

Chapter 2 – Key Questions and Issues

2.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the issues and questions used to guide the analysis. The issues and questions are derived from elements of the Red River environment most relevant to management questions, human values, or resource conditions. The issues and questions are separated into two categories: key issues and questions and supplemental issues and questions. The key issues and questions are driving the need for this analysis. Supplemental issues and questions address additional elements that will aid in characterizing the watershed and developing management recommendations.

Section 2.1 identifies the Key Issues and Questions. Key issues are listed in bold under three categories: Aquatic Resources, Terrestrial Resources and Human Uses. The questions that need to be answered to address these issues are listed under each Issue. Included under each category are summary questions, which are those questions that will be addressed in Chapter 5, Functional Themes, Synthesis and Recommendations, or in Chapter 6, Integrated Themes, Recommendations and Project Opportunities.

Section 2.2 identifies the Supplemental Issues and Questions. They are listed under three categories: Physical Resources, Terrestrial Resources and Human Uses. Most categories include summary questions, discussed above.

2.1 Key Issues and Questions

The ID Team identified eleven key issues and questions driving this watershed analysis. These are listed in bold type in this section. For several of the key issues, additional questions that need to be addressed to answer the key issue are also listed, if applicable. Summary Questions are also listed. The bolded numbers following the questions reference that section of the document where the question is addressed.

2.1.1 Aquatic Resources

Issue 1: What are the current versus historic watershed conditions and processes?

- What were the historic hydrologic regimes, channel morphology, water quality, and pattern of hydrologic states in the area under natural disturbance regimes? (**Sections 4.1, 4.2, 4.3**)
- What is the current watershed condition, and what changes in regime, channel conditions, water quality, and pattern of hydrologic states have occurred? (**Sections 4.1, 4.2, 4.3**)
- What is the occurrence of different geologic substrata and surface deposits in the watershed and how do they affect soil and watershed processes? (**Section 4.1.3**)
- What are the historic and current erosion, mass wasting, and soil productivity conditions in the analysis area? (**Section 4.1.4**)
- What are the greatest departures from the natural state in soil conditions and disturbance regimes? (**Section 4.1.4**)
- Are there Water Quality Limited Streams in the watershed and what are the management implications? (**Section 4.2.6**)

Issue 2: What are the current aquatic habitat conditions and species density and distribution?

- What is the inherent potential of the aquatic habitat to support aquatic species? (Section 4.2.9)
- What was the historic pattern of aquatic habitat condition, and the relationship between this habitat and the natural disturbance regimes? (Section 4.2.9)
- What are the interrelationships, population dynamics, and current threats to the fish populations? (Section 4.2.10)

Issue 3: What is the status of Red River in respect to upward trend requirements?

This question has not yet been addressed

Issue 4: What are the conditions in RHCAs with respect to historic conditions and Riparian Management Objectives? (Section 4.2.8)**Summary Questions:**

- What are specific watershed improvement needs and priorities, in addition to those listed under fisheries issues? (Section 5.2.1)
- What are the priority management needs, including themes, to achieve watershed aquatic objectives? (Section 5.2.1)
- Where are specific watershed or habitat improvement needs, and their priorities, to achieve the aquatic objectives? (Section 5.2.1)

2.1.2 Terrestrial Resources**Issue 5: What are historic versus current landscape conditions and processes?**

- What was the pattern of historic plant communities and their disturbance regimes? (Sections 4.3.3, 4.3.4)
- How have plant community composition, stand structure, and landscape pattern changed as a result of fire exclusion policy, harvest, livestock grazing and road building? (Section 4.3.5)
- Where and to what extent have insect and disease agents changed from historic levels? (Section 4.3.5)
- How have specific elements (e.g., large blocks of mature forest, early seral communities with snags, forest understories, and non-forest communities) changed from historic ranges? (Section 4.3.3)
- How much and where are existing old growth that meet Forest Plan or North Idaho old growth standards? (Sections 4.3.3, 4.3.8)
- How does this compare with Forest Plan and historic occurrence of old growth? (Sections 4.3.3, 4.3.8)
- How has insect and disease activity changed from probable natural patterns? (Section 4.3.5)

