unit programs and goals.	III-5	Infrastructure
Provide the opportunity for human resource programs that assist the disadvantaged with resource use and employment opportunities.	III-5	Social
Provide opportunities for public participation in the evaluation of proposed Forest activities.	III-5	Social
Provide work opportunities and training experiences to accomplish resource objectives and to assist communities.	III-5	Social

Desired Condition	Page Number	Resource
Consider special-use applications and permits on the basis of relative benefit to the public and individual need.	III-5	Special Uses
Promote an integrated pest management program to prevent and control insect and disease infestation.	III-5	Vegetation
Manage special interest areas to protect the unique archeological, ecological, geological, paleontological, historical, and other special characteristics for long-term public benefit.	III-6	Cultural, Paleontological, Geology
Preserve in as near as natural condition as possible areas or features of unique natural phenomenon.	III-6	General
The aspen vegetation type would be managed and maintained in a condition of high productivity. Silvicultural practices treating total clones would generally be utilized resulting in the aspen type appearing as even-aged stands, but with stands in all age classes throughout the Forest.	III-8	Vegetation
Approximately 25 percent of the spruce-fir type is suitable for intensive management through commercial timber and wood product sales. Harvesting utilizing shelterwood or modified shelterwood systems would occur where slope stability would not be affected and where the practice would enhance vegetation diversity as well as improve wildlife habitat. The number of fir stands would be diminished as a result of some stands being converted back to aspen.	III-8	Vegetation
Approximately 50 percent of the ponderosa pine type is suitable for intensive management using commercial timber and wood product sales. Silvicultural practices used would emphasize the high productivity of this type while considering range, wildlife, and recreational uses and values.	III-8	Vegetation
Pinyon-juniper stands (about 10 percent of the total) on gentle slopes and on land with good soils will be treated periodically to maintain early successional stages. This will help provide vegetation, scenic, and habitat, as well as forage and improved watershed. Pinyon-juniper stands (about 90 percent of the total) on steeper slopes and on lands with poor or rocky soils will be extensively managed and generally not treated except by natural disturbance.	III-8	Vegetation
The subalpine forb grassland would include a diverse mixture of the native and desirable introduced high forage producing plant species. Management would maintain this complex in a healthy, vigorous condition to preclude invasion by less desirable species.	III-8	Vegetation
Vegetative cover within the riparian component ecosystems would be maintained or diversified and enhanced as necessary to emphasize watershed, wildlife, and fisheries values. The stage of vegetative development may be locally altered to increase riparian and/or aquatic ecosystems.	III-8	Vegetation, Riparian
Recreation visitor use would be distributed between developed recreation facilities on individual and adjacent Ranger Districts. Use would also be distributed between government agency and privately-owned and/or operated facilities. Still, some individual developed recreation sites could be overcrowded during peak use periods.	III-9	Recreation
Developed recreation sites would be operated at a reduced service level during the pre-and post-summer use period. During the summer use period, high use fee sites comprising approximately 50 percent of the total Forest site capacity would be managed at the full service level and the remainder at the reduced service level. Sites adjacent to private resorts, easy	III-9	Recreation

