

**Gila National Forest
Silver City Technical Meeting
June 14, 2017
FOREST PLAN REVISION PUBLIC MEETING**

INTRODUCTION

Adam Mendonca, Forest Supervisor for the Gila National Forest, welcomed the group and shared his commitment to engaging with the public and encouraged participants to share their thoughts and opinions. This is the first of several technical meetings, which are important because they provide an opportunity for engaged and knowledgeable members of the public to have deep-dive conversations. He reminded participants that the revision process was only in the first phase of a much longer Forest Plan Revision process. He asked for community members to continue to stay engaged and attentive throughout the process. He stressed that the input from technical meetings (as well as the shorter public meetings held in the evenings) will be used to narrow multiple management options down to several alternatives. As the Forest Supervisor, it will be his responsibility to select the alternative that will guide forest management for up to 25 years.

Participants introduced themselves. Participants represented a broad range of interests and organizational entities, including the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, the Center for Biological Diversity, Tucson Electrical Power, Soil and Watershed Conservation Districts, the Sky Island Alliance, the Gila National Forest Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico, the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. There were also local public officials present, including the Mayor of Silver City, several County Commissioners, and one State Representative.

PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

Matt Schultz, Forest Planner, introduced the Gila National Forest planning process and summarized the current phase.

- The current forest plan, which was last revised in 1986, provides management guidance for the US Forest Service (USFS) and all the resources on the Gila National Forest.
- The planning process is embedded in an adaptive management framework that consists of assessing, planning, and monitoring. The revision is currently in the planning phase.
- The Gila National Forest planning team has completed the assessment phase and has posted final versions of the Assessment Report and Need for Change Document on the website. The Notice of Intent has also been published. This marks the beginning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.
- The Need for Change Document provides focus for the next phase of planning. The goal is to develop a Forest Plan that provides vision, strategy, and guidance. Components of the Forest Plan will be developed to meet desired conditions. Desired conditions are the drivers of the Forest Plan.
- The Forest Plan will also include:

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- Objectives
- Standards
- Guidelines
- Suitability
- Management approaches
- Geographical areas
- A monitoring plan
- Timber suitability
- Priority watersheds
- An inventory of lands that may have potential wilderness characteristics
- A wild and scenic river eligibility study
- A list of significant issues and alternatives
- An environmental analysis
- The plan components will be integrated to provide for multiple use, sustainability, ecological integrity, and ecosystem services. The plan components will provide a strategic and practical framework for managing the Gila National Forest that best meets the needs of the people while remaining within the inherent capability of the land and Forest Service authority/fiscal capacity.
- Stakeholder engagement is critical to developing a plan that can be successfully implemented. Engagement will ensure that the process is inclusive and transparent. For this phase of the plan, the Gila National Forest is planning to hold:
 - Community meetings
 - Technical meetings
 - Open houses
 - Field trips
 - Desired conditions workshops (early August)
 - Review and comment periods
- The timeline is as follows:
 - Initial plan components: completed winter of 2017/2018 for feedback
 - Development of preliminary alternatives: early 2018
 - Environmental analysis (EIS): 2018/2019
 - Record of decision: 2019
- It is important that community members are active participants in developing a future vision for the Forest. Please tell the Gila National Forest planning team what is valuable about the Forest and offer ideas on forest management. The Gila National Forest planning team hopes to build on existing partnerships and explore new ways to accomplish land management goals throughout this process.
- For more information, visit the Gila National Forest Plan website: <http://go.usa.gov/h88k> or e-mail gilaplan@fs.fed.us .

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MEETING PLAN OVERVIEW

- Participants were encouraged to provide field trip suggestions for areas, issues, management activities, or resources that they would like to visit with a Gila National Forest Service representative. There will be one field trip per district with multiple site visits.
- Participants rotated through three “stations,” each with a different focus related to the Forest Plan Revision.
 1. **Desired Conditions:** There will be a presentation about the desired conditions for vegetation, timber/forest products and timber suitability analysis. Participants will have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions and discuss additional priorities.
 2. **Inventory of Lands with Potential Wilderness Characteristics:** Participants will be asked to assess visual improvements based on whether they were “substantially noticeable.” “Substantially noticeable” is an important term for the Gila National Forest planners to define during the inventory of lands that may have potential wilderness characteristics.
 3. **Values and Priorities:** Participants will be asked to prioritize the benefits from the forest that are most important to them.

DESIRED CONDITIONS

Nessa Natharius, Forest Ecologist, provided an in-depth examination of desired conditions for vegetation, timber/forest products, and the Timber Suitability Analysis. Desired conditions will be the drivers of the Forest Plan. They are outcomes, not actions. They must be achievable, which means they must be within the inherent capability of the land and within the US Forest Service’s (USFS) ability and authority to affect. They should be written in such a way that clearly communicates intent as concisely as possible, while providing enough detail so that progress toward them can be measured or evaluated. Finally, they must be integrated to reduce conflict. Below are the highlights of Nessa’s presentation.

Regionally-Consistent Desired Conditions for Vegetation

- There are several reasons for developing regionally-consistent desired conditions for vegetation:
 - Restoration is an agency-wide priority. Restored ecosystems better provide for multiple uses and better contribute to healthy, resilient, sustainable, social and economic systems.
 - The USFS has a national restoration policy that requires regions to develop restoration management planning processes. The Southwestern regional representatives wanted to ensure that all forests were approaching restoration consistently, including management for the Mexican spotted owl, the northern goshawk, and old growth.

