

# **SALMON AND CHALLIS FOREST PLANS**

## **ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES INFLUENCING FOREST PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The forest plans for the Salmon-Challis National Forest were written in the late 1980s. In fall 2016, the Salmon-Challis National Forest began engaging stakeholders in deciding whether to revise the forest plans. During that process, stakeholders were interested in discussing changes that influence if forest plans need revision.

While there are many factors that can influence if forest plans need revision, this document describes three administrative changes that have happened since the plans were written:

1. [Endangered Species Act](#) listings and the [PACFISH/INFISH Plan Amendments](#);
2. [the 2008 Idaho Roadless Rule](#); and
3. [National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy](#).

### **BACKGROUND**

Generally speaking, forest plans identify goals and objectives and provide guidance for management that contributes to meeting them. When forest plans are written, they are based on the issues and conditions at the time and what is reasonably foreseeable. However, as recognized in Section 6 of the [National Forest Management Act](#), issues and conditions can change over time, and this influences whether direction is still relevant and useful.

Deciding if forest plans should be amended or revised requires, in part, an understanding of the major changes that have occurred since those plans were written. The 2012 Planning Rule refers to this concept as the “need for change.” Both forest plans were developed prior to administrative changes that may have influenced their implementation. The remainder of this document discusses three important administrative changes.

### **1990S ERA ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT LISTINGS AND THE PACFISH/INFISH PLAN AMENDMENTS**

In the 1990s, Snake River Chinook salmon, Snake River steelhead, and Columbia Basin bull trout were listed by the National Marine Fisheries Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Following the listings, the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management developed two strategies to address management for aquatic and riparian habitats:

- (1) Pacific Anadromous Fish Strategy (PACFISH)—this strategy addresses rivers and streams with anadromous fish (fish that live in the ocean but swim up rivers to spawn); including, Chinook salmon and steelhead.
- (2) Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH)—this strategy addresses rivers and streams without anadromous fish (fish that spend their lives in rivers and streams); including bull trout.

These strategies were incorporated into the forest plans as forest plan amendments in 1995.

While PACFISH and INFISH involve different fish species, they are similar in several respects. First, they both identify the need to protect and restore riparian areas. Riparian areas border rivers and streams and range from 50 to 300 feet on either side. Second, they both establish landscape scale riparian management objectives that describe conditions for fish habitat at a watershed scale. Third, they both largely prohibit timber harvest, including firewood, within riparian areas.

Fourth, grazing and fire and fuels management actions are allowed within the riparian areas only if it can be shown that it will not prevent attaining riparian management objectives. With regards to grazing management, in some cases, constraints and limitations have been placed on permittees; for example: timing restrictions, intensity reductions, reduced flexibility in overall use and management, or a reduction in head months.

Because the current Salmon-Challis National Forest plans were written before PACFISH and INFISH, none of the direction in those plans accounts for the adjustment in management for riparian areas. At the time the forest plans were written, it was not foreseeable and the plans did not account for the listing of Snake River Chinook salmon, Snake River steelhead, and Columbia Basin bull trout or the direction that followed.

## IDAHO ROADLESS RULE

In 2008, the Forest Service adopted the Idaho Roadless Rule. The Idaho Roadless Rule provides management direction for designated Roadless areas in the State of Idaho. Roadless areas make up 2.2 million acres, or about 50% of the Salmon-Challis National Forest. The Idaho Roadless Rule establishes five management themes that include prohibitions with exceptions or conditioned permissions governing road construction, timber cutting, and discretionary mineral development.

These exceptions or conditioned permissions vary depending on the management theme. The Salmon-Challis National Forest has four of the five management themes:

1. Backcountry accounts for 1.8 million acres;
2. Wild Land Recreation accounts for 300,000 acres;
3. General Forest, Rangeland, and Grassland accounts for 100,000 acres;
4. Primitive accounts for 10,000 acres.

The Salmon-Challis has no acres categorized as Special Areas of Historic or Tribal Significance.

The current forest plans include direction that relates to road construction, timber cutting, and mineral development. Because current forest plan direction was written

before the 2008 Idaho Roadless Rule was adopted, it does not account for the prohibitions with exceptions or conditioned permissions related to timber cutting, road construction or discretionary mineral development in the 2008 Idaho Roadless Rule. In addition, designated Roadless areas are about 50% of the Salmon-Challis National Forest.

## **FIRE POLICY CHANGES**

In 1989, the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior formed a fire policy review team. This team reviewed federal wildland fire management policy and published [a report in 1995](#). One of the key findings in their report is that “[w]ildland fire, as a critical natural process, must be reintroduced into the ecosystem.”

The report also identified guiding principles that “are fundamental to the success of the Federal wildland fire management program and the implementation of review recommendations.” With respect to the role of wildland fire, one of the principles is that: “[t]he role of wildland fire as an essential ecological process and natural change agent will be incorporated into the planning process.”

Following the 1995 review report, the Governmental Accountability Office wrote a [report in 1999](#) recommending that the Forest Service develop a cohesive strategy. The recommendation for the cohesive strategy was again made during testimony in 2007 to the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, Committee on Natural Resources, House of Representatives.

In 2014, a cohesive strategy was finalized and submitted. Titled, the “National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy,” it provides the strategic direction necessary to, “safely and effectively extinguish fire when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and, as a Nation, live with wildland fire.”

The current forest plans both include direction that relates to fire management and suppression. Because current forest plan direction was written shortly before the review and revision of the national fire policy, it does not account for or include the fire management principles adopted by the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.