Desired Condition	Page Number	Resource
accessible destination use sites, and some sites near towns or cities could be operated and maintained by private concessionaires.		
Existing campgrounds and picnic grounds would be rehabilitated and/or expanded where the private sector would not satisfy the demand. An average of 20 persons-at-one-time (PAOT) capacity would be constructed annually over the 50 year planning horizon to satisfy picnic ground and overnight campground demand. The condition of high use fee recreation facilities would be improved to condition class one or two. The vegetative condition including riparian areas would be maintained or improved.	III-9	Recreation
Summer home residences on National Forest System lands would be fewer because isolated special use permits for this use are non-transferable.	III-9	Recreation
Private sector resort demand would reach capacity between the years 1990 and 2000. The majority of any new capacity would be provided by the private sector off Forest or on private lands within the Forest boundary.	III-9	Recreation
High quality winter recreation opportunities would be provided, generally by the private sector, on sites suitable to this use.	III-9	Recreation
A range of dispersed recreation opportunities would be provided on National Forest System lands. Each activity would be managed to maintain or enhance appropriate opportunities.	III-9	Recreation
When a greater public need, such as timber harvest or minimal extraction would be determined by the Forest Supervisor, any dispersed recreation area not formally withdrawn from such activity could be impacted. However, after the operation ceased, the area would be reclaimed or rehabilitated consistent with the pre-project recreation opportunity classification goals.	III-9	Recreation
Intensive management practices would maintain structural diversity within the woody species in at least 25 percent of the area cover by the Gambel oak and Mountain shrub type. Vegetative diversity within the grass and forb ground cover would also be improved. In some cases, the Gambel oak would be encouraged to successional develop as an open savannah or in a high seral stage.	III-9	Vegetation
Cultural, historical, and paleontological resources would be protected from resource disturbing activities and vandalism. Exceptional suitable sites should be interpreted and made available for general public viewing and, as appropriate, nominated to the National Register.	III-10	Cultural, Historic, Paleontological
The Dark Canyon Wilderness would be managed to protect its wilderness character for present and future use and enjoyment. Livestock grazing on suitable range would continue within compatible use levels and schedule.	III-10	Designated Areas, Wilderness
On remaining National Forest System lands, protection of wilderness values would be a function of the demands for land use, activity design, and reclamation work required upon project completion.	III-10	Designated Areas, Wilderness
Grazing capacity would be increased by the end of the first decade, and actual use and permitted use would be in balance with the projected grazing capacity. This could involve some reduction of permit obligations depending on the allotment. During the planning period, range condition and trend should gradually improve. Thus, grazing capacity and use should increase to exceed present levels.	III-10	Grazing, Range

Desired Condition	Page Number	Resource
Allotment management plans would be completed. These plans would include goals and objectives, with management efforts to provide coordination and improvement of the range resource.	III-10	Grazing, Range
Flood damaged fisheries habitat could significantly improve as a result of the flood damage repair program in conjunction with watershed activities. In other areas, the fisheries habitat would gradually increase by improving habitat in suitable marginal and unsuitable lakes and reservoirs, and completing stream and riparian improvement projects. Riparian habitat could be maintained and its condition improved.	III-10	Riparian, Fish
Big-game winter range capacity could be maintained through direct habitat improvement which could offset encroachment by other activities. Increased emphasis would be given to non-game habitat and non-consumptive wildlife uses.	III-10	Wildlife
Populations of deer and elk would increase over current levels. Management Indicator Species (MIS) habitat would be maintained at levels that meet or exceed requirements for minimum viable populations.	III-10	Wildlife
Appropriate habitat management would maintain viable populations of existing vertebrate species.	III-10	Wildlife, Fish
Habitats of threatened and endangered species would be maintained. Habitat would be surveyed and appropriate action taken. Habitats for sensitive species would be managed to reduce the potential of these species becoming threatened or endangered.	III-10	Wildlife, Fish
Non-commercial stands would be managed to provide other resource outputs, thus, there would be some loss of wood or wood products, and growth rates could be substantially lower.	III-11	Forest Products
The supply of firewood created by this alternative, when added to existing dead timber, should meet the demand through 2030.	III-11	Forest Products
Some treated watershed areas closed to grazing would remain closed. However, some treated areas capable of supporting grazing, would be opened for this use.	III-11	Grazing, Watershed
The noxious weed program would continue in coordination with local weed control districts with the aim of controlling existing infestations and preventing establishment of new ones. Special attention would be given to the control of musk thistle on the Forest. Integrated pest management techniques would be used to protect, maintain, and improve range conditions. Predator control should be allowed on grazing allotments where a need is demonstrated.	III-11	Grazing, Weeds
Endangered, threatened, and sensitive plant species populations and their habitats would be maintained and improved. Land disturbing activities would be reviewed for endangered, threatened, and sensitive plant species and clearance would be made before the projects are approved, thus, providing the safeguards needed for their protection and continued existence.	III-11	Plants
Water quality and soil productivity would be maintained or improved. Flood damage repair programs in conjunction with fisheries improvement would result in improved conditions of damaged streams. Other identified watershed improvement needs would be completed at a reasonable rate throughout the planning period, which would reduce soil erosion and stream sedimentation. Future resource uses or activities would be executed so as to minimize impacts to soil and water quality. Reconstructing eroding portions of roads and trails will improve	III-11	Soils, Water