- How have changes in plant community composition and structure affected susceptibility to different pathogens? (**Section 4.3.5**)
- What were natural fire regimes and fire history in the assessment area? (**Section 4.3.5**)
- How have fuels, ignitions, and fire risk changed as a consequence of fire suppression and harvest? Is the likelihood of large severe fires greater than historically? (**Section 4.3.5**)
- What is the likelihood of large, severe fires? (**Section 4.3.5**)
- How well has timber harvest replicated the pattern of wildland fire in the assessment area in terms of frequency, severity, and extent? (**Section 4.3.5**)

Summary Questions

- What restoration and conservation strategies are suited to move landscapes elements closer to more natural patterns of composition and structure? (**Section 5.3.1**)
- What are the appropriate scale, frequency, and kinds of disturbance to sustain or restore the variability and character of plant communities? (**Section 5.3.1**)
- What kinds of management activities can promote increased resistance or resilience to wildfire while remaining consonant with landscape setting and natural disturbance regimes? (**Sections 5.3.1, 6.3**)
- Where are the priorities for fuel hazard reduction, in response to mountain beetle effects on lodgepole pine and social and ecological values at risk in the event of fire? (**Sections 5.3.1, 6.2.3, 6.3**)

Issue 6: What are current versus historic TES species abundance and distribution?

- What is the suitability of different habitats for rare wildlife species in the area? (**Section 4.3.8**)
- Are there known populations of rare species in the area? (**Sections 4.3.6 – 4.3.8**)
- What species are important in the watershed and what is the relative abundance and distribution of species of concern that are important in the watershed (e.g. threatened, endangered, sensitive, rare species)? What is the distribution and character of their habitats? (**Sections 4.3.6 – 4.3.8**)
- What are the current habitat conditions and trends for the species of concern, e.g., old forest (old growth) habitat quantity, quality and distribution; big game security area size and distribution; successional stage diversity, patch size and distribution? (**Section 4.3.8**)
- What was the historical relative abundance and distribution of species of concern and the condition and distribution of their habitats in the watershed? (**Sections 4.3.7, 4.3.8**)
- What are the natural and human causes of change between historical and current species distribution and habitat quality for species of concern in the watershed? What are the influences and relationships of species and their habitat with other ecosystem processes in the watershed? (**Section 4.3.8**)
- What was the extent and location of the historic habitat for wildlife species given the natural disturbance regimes in the area? (**Section 4.3.8**)

- How has current habitat changed from historic range? (**Section 4.3.8**)
- What is the current status of wildlife security, how has it changed and what are the trends? (**Section 4.3.8**)
- What areas currently support wildlife species sensitive to human disturbance? (**Section 4.3.8**)

Summary Questions:

- What strategy is recommended to allocate and manage old growth to move closer to the historic range? (**Sections 4.3.1, 5.3.1**)
- What and where are the priorities for rare species habitat restoration, protection enhancement and inventories? (**Sections 5.3.1 – 5.3.4**)
- What types of restoration efforts can be implemented to improve and maintain quality wildlife habitats in the short and long term? (**Sections 5.3.1 – 5.3.4**)
- What current areas are priorities to manage toward historic conditions and what treatments are compatible with reestablishing historic conditions? (**Sections 5.3.1 – 5.3.4**)
- What actions can improve wildlife security? (**Section 5.3.3**)

2.1.3 Human Uses

Issue 7: What are the Nez Perce Tribe’s concerns, values and uses of the watershed?