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- In addition to ensuring consistency, the Regional Office also saw a need to provide flexibility for forest-specific situations and wanted a mechanism to incorporate this into the plan revision process.
- The Regional Forester convened a multidisciplinary team composed of silviculturists, foresters, ecologists, wildlife biologists, and planners to develop approaches and products that were scientifically-based. They focused on analysis of:
 - The 1996 Regional Amendment for the Mexican spotted owl and the northern goshawk
 - The Mexican spotted owl and northern goshawk Implementation Guide
 - The Mexican spotted owl Recovery Plan
 - The recent project-specific plan amendments related to the Mexican spotted owl, the northern goshawk, or old growth
- After reaching out to additional partners across the region, the team settled on an ecosystem-based approach to desired conditions.
- There are four ecosystem characteristics described within the regionally-consistent desired conditions for vegetation.
 - *Composition*: what are the dominant species and what is their relative abundance?
 - *Structure*: how many canopy layers are there and what is the forest arrangement?
 - *Patterns*: does the structure or composition have a pattern?
 - *Ecological processes*: have there been natural disturbances such as fire, windthrow, insects, and disease?
- The Ecological Response Units (ERUs) are an ecological classification system. Each of the forest and woodland ERUs have regionally-consistent desired conditions. They were not developed for shrubland, grassland, or riparian systems.
- These desired conditions recognize that ecosystems are not static. Change is “bound” by what is known as the “natural range of variation” (NRV). NRV is a core principle of restoration science, and it is the reference conditions used in the Gila’s Assessment document.
- Ecosystems vary across the landscape, and the desired conditions reflect this by describing conditions at three spatial scales:
 - Landscape scale (1,000-10,000 plus acres)
 - Mid-scale (10-1,000 acres)
 - Fine scale (less than 10 acres)

Desired Conditions for Timber and Forest Products

- Desired conditions for timber and forest products are not being driven by the Regional Office. Decisions are left to each individual forest and their stakeholders.
- It is important to consider whether the desired conditions for timber and other forest products are compatible with the regionally-consistent desired conditions for vegetation. The regionally-consistent desired conditions should be viewed as a foundation. There is

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room for flexibility to respond to local conditions and issues so long as the scientific basis remains intact.

- The Timber Suitability Analysis is a requirement of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA).
- There is an important distinction between timber production and timber harvest. Timber production is the resource use, and timber harvest is a tool.
- The Timber Suitability Analysis is a two-step interdisciplinary team effort:
 - First, the USFS must identify “lands not suitable for timber production due to legal and technical factors.” Legal factors that apply to the Gila National Forest are:
 - Existing Designated Wilderness
 - Existing Wilderness Study Areas
 - Existing Research Natural Areas
 - Existing Inventoried Roadless Areas
 - Existing Eligible Wild Rivers (not stream systems eligible for the Scenic or Recreational Rivers designations)
 - Second, the USFS must identify “lands suited and not suited for timber production based on compatibility with desired conditions and objectives.” Technical reasons for land not being suitable for timber production are:
 - Lands on which the technology to harvest timber is not currently available without causing irreversible damage to soil, slope, or other watershed conditions
 - Lands on which there is no reasonable assurance that lands can be adequately restocked within five years of the final regeneration harvest
 - Lands that are not USFS land
- After these steps are completed, some portion of the Gila National Forest will be identified as unsuitable for timber production due to legal or technical factors and the rest of the forest will be identified as potentially suitable for timber production. Outcomes of these steps do not change with the forest plan alternatives. However, all lands identified as not suited for timber production due to legal and technical factors are subject to a mandatory ten-year review.
- After going through this process, all the lands identified as those that may be suitable for timber production move onto the next phase, in which those lands are evaluated and identified as either suited or not suited for timber production based on compatibility with desired conditions and objectives. Outcomes will vary by forest plan alternative.
- There are required reporting elements associated with the Timber Suitability Analysis. The USFS is required to report:
 - The estimated sustained yield limit (the non-declining yield of timber from the suitable timber base)
 - The projected timber sale quantity
 - The projected wood sale quantity (timber plus fuelwood)
 - The process and rationale

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- There are three mechanisms through which community members can influence the outcome of the Timber Suitability Analysis.
 1. Participate in the development of desired conditions
 2. Provide input and feedback during the Designated Area processes
 3. Provide comments during the NEPA comment periods

Clarifying Questions from Participants

Participants asked clarifying questions about desired conditions for vegetation, timber and forest products, and the Timber Suitability Analysis. Questions are indicated in italics and responses are below.

Do the restoration goals apply to the whole landscape? The 1994 requirements for the Mexican spotted owl and goshawk did affect the management of the entire landscape of the forest.

Mexican spotted owls will typically use mixed conifer forests. The northern goshawk requirements also focus on those forest types. Restoration focuses on the whole system, but the standards do not apply to the owl and goshawk. The USFS will be attentive to this concern. Where the science applies, the requirements are used. Where it does not apply, they will not be used.

The 1996 amendment was based on the science at that time. The Recovery Plan has been amended and science has changed since then. Will the USFS use scientifically-based analysis from 1996 or apply new data?

It is cumulative. All plans were reviewed to ensure there was no scientific conflict.

Why was shrubland excluded from the ERUs?

There is more data about forest and woodland systems. There were competing priorities and staffing and budget issues. No one at the Regional Office has stepped up to champion shrubland, grassland, or riparian areas yet.