Desired Condition	Page Number	Resource
<p>water quality. Protection from damage due to vehicular travel would increase through law enforcement and public education. The soil and water resource inventory and monitoring would be used in activity design and implementation. Water uses and needs including instream flows would be claimed through the State adjudication process. Increases in water yield due to aspen harvest could be less than one percent of current yield, and 95 percent of the increase would be in the Colorado River Basin.</p>		
<p>Areas available for timber harvest would generally include slopes less than 40 percent.</p>	III-11	Timber
<p>A combination of silvicultural harvest systems that maximize positive present net value would generally be used. Intensive management practices, such as precommercial thinning, would be used in commercial working groups. Harvest of the high and medium bark-beetle-susceptible ponderosa pine stands would be emphasized. A harvest based on allowable sale quantity should be maintained annually in the ponderosa pine and spruce-fir working groups.</p>	III-11	Timber
<p>The future condition of the commercial stands would improve, conversion of slow-growing, over-mature stands to younger, more vigorous stands, and by periodic reentry to maintain stand vigor. Insect and disease impacts would be less than present because of the emphasis on harvesting susceptible stands.</p>	III-11	Timber
<p>Oil and gas leases would be issued except in the Dark Canyon Wilderness Area. Leases would contain necessary stipulations to minimize or eliminate adverse impacts on other resources and resource uses that could be caused by exploration and development.</p>	III-12	Energy
<p>Lease exploration and development activities would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Recommendations for project approval would be developed through site-specific environmental analyses.</p>	III-12	Energy
<p>Proposed coal lease tracts would be identified based on expressions of interest from coal development companies. Leasing would be considered and cleared, eliminated, or delayed for tracts within the Coal Development Potential Area that have been determined to be available for coal leasing based on application of the coal lease unsuitability criteria and multiple-use management decisions.</p>	III-12	Energy, Minerals
<p>Cleared tracts would be available for leasing subject to the mitigating requirements determined through the multiple-use management and environmental assessments.</p>	III-12	Energy, Minerals
<p>New mines would be expected to develop on existing as well as new leases and coal production would increase.</p>	III-12	Energy, Minerals
<p>Coal exploration, including new exploration of potential lease areas and obtaining additional geologic data for existing mining operations, would increase proportionately with new leasing and increased production.</p>	III-12	Energy, Minerals
<p>Subsidence and the resource monitoring programs, required for approval of mine plans, would provide necessary data to create models for predicting subsidence and the related impacts for evaluating future leases and/or mining operations.</p>	III-12	Energy, Minerals
<p>Areas not withdrawn from locatable minerals location would be open and available for prospecting and development of mining claims. However, locatable mineral withdrawals and the Dark Canyon Wilderness Area would be subject to valid rights.</p>	III-12	Minerals

<b>Desired Condition</b>	<b>Page Number</b>	<b>Resource</b>
Surface disturbing mining claim exploration and development activities would be evaluated and approved subject to site-specific environmental analyses.	III-12	Minerals
Common variety minerals would be developed and disposed of based on need and site-specific environmental analyses.	III-12	Minerals
Geophysical and geochemical exploration proposals for geologic and mineral exploration would be evaluated by site-specific environmental analyses, and approved with appropriate stipulations, or denied.	III-12	Minerals, Geology
Research Natural Areas, botanical Areas, and other Special Interest Areas would be established so that future generations will have the opportunity to study or view the notable and/or unique physical, biological, paleontological, cultural, and historical values of the Forest.	III-13	Designated Areas
Appropriate suppression response would be taken on wildfires as provided in the general Forest Direction and specific Management Unit Requirements.	III-13	Fire
Exterior Forest boundaries and interior State and private land boundaries would be identified and marked on the ground by the end of the year 2035.	III-13	Land Status
Lands would be acquired, transferred, and exchanged as available to block lands into more manageable configurations and eliminate small isolated tracts. Several programs involving the Forest Service, Department of Interior, and the State of Utah and Colorado have been initiated for this purpose, and some would be consummated.	III-13	Lands
Current land withdrawals are to be reevaluated by 1991 as required by Section 204 (1) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). It is expected that the total area under withdrawals may increase since some new areas may be withdrawn to protect specific special interest and high investment areas.	III-13	Lands
Utilities and other special uses would be considered in suitable areas and/or corridors based on need and overall benefit. The need and number of special-use permits issues is expected to increase proportional to population growth, expansion of industry, and the demand for natural resources, especially energy minerals.	III-13	Lands, Special Uses
Cooperative law enforcement agreements with local law enforcement agencies would continue. Increased public use of the Forest would increase the law enforcement problem, and greater protection efforts would be needed.	III-13	Law Enforcement
Special-use permits for isolated cabins would be phased out as permits expire under existing terms.	III-13	Special Uses
Special-use fee returns would increase.	III-13	Special Uses
Prescribed fire from planned or unplanned ignitions would be used for fuels treatment and resource improvement. Prescribed burning would be used if justified by an environmental analysis. Manipulation of vegetation could provide adequate fuels reduction.	III-13	Vegetation, Fire, Fuel
In the Dark Canyon Wilderness, prescribed unplanned ignitions could be used to maintain natural ecosystems.	III-13	Wilderness, Fire
The transportation system would be safe, functional, economical, and environmentally acceptable. Road construction, reconstruction, surfacing, operation and maintenance for coal,	III-14	Infrastructure