- What are the historic uses of the watershed by members of the Nez Perce Tribe? (**Sections 4.4.5, 5.4.3**)
- What are the current uses of the watershed by members of the Nez Perce Tribe? (**Sections 4.4.5, 5.4.3**)
 - Do tribal members exercise their fishing, hunting, gathering and grazing rights in the watershed? If so, how, when, and where? (**Sections 4.4.5, 5.4.3**)
 - Do tribal members access and camp in the watershed in pursuit of these treaty rights, and if so, how, when, and where? (**Sections 4.4.5, 5.4.3**)
- Does the Forest Service’s current management of the watershed affect the ability of tribal members to exercise their treaty rights, and if so, what are the effects? (**Sections 4.4.5, 5.0, 5.4.3**)

Issue 8: What is the potential fire risk to resources in the area? (Sections 5.2.1, 5.3.1, 5.3.3, 5.4.1, 5.4.4)

Issue 9: What are public expectations for harvesting dead and dying trees? (Section 4.4.1)

Issue 10: Can diverse recreation be accommodated across the watershed? (Section 4.4.2)

Issue 11: What is the transportation system that will best accommodate watershed recovery and human uses?

- What are the extent, condition and use of the road system? (**Section 4.4.8**)
- What is the current extent, condition, and use of unclassified roads? (**Section 4.4.8**)

- What are the resource impacts on the analysis area from the system of roads? (Sections 4.2.8, 4.2.10, 5.4.4)
- How does the current road system influence the potential recovery and migration of aquatic species? (Sections 4.2.8, 4.2.10, 5.4.4)
- What roads currently provide the greatest corridor to the spread of invasive plants and noxious weeds? (Section 4.3.5)
- What is the jurisdiction of roads in the system? (Section 4.4.8)
- What is the location and condition of bridges? (Section 4.4.8)
- What is the core system of roads required to access private lands, mineral claims and special uses, as well as support vegetation management, livestock management, weed treatment, prescribed fire, public uses, preserve historic travel ways, and meet basic forest travel needs? (Sections 4.4.2, 4.4.8, 4.4.9)
- What are the current access prescriptions on roads? (Section 4.4.8)
- Do the access prescriptions meet the needs of the public, administration, wildlife, aquatics and plant communities/weed invasion? (Sections 4.3.8, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 4.4.5, 4.4.8)
- What are the future trends for access needs? (Section 4.4.3)
- Are there new travel routes compatible with the recovery objectives? (Section 5.4.2)
- What are the current right-of-way needs in Red River? (Section 4.4.8)

Summary Questions:

- Are integrated recommendations compatible with tribal members' ability to exercise treaty rights? If not disclose any conflicts. (Sections 5.0, 5.4.4)
- What are specific road management recommendations and priorities given the aquatic, terrestrial, and human uses, including maintenance, decommissioning, reconstruction, realignment, and other management? (Section 5.4.4)
- Are new routes needed to support other management objectives? (Section 5.4.4)

2.2 Supplemental Issues and Questions

This section identifies the issues and questions that provide important contextual information to help characterize the watershed, or are supplemental issues that are relevant but not key to this assessment. Summary questions are listed for some of the categories.

2.2.1 Physical Resources

Issue: What is the general climate of the watershed? (Section 4.1.1)

2.2.2 Terrestrial Resources

Issue: Introduced plant species and noxious weeds

- What areas are most susceptible to noxious weed invasion? (Section 4.3.5, Map 37)
- Where are current infestations? (Section 4.3.5, Map 35)

- What is the risk of current infestations spreading? (**Section 4.3.5, Map 38**)
- What are current weed management strategies? (**Sections 4.3.5, 5.3.2**)

Issue: Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive Plant Species and Communities

- What and where (in terms of habitat and location) are known populations of TES plants? (**Sections 4.3.7, 5.3.2**)
- What is the suitability of the different habitats for TES plant species? (**Sections 4.3.7, 5.3.2**)
- What are the threats to TES populations? (**Sections 4.3.7, 5.3.2**)
- What was the historic TES habitat? (**Sections 4.3.7, 5.3.2**)

Issue: Unique Elements and Special Features and Habitats

- What are the unique elements and special plant communities? (**Sections 4.3.7, 5.3.2, Map 39**)
- What are the current threats to special plant communities and unique elements? (**Sections 4.3.8, 5.3.2**)

Summary Questions:

- Based upon risk of spread and priority areas for plant restoration, which infestations are the highest treatment priorities? (**Sections 4.3.8, 5.3.2, Map 36**)
- What and where are TES habitat restoration, protection, and/or creation priorities? (**Sections 5.3.2, 6.2.9**)
- What and where are special plant community restoration, protection, and/or creation priorities? (**Sections 5.3.2, 6.2.9**)