Is the USFS achieving other desired management outcomes by managing for spotted owl, goshawk and old growth in relevant units? By meeting the needs of a keystone species, is the USFS meeting the needs of other species?

Yes, but not entirely. Some species will require more attention. The regionally-consistent desired conditions are a foundation that can be built upon. Spotted owl, old growth, and goshawk present a starting point, and it can be refined by looking at different scales. This is where community and stakeholder comments can help us ensure that the USFS does not miss anything.

Are the regionally-consistent desired conditions for timber compatible with other local desired conditions? Are the regionally-specific desired conditions compatible with multiple use and the USFS Organic Act requiring that the USFS sustain timber production for the community?

The USFS does not anticipate a problem with local needs being out of step with the regionally-consistent desired conditions. However, the region has been involved in the modeling to develop

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the regionally-specific desired conditions. If those desired conditions do not fit the Gila National Forest context, more modeling work should be done. The Gila National Forest planning staff can assess the appropriateness of the desired conditions for the Gila National Forest. Also, regionally-specific desired conditions do lend themselves to a lot of timber work in the ponderosa pine and mixed conifer habitat types that provide timber product.

Does the revised Forest Plan establish metrics for re-evaluating the Forest Plan in ten years?
The same steps being used now will be used in ten years. It is embedded in USFS law and policy. However, new science and technology will also be considered.

There are areas in dire need of timber harvesting that experienced the 2013 floods. The floods endangered lives and came with many expenses. Harvests are an important tool.
Absolutely.

Will an economic analysis be completed for the Timber Suitability report that looks at immediate, intermediate, and long-term demand for this forest type in the local and international market? Could the Gila National Forest potentially contract out an economic analysis?

The 2012 Planning Rule is different from previous rules and planning processes. The Assessment that started this process identified 15 areas to address. Five of those were ecology-based. The other ten were based on socioeconomic aspects. All community members and stakeholders should help ensure that the document has the best information and input. As part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS) there will be an economic analysis completed for each alternative. The Assessment included an economic contribution analysis of all the activities associated with the Gila National Forest.

It was mentioned that desired conditions will change based on the alternatives to which they are attached. If the desired conditions are defined by science, how does that work?

An EIS will be conducted. Through that process, people will provide input on desired conditions. Those desired conditions will be analyzed to understand the expected outcomes. The Forest Supervisor will review them and make a final decision.

Does the Gila National Forest have the budget to be able to address all factors that will be brought up in this planning process and conduct a complete analysis?

The Forest Supervisor's intent is to complete a thorough and robust planning process; no major components will be missed based on budgetary issues. But when it comes to implementation of the plan, the Gila National Forest cannot guarantee implementation money.

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Will the Forest Plan revision clearly define the priorities on the Gila National Forest? What is the top priority?

The Forest Plan does not prioritize issues; it seeks to balance them. The Gila National Forest planning team seeks to balance ecology, grazing, recreation and all the other uses.

What happens when there is conflict between the different uses?

That is why the Gila National Forest is holding technical meetings. It is important that the planning team knows what the conflicts are and provides an opportunity for community members to discuss the conflicts.

Regarding the Timber Suitability Analysis, will stakeholders receive a schedule or breakdown of when specific areas will change from timber production to timber harvesting?

The objectives are associated with timelines. Each ERU will be forest-wide. It is a question of scale. The Forest Plan is not a project-specific document. While pieces of ground will be identified based on whether they are suitable for timber harvest, there will not be a list of all timber projects. The planning team hopes to work with partners to develop implementation priorities after the plan is complete. Implementation priorities must be compatible with the Travel Management Plan, which is detailed, but there will not be a similar kind of site-specific scale in the forest plan revision process.

Will the areas deemed unsuitable for timber production and harvesting still be eligible for vegetation management and forest restoration?

It depends on the reasons for designating the area as unsuitable. For example, if an area was found unsuitable for timber harvest because it was in designated wilderness, it would not be eligible for ecological restoration projects.

There is an emphasis in the Need for Change Document and the Assessment on the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), which seemed to be dominated by discussion in urban centers. When the WUI is considered in that context, there is a focus on protecting subdivisions close to populated areas. The WUI as envisioned in the Healthy Forest Restoration Act did not just consider subdivisions out on the forest. The WUI is the interface with human-influenced zones. That is not clear in the documents.

There are regional desired conditions for the WUI. The Gila National Forest planning team will be looking at other plans (including Community Wildfire Protection Plans) and hoping to maximize compatibility and minimize conflicts.

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DISCUSSION OF ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

Participants were asked to share one additional topic area relevant to desired conditions about which they would like to have an in-depth discussion at a future technical meeting. The identified topics are listed below.

- Ecological integrity
 - Humans in ecology
 - Ecological sustainability
- Economic impacts/ impacts on the county
- Soils and watersheds / riparian area sustainability and integrity
- Resource management / ensuring that there is water flow and usable land
- Multiple use / balance of uses and interests
- Grazing and traditional uses
- Custom and culture / historic and present uses
- Management and sustainability of infrastructure
 - Road closures
 - Recreation trails
- Special management areas
 - Designated wilderness
 - Botanical areas
 - Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Strategic allocation of limited funding
- Law enforcement / effectiveness, funding, etc.
- Public health, public use, and health of the watershed
- Utilities / right of ways
- Post-fire recovery

Highest Priorities

Several topics were mentioned multiple times. These topics are listed below. After some discussion, it appeared that ecological integrity was the highest-priority future discussion topic for the most people.