Desired Condition	Page Number	Resource
gas, oil and uranium exploration, development and production would be coordinated with other resource activities.		
The basic arterial and collector, as well as the local system serving major rural recreation sites, would be constructed, reconditioned, and/or surfaced, and then maintained to carry passenger traffic at level 3 or higher maintenance for the intended season of use. This reconstruction and 20 percent of the surfacing placement should occur in the first 10 years. The remainder of the surfacing should be placed in the second 10 years.	III-14	Infrastructure
The remainder of the local system would be evaluated and substandard roads rebuilt to standard or abandoned as determined in the road management program. Management of local roads would include intermittent restrictions of road use, vehicle type or loading restrictions, and weather restrictions as necessary to maximize access while minimizing maintenance costs, roadway damage, and environmental damage. Local unrestricted roads would be travelable by high clearance vehicles at level 2 for the intended season of use. Reconstruction of the local system would occur during the second 10-year period, except where required for timber or mineral access. This could occur in the first 10-year period.	III-14	Infrastructure
After the first 20 years, road construction would consist of that necessary for support of timber and some mineral activities, mostly temporary roads. In conjunction with maintenance activities, an ongoing surface replacement program of 29 miles per year would be required.	III-14	Infrastructure
Major health and safety problems would be resolved so that unrestricted use can occur by the end of the first 10-year period. Less severe health and safety problems would be resolved so that unrestricted use can occur by the end of the second 10-year period. Further, major work centers would have space adequate to serve administrative needs. Reconstruction and major maintenance not related to health and safety would be completed during the third 10-year period, and as other space requirements are fulfilled.	III-14	Infrastructure

## Appendix B: 2007 Draft Forest Plan Revision—Analysis of Management Situation

The full text of this document is available on our website at:  
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/mantilasal/landmanagement/planning>.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The following text was developed as part of a previous planning effort. It is not currently in use on the Forest and does not reflect the direction of 2012 planning rule. The use of it here is as a resource for consideration.

### MAJOR REVISION TOPICS

The Forest Plan Interdisciplinary team used a broad array of existing information to identify areas of the Forest Plan most in need of change. Sources of information included monitoring reports, new scientific information, Forest Service employees, input from public meetings (March/May 2003 and May 2004), and responses to the 2003 revision newsletter questionnaire. The Forest Supervisor, Forest Leadership Team, and Forest Plan Interdisciplinary team have identified four major topics the Forest proposes to address during Forest Plan revision. Those major topics are:

- Recreation Management
- Watershed Health
- Minerals Management
- Fire/Fuels Management

The needs for change in these resource areas are evident. Because the solutions may generate some controversy or multiple solution possibilities, alternatives will be developed to determine the type and amount of change.

#### **Recreation Management**

**FINDING:**

By mid-century our Nation's population is projected to increase by nearly 50 percent. Simultaneously, public access to privately owned forestland is expected to continue to decline. This situation will increase the pressure on public lands to provide recreational opportunities. If public lands are to meet increased demand for recreational opportunities without experiencing unacceptable impacts to resources, emphasis must be placed on effective management solutions. In particular, it is critical that management of off-highway vehicle access and use on National Forest System lands be improved to preserve high-quality experiences for all recreational users (USDA Forest Service, 2004a).