2.2.3. Human Uses

Issue: Recreation

- What is the current extent and locations of developed recreational facilities and dispersed use in the area? (**Section 4.4.2**)
- Who, When Where and How do people use the area? (**Section 4.4.2**)
- What are the current perceptions, values, beliefs and concerns of the people living in the local area toward: community and landscape change; resource use; land and resource management agencies; future of the community; surrounding landscape? (**Section 4.4.1**)
- What are the resource impacts in the area from recreation sites? (**Section 4.4.2**)
- What recreational Special use permits exist in the area? (**Section 4.4.2**)
- What are the recreational requests for Special Uses in Red River? (**Section 4.4.2**)

Issue: Trails

- What are the extent, condition, and use of the trail system? (**Section 4.4.3**)
- What is the current extent, condition, and use of unclassified trails? (**Section 4.4.3**)

- What are the resource impacts on the analysis area by the system of trails? (**Section 4.4.3**)
- How does the current trail system influence the potential recovery and migration of aquatic species? (**Section 4.2**)
- How do trails currently provide corridors to spread invasive plants and noxious weeds and what is the extent? (**Section 4.3.5**)
- What is the jurisdiction of the trails in the system? (**Section 4.4.3**)
- What are the current access prescriptions on trails? (**Section 4.4.3**)
- Do the access prescriptions meet the needs of the: public, administration, wildlife, aquatics and plant communities/weed invasion? (**Sections 4.3.8, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 4.4.5, 4.4.8**)
- What are the future trends for access needs? (**Section 4.4.3**)

Issue: Social

- What are likely future trends in recreation use? (**Section 4.4.3**)
- What do present trends suggest for resource conflict? (**Sections 4.4.2, 5.2.1, 5.3.1 - 5.3.3**)
- What non-recreation Special Use permits exist in the area? (**Sections 4.4.2, 4.4.8**)
- What are the non-recreation requests for Special Uses in Red River? (**Sections 4.4.2, 4.4.8**)

Issue: Cultural Resources

- What is the distribution of known tribal and non-tribal cultural resources? (**Sections 4.4.3, 4.4.4**)
- What are the significant tribal and non-tribal cultural resources that may influence Forest management? (**Sections 4.4.3, 4.4.4**)

Issue: Mining

- What is the distribution of current mining claims? (**Section 4.4.7**)
- What is the current permitted mining activity? (**Section 4.4.7**)
- What is the distribution and type of historic mining activity? (**Sections 4.4.7, 5.1.1**)

Issue: Livestock Grazing

- What are the current and past impacts of livestock grazing? (**Section 4.4.9**)

Summary Questions:

- What projects are best suited to support recreational activities in the area? (**Section 5.4.2**)
- What is the core system of trails required to access: private lands, mineral claims and special use permits, as well as support vegetation management, livestock management, weed treatment, prescribed fire, public uses, preserve historic travel ways, and meet basic forest travel needs? (**Sections 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 5.4.2**)
- Are there new travel routes compatible with the recovery objectives? (**Section 5.4.2**)

- What are specific trail management recommendations and priorities given the aquatic, terrestrial, and human uses, including maintenance, decommissioning, reconstruction, realignment, and other management? (**Section 5.4.2**)
- Are new routes needed to support other management objectives? (**Section 5.4.2**)
- What opportunities exist for collaborative stewardship, new partnerships, and mutual learning between community members and resource managers? (**Sections 5.3.1 – 5.3.3**)
- What and where are specific maintenance, improvement, or management needs and priorities? (**Sections 4.4.3, 4.4.7, 4.4.8**)
- How will significant prehistoric and historic Native American sites be preserved and protected from management activities and current use? (**Section 4.4.5**)
- What management recommendations will be used to ensure the preservation of cultural resources? (**Section 5.4.3**)
- What specific forest management recommendations and priorities can be given for mine restoration work for the aquatic, terrestrial, and human uses, including maintenance, decommissioning, and other management? (**Sections 5.1.1, 5.2.1**)