- Watershed/riparian area health
- Economic impacts
- ***Ecological integrity***

DISCUSSION OF ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

The group discussed ecological integrity in relation to the forest plan revision. Their discussion focused on what ecological integrity meant to them, what it looked like on the ground, and how the USFS could manage for it in the future.

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1. What does ecological integrity mean to you?

- Ecological integrity means there is a healthy and sustainable environment that supports multiple uses. It also means that the plants and animals have a sustainable environment that allows them to thrive.
- Ecological integrity means viewing the forest as an organism rather than just separate parts. All the parts of the forest are interdependent and compose a whole.
- Any definition of ecological integrity should be scientifically-informed.
- Healthy and integrated ecosystems must be resilient. This means the ecosystem should be able to recover from catastrophes like large fires and support native flora and fauna in the face of invasive species.
- An ecosystem has integrity if it can withstand the full range of disturbances or system stressors and be resilient enough to recover its core functions and processes.
- Water is the basis of life. A healthy ecosystem protects water quality, watersheds, and riparian areas. Global warming indicates a need for more focus on water quality. Climate change is a stressor.
- Aldo Leopold wrote about a fully-functioning and self-sustaining system. Healthy and sustainable ecosystems need to have all the parts, including animals, plants, etc.
- Nature has its own integrity and mankind has its own integrity. They are not always compatible with each other.

2. What does ecological integrity look like on the ground?

- There must be biologically-active soils, not dry clay that has been eroded.
- The soil must support grasses, forbs, and plants that hold water.
- The plants must support animals and livestock.
- Animals must support predators.
- There must be a diversity of vegetation, and natural variation within the diversity.

3. How could the USFS manage for ecological integrity in the future?

- Forest managers must look at a forest and see the whole picture. They must see that the many parts of the forest must function together for the betterment of the whole. If the forest is not managed holistically, the system will fail.
- There has been a departure from historic fire-return intervals. There is too much understory, and there are too many trees. Fire must be reintroduced on the landscape. It is cheaper to implement prescribed fire. The USFS should identify the areas that are out of line with historic fire-return intervals.
- The USFS could use fire as a tool for restoration. However, the Gila National Forest has recently experienced catastrophic levels of dryness. If a prescribed fire gets out of control it is not an economically wise decision and the aftermath of fires will change the Gila forever. It impacts siltation, endangered species, etc.

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- There are insufficient resources to manage for the Gila National Forest's impaired ecological integrity. There have been several disturbances that have been viewed as uncharacteristic. How should the Gila National Forest manage for disturbances? What degree of disturbance should the community tolerate and accept? How can the community embrace the appropriate level of disturbance?
- Mother nature does not play games. Forest managers must work with nature to recognize what will and will not work.
- Healthy ponderosa pine forests burn regularly and have no human inhabitants, grazing, timber cutting, or fire suppression. Paulo Plateau in the Grand Canyon is a good example of a healthy forest. All human activity increases the risk of wildfire. There must be a discussion about external threats, including human activity. Use tools and resources available, such as grazing and timber harvesting.
- Fire resiliency must be achieved. If coexistence in fire-adapted communities is not possible, there will continue to be uncharacteristic, catastrophic events. Fire must return to its natural cycle.
- Considering the inevitable population growth and expansion, it is important to have designated wilderness areas that do not have any encroachment from human forces.
- Harvesting should be done wherever it is accessible. Logging should have continued despite issues with the spotted owl. The forest became unmanageable.
- Ecological integrity is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 219.19.36 as "the quality or condition of an ecosystem when its dominant ecological characteristics occur within the natural range of variation and can withstand and recover from most perturbations imposed by natural environmental dynamics or human influence."
- While it is important to have a scientifically-informed discussion, there are uncertainties and disagreements within science.
- When considering designated wilderness area suitability and proactive fire management, the USFS has a clear process. First, a geographic information system (GIS) is used based on the criteria. Then an evaluation remaining land is completed. Regarding fire management, the USFS analyzes all alternatives and other uses. Criteria may or may not be publicly accessible.

INVENTORY OF LANDS WITH POTENTIAL WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

Eric Flood, Recreation Planner, explained the process for identifying and evaluating lands that may be suitable to recommend to Congress for Wilderness Designation. When Congress passed the original Wilderness Act in 1964, they instructed the Secretary of Agriculture to periodically assess wilderness characteristics on national forests.

- It is required by law and policy that every national forest undertaking forest plan revision must undergo this process, which involves four steps. Each step in the process reduces the number of acres being evaluated:

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- **Step one:** The USFS performs a broad and inclusive inventory of lands that may have potential wilderness characteristics.
- **Step two:** Sites are evaluated for wilderness characteristics. They are evaluated for apparent naturalness, opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, and manageability to protect wilderness characteristics.
- **Step three:** A range of alternatives are analyzed. Inclusion in alternatives is based on the compatibility with the “theme” of each.
- **Step four:** The Forest Supervisor decides which, if any, lands to recommend to Congress for designation. Congress may or may not act upon this recommendation.
- The Gila National Forest planning team is currently in the first step of the process. First, any areas that contain any open roads are excluded, with a 300-foot buffer (which can be adjusted on a case-by-case basis). The planning team will then identify and remove all areas with “substantially noticeable” improvements and installations. Finally, the planning team will remove areas that are “unmanageable as wilderness areas due to their size.” Areas less than 5,000 acres that do not border an existing wilderness area are not generally considered manageable unless they have unique circumstances due to terrain, location, natural barriers, etc.
- As part of the inventory of lands with potential wilderness characteristics process, the Gila National Forest must determine what existing structures and improvements are “substantially noticeable” and exclude them from the inventoried areas.
- Participants were asked to write their responses to the following 3 questions on a sticky note for each of 11 pictures with a manmade structure or improvement in it:
 - Do you think the structure or improvement in this picture is substantially noticeable?
 - Why or why not?
 - Can you think of any change in circumstance that would change your answer to question number one?