The Forest Plan stated that over the planning period new developed sites would be constructed on average of about 20 PAOTS (people at one time) each year. In actuality, new construction occurred in the form of hardened dispersed sites that provide the social setting people desire while providing the resource protection needed to allow intensive use of these areas. The current Forest Plan predicted the demand for developed recreation facilities would occasionally exceed supply. The capacity of developed recreation facilities has not been exceeded. The public's demand for an unconfined camping experience has resulted in more and larger dispersed recreation sites across the Forest.

Beyond the issue of developed and dispersed recreation, the Forest Plan does not discuss the necessity of providing a broad range of recreation opportunities that would ensure the breadth of recreational experiences that have come about. The Forest Plan did not anticipate dispersed recreation and off-highway vehicles as dominant forms of recreation on the Forest. Current direction focuses on recreation management units (Developed Recreation Sites, Undeveloped Motorized Areas, Semi-Primitive Recreation Areas) and does not provide guidance for Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes currently available on the Forest. A new ROS inventory is needed to ensure alternatives are compared to the existing array of recreation settings.

The Forest Plan does not provide adequate direction for the management of winter recreation activities. Increased winter use of the Forest has led to conflicts between motorized users and nonmotorized recreationists. The favorite areas for motorized winter use are also the preferred areas for nonmotorized use.

Resource damage often takes place when unauthorized motorized/mechanized use occurs off designated routes. Current trail definitions (FSH 2309.18) do not distinguish width requirements for the range of off-highway vehicles. Off-highway vehicle routes can range from singletrack to doubletrack to roads depending on the vehicle type.

The Forest has issued numerous Outfitter and Guide (O&G) permits covering a variety of activities including guided hunts, mountain bike and OHV touring, and other recreation related activities. A demand for additional permits exists. The actual demand or need for guided activities has not been determined. A capacity study will be completed later as a Continuous Assessment and Planning (CAP) project to determine the need and capacity for outfitter and guide operations.

**ACTION:**

*We propose to:*

- *Emphasize management of dispersed recreation opportunities to address user conflicts and minimize resource impacts, while providing the recreational opportunities sought by the public.*
- *Identify desired recreation environments using the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS). Management direction would be expanded for recreation opportunities and settings in both winter and summer seasons that balance current and anticipated visitor needs while sustaining or enhancing resources. Suitable recreational opportunities would be identified within each geographic area.*
- *Clarify management direction for roads, off-highway vehicle routes, and hiking/biking trail systems.*
- *Develop direction to facilitate the determination of how outfitter/guide operations may be utilized to provide recreational opportunities for that segment of the recreating public who require such services to experience the variety of recreational opportunities available on the Forest.*

<b>Watershed Health</b>
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**FINDING:**

Conservation of the soil and water resources of forest ecosystems is vital to all aspects of sustainable resource management. These resources, the building blocks of all ecosystems, are also the most complex elements in the landscape to consistently and comprehensively assess.

**Water Resources**

**Streams**

Management direction for mineral resources, in part, emphasizes protection for perennial sections of the drainage network that support aquatic life (USDA Forest Service, 1986, Appendix B, Stipulation #9). The Plan does not address management of activities or permitted uses within intermittent and ephemeral stream reaches and springs, the source areas for perennial stream segments.

Streambank trampling, in areas of concentrated livestock and recreational use, is resulting in soil compaction, the loss of stabilizing vegetation, streambank erosion, increased sediment delivery, and changes in channel structure and function.

**Springs**

In some instances, uses of and activities that occur around spring developments (by wildlife, livestock, and recreation activities) are resulting in undesirable effects to soil, vegetation, wildlife habitats, and riparian ecosystems. In addition, spring developments involving flow diversions are affecting the dependent, associated riparian ecosystem as surface flows are reduced and/or diverted.

**Wetlands**

Wetlands are included in the general definition and management direction for riparian areas (USDA Forest Service, 1986, III-69). The Plan does not separate wetlands from other riparian areas to reflect their unique soils, vegetation, landform, sensitivity to disturbances, recovery potentials, and legal protections.

**Proper Use Criteria**

The proper use criteria for rangelands in the current Plan lacks the specificity recommended by the Regional Office to provide for the desired resource conditions on lands affected by grazing and browsing animals (USDA Forest Service, 2002c).

Concerns have arisen over the sustainability of riparian and upland browse species due to browsing pressure on young plants, the effects of streambank trampling, the physiological differences of hydric and non-hydric species in the greenline, and the inconsistency in definition and terminology for soil disturbance in the riparian zone.

**Soil Productivity**

Increasing knowledge and understanding has led to a greater emphasis on long-term soil productivity. Management direction in the current Plan does not address the role of effective ground cover and above ground organic matter, which protect and/or contribute nutrients to the soil resource.

**Water Quality/Quantity**

Best Management Practices (BMPs) have been developed in cooperation with the Utah Department of Environmental Quality and other state and federal agencies as part of a

statewide Non-Point Source Management Plan for Silvicultural Activities (Silvicultural Addendum Subcommittee, 1998). This plan identifies standard management practices to reduce non-point source pollution from silvicultural activities. These standard practices, which are not addressed in the current Plan, can provide similar soil/water protection from other management activities and permitted uses.

Since the current Plan was approved, some stream segments on the Forest have been identified as water quality impaired under the Clean Water Act. These impaired stream segments are known as 303d waterbodies. The current Forest Plan does not address 303d waterbodies.

The Forest Plan is too general to secure favorable water flow to meet Forest purposes and to sustain ecological functions. Forest specialists have identified concerns regarding continued water depletions and/or diversions and their effects on high-value aquatic sites such as riparian areas, recreational streams, Colorado cutthroat conservation/recovery watersheds, wetlands, eligible wild and scenic rivers, research natural areas, and other water dependent sites.

### **Municipal Watershed Management**

Numerous municipalities depend on the Forest for all or a portion of their culinary water. The Plan currently identifies only a small fraction of the actual municipal water sources under the municipal water supply (MWS) management prescription. The Plan is inconsistent in its identification and management direction for municipal water supply areas.

As per the 1996 amendment to the Safe Drinking Water Act, all municipalities are required to identify their drinking water source areas, evaluate the risk of accidental contamination, and develop source protection plans accordingly. Drinking water source protection plans have not been evaluated to ensure Forest Service management activities or permitted uses do not jeopardize drinking water source areas.

While Forest Plan direction seems generally adequate, it does not promote vegetation management for the protection of municipal water supply areas from catastrophic events, such as wildland fire, which may result in large-scale impacts to vegetation, soil, and ultimately, water quality and water supply system infrastructure.

#### **ACTION:**

*We propose to:*

- *Clarify desired conditions and strengthen existing direction for management of activities and uses within stream-side riparian areas, wetlands, and springs, including emphasizing the need to provide for water quality/quantity needs for ecosystems and threatened and endangered species. Specific items we propose to address include:*
  - a) *Clarify appropriate protections for perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral stream reaches.*
  - b) *Clarify direction limiting streambank alteration to levels which minimize effects to streambank soils and vegetation, allowing streams to maintain normal channel morphology and function.*
  - c) *Clarify and update direction for spring developments to include protection for wildlife, the spring source area, and the associated riparian area.*
  - d) *Clarify direction, as appropriate, to sustain and protect wetland function and values.*

- e) *Revise proper use criteria to ensure livestock grazing is managed to meet desired conditions for browse species, hydric and non-hydric species in the greenline, and ensure sufficient ground cover in riparian zones.*
- f) *Incorporate desired conditions and management direction, as appropriate, for effective ground cover and above ground organic matter*
- g) *Incorporate direction from Best Management Practices (BMPs) for soil and water protection, as appropriate.*
- h) *Incorporate direction for 303d listed waterbodies to ensure management activities or permitted uses do not contribute to further degradation or new listings.*
- i) *Include direction for qualifying and quantifying consumptive and non-consumptive water needs for instream flows, in-place standing water, and conservation pools. To facilitate identification of suitable uses, we propose to develop criteria to identify sites where water developments, diversions, and occupancy to divert may be prohibited, or situations where mitigation may be required to protect and provide for National Forest resources and uses.*
- j) *Clarify direction for management of suitable uses within those areas where municipal water sources areas exist.*