Clarifying Questions from Participants

Participants asked clarifying questions regarding the “substantially noticeable” exercise. Questions are indicated in italics with responses below.

How does wilderness designation impact fire management in the area? How does wilderness designation impact existing uses on the land?

The Forest Supervisor will decide what areas, if any, will be recommended to Congress as for wilderness designation. Congress can choose not to follow the recommendations.

What happens when an improvement is in the middle of the recommended area? How does the 300-foot buffer apply in that context?

That is difficult. It may come down to a decision about how substantially noticeable the single improvement is in the large area. It would depend how many improvements there were in the area.

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Should we allow the statutory language “untrammeled by man” to influence the decision on “substantially noticeable?”

There is no right way to do the exercise. You may if you would like. The term “substantially noticeable” originates from the Wilderness Act.

Should we take into consideration the fact that most of these improvements already exist in the wilderness?

If you would like to put it in that context, that is fine. There is not right way to do the exercise.

RESULTS OF GROUP EXERCISE (Letters before responses do not connote meaning or value; they have been added to facilitate reading the table below. Each letter corresponds to a single person’s response for that picture.)

Improvement or Structure	Do you think this picture is substantially noticeable?	Why or why not?	Is there any change in circumstance that would change your answer to #1?
Wildlife Guzzler (with bear)	a. Yes b. Yes c. Yes d. Yes e. Yes f. Yes g. Yes h. Yes i. No j. No k. No	a. It is not cool b. It is obviously a man-made artificial water source c. It provides water for animals d. Water storage helps wildlife e. It could be one of many such improvements f. It will need to be maintained. What else is in the area? A well or pipeline? g. There is a tire h. There is a bear in the water i. It has a small footprint and a low impact j. It is too small to influence the experience k. It blends into the overall environment	a. No b. If designated wilderness, allow for either maintenance or removal c. No d. Leave it as it is e. No f. No g. Remove it h. No i. No j. If there were a lot of them in a small area k. It could be removed for safety

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Improvement or Structure	Do you think this picture is substantially noticeable?	Why or why not?	Is there any change in circumstance that would change your answer to #1?
	l. No m. No n. No o. No p. No q. No	l. It is junk m. It would not be seen until close-up n. The scale is small in an area that would likely be +5,000 acres o. It has a localized impact and would not impact user experience in the larger landscape p. It has a small footprint q. It is small and easily missed by visitors	l. Correct it m. If it was one of many n. No o. Remove it when out of order and restore in spring p. No q. N/A
Wildlife Guzzler	a. Yes b. Yes c. Yes d. Yes e. Yes f. Yes g. Yes h. Yes i. Yes j. Yes k. Yes	a. It provides storage b. There is metal fencing c. But it is a great water source d. It is a big noticeable object e. There is junk everywhere f. It is metal storage g. It is large and silver and will require maintenance, which means there must be roads and new materials h. It is obvious i. It is metal and obvious j. It is a human improvement k. There is a sign and new materials	a. No b. Remove it c. N/A d. Remove it e. No f. No g. No h. Remove it or change the way it looks i. I would not use this as a reason to not include it in inventory if this is only part of limited improvements j. No k. Remove it

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Improvement or Structure	Do you think this picture is substantially noticeable?	Why or why not?	Is there any change in circumstance that would change your answer to #1?
	l. Yes m. Yes n. Yes o. Yes p. Yes q. No	l. It is obviously human-installed m. But water is necessary n. It is a wildlife waterer o. The materials, active use, and obvious human impact p. N/A q. There is a localized impact and it can be maintained by foot or horse. Such devices already exist in the wilderness	l. Allow for maintenance or remove it m. No n. No o. No p. If the structure needs to be maintained or is no longer functioning, get rid of it and designate the area as wilderness q. Remove it if it is abandoned
Aging Cabin	a. Yes b. Yes c. Yes d. Yes e. Yes f. Yes g. Yes h. Yes i. Yes j. Yes k. Yes	a. It is a human improvement b. But it fits c. Leave it as it is or designate it as historic and scenic d. It is part of history e. It is an old cabin f. But it is okay because it will naturally degrade g. It is a log cabin h. It is a building i. It is an obvious human development j. It draws the eye k. It is a man-made structure	a. It should be considered historic b. No c. No d. No e. No f. Remove the sign g. Remove the cabin h. If it is removed i. If it is in use (occupied) and less than 50 years old, tear it down j. No k. No, it is historical

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Improvement or Structure	Do you think this picture is substantially noticeable?	Why or why not?	Is there any change in circumstance that would change your answer to #1?
	l. No m. No n. No o. No p. No q. No r. No s. No	l. It is an old historic cabin and should not be disqualified as wilderness m. It will go away with time n. It suits the landscape o. It will disintegrate p. It is an historic site with localized impact and exists in many wilderness areas q. It is historic r. It blends in with the environment and will eventually fall apart s. It is likely historic. There are similar buildings in the wilderness	l. Leave it! m. No n. The historic building will fall down o. Dismantle it p. Fire will destroy it q. It is part of the landscape now r. Refurbishing or improving it would make it more noticeable s. N/A
Lookout Tower and Communication Site	a. Yes b. Yes c. Yes d. Yes e. Yes f. Yes g. Yes	a. It has a metal antennae, and a painted building b. N/A c. There are metal objects and it can be seen from far away d. It is viewable from many places e. It does not fit in with the surrounding wilderness f. There is a building and a tower g. If it needs to be maintained it should not qualify for wilderness	a. If it is not used, remove it all b. Paint it c. Remove the antennas, but leave the historical building d. N/A e. No f. No g. If it is no longer functional, get rid of it and let it be wilderness

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Improvement or Structure	Do you think this picture is substantially noticeable?	Why or why not?	Is there any change in circumstance that would change your answer to #1?
	h. Yes i. Yes j. Yes k. Yes l. Yes m. Yes n. Yes o. Yes p. Yes	h. But it is necessary for communication i. It is a tower j. The height and materials ruin the view k. It is a communication station l. There is an antenna and building m. It is too developed and on the top of a mountain so you can see it from everywhere n. It is an obvious human development o. It is a needed human use p. It is ugly and inconsistent with the landscape	h. No i. No j. Remove it k. No l. No m. Exclude it n. No o. No p. No
Solar Panel	a. Yes b. Yes c. Yes d. Yes e. Yes f. Yes g. Yes h. Yes i. Yes j. Yes k. Yes	a. It is an obvious human improvement b. It does not fit in c. It is metal and man-made d. It is a solar panel e. It is too modern and metal f. It is recent construction and not local materials g. It is a solar panel h. It is so obviously human and techy i. It is poorly placed j. It provides power for water k. But solar panels serve a purpose	a. Remove it b. Remove it c. Remove it d. Remove it e. Remove it f. Evaluate its use. Is the supported unit more noticeable? g. The area may be developed and there may be a road. If not, remove it. h. If it was the only thing on a huge road-less area i. No j. No k. Leave it as it is

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	l. Yes m. Yes n. No o. No p. No	l. N/A m. It is a human installment and is probably in use n. There is a small local impact and it does not impact the area as a whole o. It is a solar panel p. It has a small footprint	l. If it is no longer functional, get rid of it. Then the area will look like wilderness m. Relocate it to another site that will not impact intended use n. N/A o. Yes p. No
Clear-Cut Area	a. Yes b. Yes c. Yes d. Yes e. Yes f. Yes g. Yes h. Yes i. Yes j. Yes k. Yes l. Yes m. Yes	a. It implies logging jobs and taxes b. It is a clear cut c. It is a clear cut d. It was a thick forest e. They clear-cut the forest f. There was logging g. It is a bad log job h. It is very noticeable but could still be wilderness i. It was logged off. There must be roads to support logging j. It does not blend in k. Not okay with logging in wilderness areas l. It was logged m. The logging looks recent and obvious	a. No b. Replant it c. After ten years of growth it will be okay. Plenty of wilderness areas have been logged d. No e. Allow it to regenerate f. Yes g. No h. N/A i. 75 years it will be okay j. It will grow back k. N/A l. N/A m. No

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	n. Yes o. Yes p. No q. No r. No s. No t. No	n. The forest condition is not sustainable without treatments o. It is a scar on the landscape p. It will grow back if it is left alone q. Open space can occur in nature and can recover over time r. It depends on the size of the logged area s. Tree canopies vary depending on viewpoint t. It will recover!	n. N/A o. It will grow back p. If there was a valid existing timber lease that was ongoing q. Additional logging would make it more noticeable r. Leave it untouched for 20 plus years s. It is unavoidable t. No
Fish Barrier	a. Yes b. Yes c. Yes d. Yes e. Yes f. Yes g. No h. No i. No j. No k. No l. No	a. But it is natural b. There is a utility pole on the rock c. It shows water recreation d. It is a waterfall e. It substantially disrupts the creek f. It shows human degradation g. It is barely recognizable as human use h. It blends into the environment i. It is not obviously man-made j. It blends into the landscape k. There is no obvious human influence l. Man-made small rock dams already exist in the wilderness	a. Remove the pole on the rock b. Remove it c. No d. No e. Blow it up f. No g. No h. No i. No j. No k. N/A l. Leave it

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	m. No n. No o. No p. No q. No	m. It is barely noticeable. These are already allowed in the wilderness. n. It is not noticeable o. It fits p. It looks natural q. It looks okay	m. Someday a flood will knock it down n. No o. No. it might be a fish barrier p. N/A q. No
Windmill	a. Yes b. Yes c. Yes d. Yes e. Yes f. Yes g. Yes h. Yes i. Yes j. Yes k. Yes l. Yes m. No n. No	a. It is a tall object b. The height and man-made materials c. There is windmill and tank d. There is a windmill and water tank e. There is a windmill and water in the meadow f. It is an in-use livestock waterer g. It is a human use improvement h. It is a windmill i. It is tall and will take equipment to maintain j. It is a good place k. It is too obtrusive and obviously still used by livestock l. It is a water source m. It is a small thing in a big area and not noticeable n. It has a localized impact. It can be removed when it is	a. Put in a solar pump but keep water b. Remove it or use solar pump c. It may have been logged or grazed. If not, remove it d. No e. No f. No g. No h. No i. No j. No k. No l. Fixed the disturbed area m. N/A n. Remove it when it is abandoned