## **Minerals Management**

### **FINDING:**

#### **Oil and Gas Leasing**

The Nation's forests play a significant role in meeting America's need for the production and transmission of energy. Unless otherwise restricted, National Forest System lands are available for energy exploration and development. The Oil and Gas Leasing FEIS (USDA Forest Service, 1992b) made a determination of areas not available for leasing (NAL) and identified a number of sensitive resources that require protection through stipulations. The Record Of Decision on Oil and Gas Leasing (USDA Forest Service, 1994b) stated decisions that designated lands as not available for leasing would be revisited. Current leasing stipulations should be reviewed relative to current laws and agency roles.

#### **Coal Suitability**

Federal regulations (43 CFR 3420.1-4) require: 1) identification of areas acceptable for further consideration for coal leasing take place during forest planning or in a land use analysis, and 2) a land use plan contain an estimate of the amount of coal recoverable by either surface or underground mining operations or both. Coal unsuitability criteria and changes in other resources (such as additional threatened, endangered, and sensitive species) require a review of unsuitability occur and management direction revised based on the review.

#### **Common Variety Minerals**

Demand for common variety minerals (gravel, sand, and stone) is expected to increase. Because of limited supplies of common variety mineral sources, Forest Service and local government needs should be considered over commercial uses by private developers. Criteria for issuing free-use permits to other agencies, local governments, and the public for non-commercial uses of common variety minerals are not discussed in the Plan.

#### **Mine Reclamation**

Several abandoned uranium/vanadium mines and other mining area sites have been inventoried for reclamation. These abandoned mines present a hazard and are sources of potentially polluting materials.

### **Gypsum**

The existence of gypsum deposits is not acknowledged in the 1986 Forest Plan.

### **Paleontological Resources**

The Manti-La Sal National Forest contains a large variety of invertebrate and vertebrate, as well as plant fossils. Regulations provide for protection of paleontological resources (e.g., fossils). The Forest Plan does not provide direction for issuing permits or for the documentation and curation of discoveries.

### **ACTION:**

*We propose to:*

- *Review areas currently identified as Not Administratively Available for Leasing (NAL), review oil/gas (including coalbed methane) leasing and occupancy stipulations, and clarify/update as needed.*
- *Review coal leasing unsuitability criteria and determine if any additional lands are unsuitable for leasing or if any previously identified suitable areas are now unsuitable. We also propose to:*
  - a) *Incorporate estimates of remaining recoverable coal reserves.*
  - b) *Review and clarify/update coal stipulations.*
  - c) *Identify areas for withdrawal as appropriate.*
- *Focus management of common variety minerals for Forest, local government, or small/limited personal use, and limit commercial use or development.*
- *Emphasize reclamation of abandoned mines.*
- *Update locatable minerals definition and management direction to include gypsum.*
- *Clarify direction for management of paleontological resources (research opportunities, interpretation).*

## **Fire/Fuels Management**

### **FINDING:**

New policy and legislation has been enacted since the Utah Fire Amendment (USDA Forest Service, 2000a) updated fire management direction in the Forest Plan. The amendment was approved prior to the National Fire Plan (2001), the 10-Year Comprehensive Wildland Fire Strategy (2001), the Healthy Forests Initiative (2000), and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (2003).

Residential communities and recreation residences continue to expand into areas within and around the boundaries of the Manti-La Sal National Forest. This boundary zone between forestland and developed, private lands is known as the wildland-urban interface. The wildland-urban interface has been recognized as a high priority area for fire and fuels management given the risks to life and property from wildfire. The current Plan does not

address management of the wildland-urban interface, where ground fuels, ladder fuels, and vegetation arrangement and density are typically maintained at levels less than general forest conditions, to provide a defensible space from wildland fire.

**ACTION:**

*We propose to:*

- *Review and update the Forest Plan, as necessary, to reflect current policy, legislation, and terminology for fire and hazardous fuel management. This will include a fire regime/condition class assessment and identification of management direction for vegetation and fuel treatments within the wildland-urban interface. Criteria may be developed to facilitate identification of priority treatment areas in coordination with the local communities.*