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	o. No	<p>abandoned and can be maintained on foot or by horse</p> <p>o. The Wilderness Act provides for grazing “when existing” so this should be part of that</p>	o. How many are there?
Range Fence	<p>a. Yes</p> <p>b. Yes</p> <p>c. Yes</p> <p>d. Yes</p> <p>e. Yes</p> <p>f. Yes</p> <p>g. Yes</p> <p>h. Yes</p> <p>i. Yes</p> <p>j. Yes</p> <p>k. Yes</p> <p>l. Yes</p> <p>m. Yes</p> <p>n. Yes</p>	<p>a. It is obviously being used</p> <p>b. The highway is visible from all locations</p> <p>c. There is a highway and power lines</p> <p>d. There is a road</p> <p>e. There are man-made structures and powerlines visible from above</p> <p>f. There are rain clouds</p> <p>g. There is a paved road, power lines, fence, and buildings</p> <p>h. There is a road and development</p> <p>i. It is good range land</p> <p>j. There is a road and infrastructure</p> <p>k. There are human impacts visible in the open setting</p> <p>l. There are roads, buildings, signs, and utilities</p> <p>m. It is a large-scale modern use of the land</p> <p>n. There is a divided highway and a well-defined fence present</p>	<p>a. No</p> <p>b. No change</p> <p>c. No</p> <p>d. No</p> <p>e. N/A</p> <p>f. No</p> <p>g. It is too developed</p> <p>h. No</p> <p>i. No</p> <p>j. No</p> <p>k. Draw the boundary up to the edge of impacts</p> <p>l. No</p> <p>m. No</p> <p>n. The areas on the horizon may be considered for wilderness, provided they</p>

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Improvement or Structure	Do you think this picture is substantially noticeable?	Why or why not?	Is there any change in circumstance that would change your answer to #1?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o. Yes p. No q. No r. No s. No 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o. The road (paved highway) and fence installation are quite noticeable p. There is no meaningful impact q. The length of the landscape (blends in) r. The landscape looks natural s. It looks okay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> meet the requirements o. N/A p. No q. No r. N/A s. No
Aging Corral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. Yes c. Yes d. Yes e. Yes f. Yes g. Yes h. Yes i. Yes j. No k. No l. No m. No 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. It is an old corral b. It is part of history c. It is a corral d. It shows human use e. It is an obvious human development f. It is part of history g. Do not destroy it. It is historic and somewhat scenic h. But it is okay i. There is modern fencing j. It will disintegrate k. There are old rotting parts and it is made from local materials l. It blends into the landscape and is no longer in use m. It is a big landscape with hills, and fences that are not maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. No b. No c. Yes d. It should not be removed e. If it is less than 50 years old and no longer in use, tear it down f. No g. No h. No i. Remove it j. Active use would change the perception k. N/A l. It will eventually fall apart m. Removal would be best

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	<p>n. No</p> <p>o. No</p> <p>p. No</p> <p>q. No</p>	<p>n. It is almost dirt</p> <p>o. It blends in with the environment and is made from natural materials</p> <p>p. So what if there is an old corral?</p> <p>q. It is old and not used and will go away with time</p>	<p>n. It will burn up someday so it will not be an issue</p> <p>o. No</p> <p>p. Either leave it or get rid of it</p> <p>q. No</p>
Aging Range Fence	<p>a. Yes</p> <p>b. Yes</p> <p>c. Yes</p> <p>d. Yes</p> <p>e. Yes</p> <p>f. Yes</p> <p>g. Yes</p> <p>h. Yes</p> <p>i. Yes</p> <p>j. No</p> <p>k. No</p> <p>l. No</p> <p>m. No</p> <p>n. No</p> <p>o. No</p>	<p>a. It is a fence</p> <p>b. It is part of history</p> <p>c. It is made by humans</p> <p>d. It is a human improvement</p> <p>e. It is an old fence</p> <p>f. It is historical but should be protected</p> <p>g. Leave it as it is</p> <p>h. It is man-made and large</p> <p>i. It is large</p> <p>j. It is a rotting old fence likely made a long time ago from local materials</p> <p>k. It blends in, and the landscape is undisturbed</p> <p>l. It is not unsightly</p> <p>m. It is an old divider fence that is partially dilapidated and no longer serves a use</p> <p>n. The wood material blends with the view and is not offensive</p> <p>o. It is aesthetically inoffensive, is disintegrating, and reflect human activity that is part of history, not ongoing.</p>	<p>a. Yes</p> <p>b. No</p> <p>c. Remove it</p> <p>d. It could be removed</p> <p>e. No</p> <p>f. No</p> <p>g. No</p> <p>h. N/A</p> <p>i. No</p> <p>j. No</p> <p>k. N/A</p> <p>l. N/A</p> <p>m. No change is needed</p> <p>n. If it was part of an in-use allotment boundary</p> <p>o. No</p>

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	p. No	p. It is made from natural materials and will go away	p. No
	q. No	q. It blends into the landscape	q. No longer in use and it will fall down
	r. No	r. It is historic, almost dirt. Decay proves that nature is in charge	r. Fire will destroy it

RESULTS

Each picture was presented to the large group and the facilitator reported on the themes and commonalities among the participants’ responses. Several common themes emerged from participants’ input across all visual improvements. Many participants articulated that their decision regarding a structure’s noticeability depended on the following components of the structure:

- The materials
- The localized impact
- The purpose or intent
- The size and height
- The frequency
- The required maintenance
- The impact on vegetation or wildlife distribution

Participants then discussed each picture, sharing additional perspectives about each picture that were not captured in their written comments. The facilitator noted common themes among these comments and the written comments regarding whether each manmade improvement in the pictures was “substantially noticeable.” This discussion is summarized below.

Wildlife guzzler

- *Yes, because:*
 - It is a human installation; the size is too large; it provides water storage; it is a large structure; it requires maintenance; it changes the default distribution of wildlife and the distribution of human impact.
- *No, because:*
 - It has a localized impact; the purpose is important.
- *Changes or suggested improvements:*

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- Remove it.
- There is nothing to be done for this one.

Wildlife Guzzler (with bear)

- *Yes, because:*
 - It has a human function; it needs to be maintained.
- *No, because:*
 - It blends into the environment; it has a small footprint and overall low impact; the scale is small in a large area.
- *Changes or suggested improvements:*
 - Remove it.
 - Restore the natural area.

Aging Cabin

- *Yes, because:*
 - It is manmade.
- *No, because:*
 - It is historical; it suits the landscape; it is going to decompose over time.
- *Changes or suggested improvements:*
 - The interpretive sign could be removed, but it may tell the story of why the cabin was kept in the wilderness.
 - There could be a sign on the trailhead that provided information about the cabin.
 - Signs foster discussions and provide educational opportunities. Humans are part of the story and natural ecology.

Lookout Tower and Communication Site

- *Yes, because (it was unanimous):*
 - There are unnatural materials; it is too tall; it is too developed; it will impact the viewshed; it is ugly.
- *Changes or suggested improvements:*
 - It depends if there is an associated maintenance road.

Solar Panel

- *Yes, because:*
 - It is metal; it is manmade; there are not many right angles in nature.
- *No, because:*
 - It has a small footprint.
- *Changes or suggested improvements:*
 - Get rid of it if it is no longer functional.
 - It must be powering something meaningful such as a water feature.

Clear-cut area

- *Yes, because:*
 - It is a big area; it does not blend in; it is very noticeable; it is recent and obvious; it is a scar on the landscape; there are jobs and social values associated with it.

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- *No, because:*
 - Open spaces occur in nature over time; it will recover; tree canopies vary based on viewpoint.
- *Changes or suggested improvements:*
 - It must be viewed from a bigger perspective of what surrounds the picture.
 - It could grow back over time.
 - It requires maintenance.

Fish Barrier

- *Yes, because:*
 - There is a utility pole; it would change the distribution of wildlife and landscape.
- *No, because:*
 - It is natural, it is barely noticeable; it is not recognizable as human use.
- *Changes or suggested improvements:*
 - Discussion should revolve around the Gila and the intended purpose, because that may be different than other locations.
 - It depends on the size of the surrounding area.

Windmill

- *Yes, because:*
 - It is a human improvement.
- *No, because:*
 - It is important for livestock; they currently exist in the wilderness.
- *Changes or suggested improvements:*
 - It depends how many there are in the area.
 - They must be spread out across the landscape.
 - If grazing historically occurred in the area, it can continue.

Range Fence

- *Yes, because:*
 - It is a man-made structure; there are visual impacts in an open setting.
- *No, because:*
 - The visual impact is minimized in the overall landscape.
- *Changes or suggested improvements:*
 - Draw the boundary to the edge.
 - The aggregate impact of individual range improvements matter.

Aging Corral

- *Yes, because:*
 - It is a sign of human use.
- *No, because:*
 - It is almost dirt; it is part of a bigger landscape; the fence is not maintained; it blends in; it will deteriorate; it is historic.
- *Changes or suggested improvements:*

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- It depends on relative age; tear it down if it is less than 50 years old.
- It shows that the forest has always been diversifying and has always been multiple use.
- It could be used again.

Aging Range Fence

- *Yes, because:*
 - It is man-made; it is going to deteriorate; it is historical.
- *No, because:*
 - It is aesthetically inoffensive; it is disintegrating; it blends in.
- *Changes or suggested improvements:*
 - It could be removed, but there may be regulations about historical structures. The Historic Preservation Act requires that any restoration of structures over 50 years old must be done in a way that aligns with that era.
 - If restored, cost should be considered.

NEXT STEPS

Matt Schultz, Forest Planner, offered closing remarks and next steps.

- Participants on the contact list will be provided an opportunity to offer comments on the draft definition of “substantially noticeable” for the inventory of lands that may have wilderness characteristics.
- There will be more community meetings and technical meetings to focus on specific topics. Suggestions for additional topics for the technical meetings given during this meeting will be considered, and all participants on the contact list will be invited.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS

Participants offered feedback on the structure of the technical meeting. Their feedback is summarized below.

- There have been similar meetings for other forests that are longer and less engaging.
- It would have been helpful to understand the format of the meeting ahead of time.
- This meeting was well-designed. The facilitation was good. The exercises connected to the purpose.
- Public officials should go out and consult with their constituencies about their priorities and encourage them to attend upcoming community meetings. If there is a standing meeting that community members attend, public officials can invite a USFS representative to attend and speak about the forest plan revision and its application to that specific area.

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- It would be helpful if the USFS compiled a synopsis of the technical meetings that is directed toward specific groups or populations who may not be able to attend the meetings (timber producers, ranchers, people who live in the WUI, etc.). Leaders of those groups could also create a similar document.