

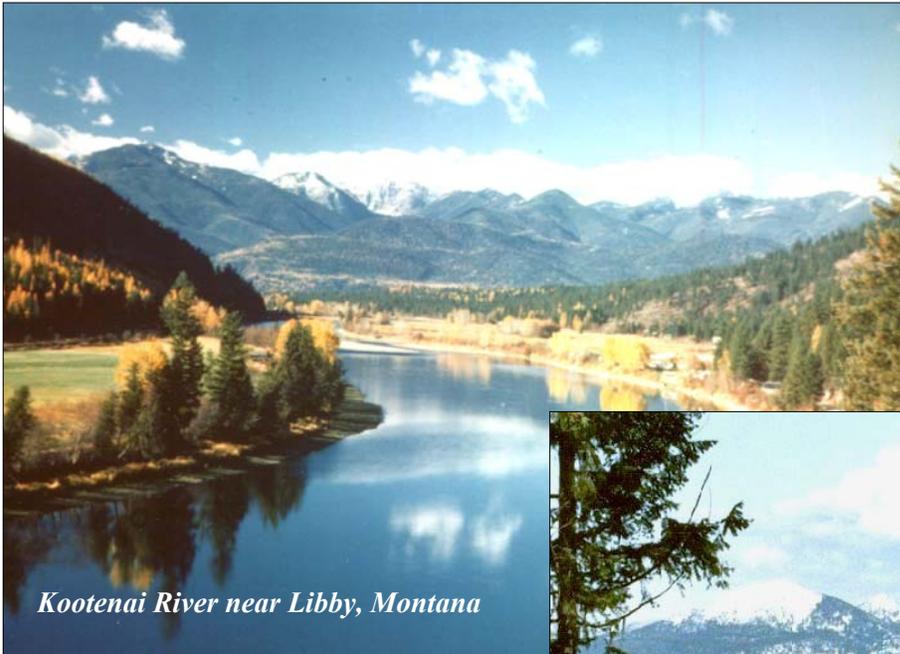
**USDA** United States  
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Agriculture

Forest Service

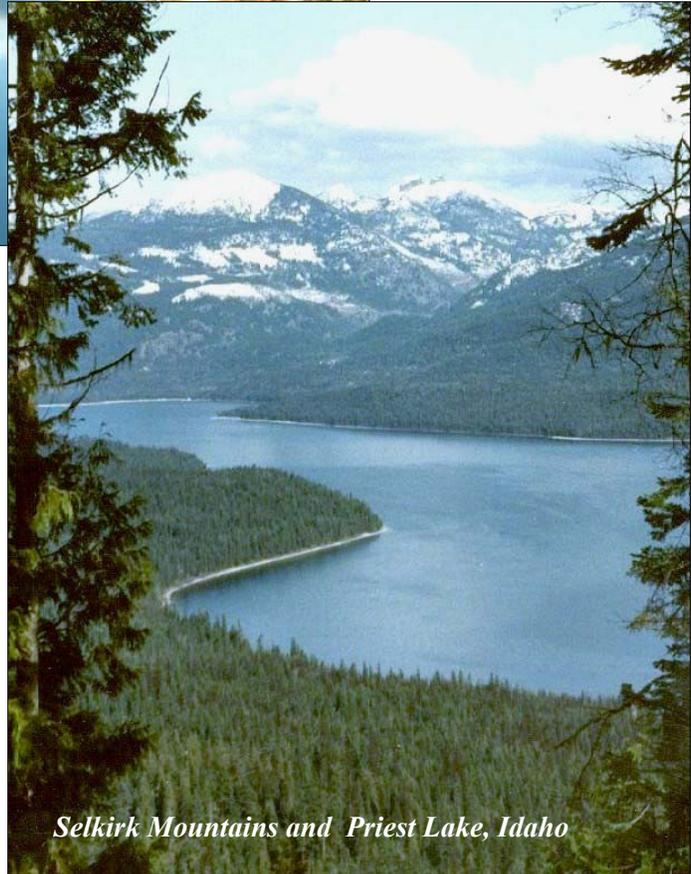


Kootenai and  
Idaho Panhandle  
National Forests

# **Analysis of the Management Situation for Revision of the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle Forest Plans March 2003**



*Kootenai River near Libby, Montana*



*Selkirk Mountains and Priest Lake, Idaho*



## Analysis of the Management Situation for Revision of the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle Forest Plans

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## **CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION**

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### **Introduction**

This chapter describes why the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests are revising their Forest Plans, summarizes the direction that will guide the revision process, and identifies the primary topics that are driving the need to revise our 1987 Forest Plans.

### **“KIPZ” - Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle Plan Revision Zone**

The Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests are working together to revise the Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans) for both of these National Forests. There are several reasons for this collaboration:

- The timing for revising the two Forest Plans is similar.
- The Forests share key issues, resources, customers, and interested publics.
- The Forests need to consider management of ecosystems across administrative boundaries.

The Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle Plan Revision Zone (hereafter referred to as KIPZ) is located in northern Idaho and northwestern Montana (See Figure 1). The KIPZ Plan Revision Team is comprised of planners and resource specialists from both forests. This combination provides opportunities to share personnel, services, budget, knowledge, and experience, thereby increasing the overall efficiency and quality of the revision effort.

The Kootenai National Forest (KNF) is responsible for the resource management of over 2.2 million acres in the northwestern corner of Montana. The KNF is divided into five Ranger Districts. Two major rivers, the Kootenai and the Clark Fork, along with several smaller rivers and their tributaries, dominate the Forest. The Whitefish Range, Purcell Mountains, Bitterroot Range, Salish Mountains, and Cabinet Mountains are all part of the rugged terrain radiating from the river valleys. In the north central part of the Forest, the land is more open with gently rolling timbered hills lying in the shadows of the Whitefish Range.

The Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNFs) consists of three individual national forests - the Kaniksu, the Coeur d’Alene, and the St. Joe - that were combined in 1973 to be administratively managed as one national forest. These forests are further divided into five Ranger Districts and comprise approximately 2.5 million acres of public lands in northern Idaho with small areas extending into eastern Washington and western Montana. Spectacular mountain ranges such as the Selkirk, Cabinet, Coeur d’Alene, and Bitterroot ranges; five major rivers - Kootenai, Pend Oreille, Coeur d’Alene, St. Joe, and Priest; and three large lakes - Priest, Pend Oreille and Coeur d’Alene are all part of the diverse terrain on the IPNFs.

Visitors come to fish the miles of rivers and numerous lakes. Boating and sailing are also popular water based activities. Hiking, biking, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing are also popular ways to enjoy the forests. The area is well known for huckleberry picking in the fall season.

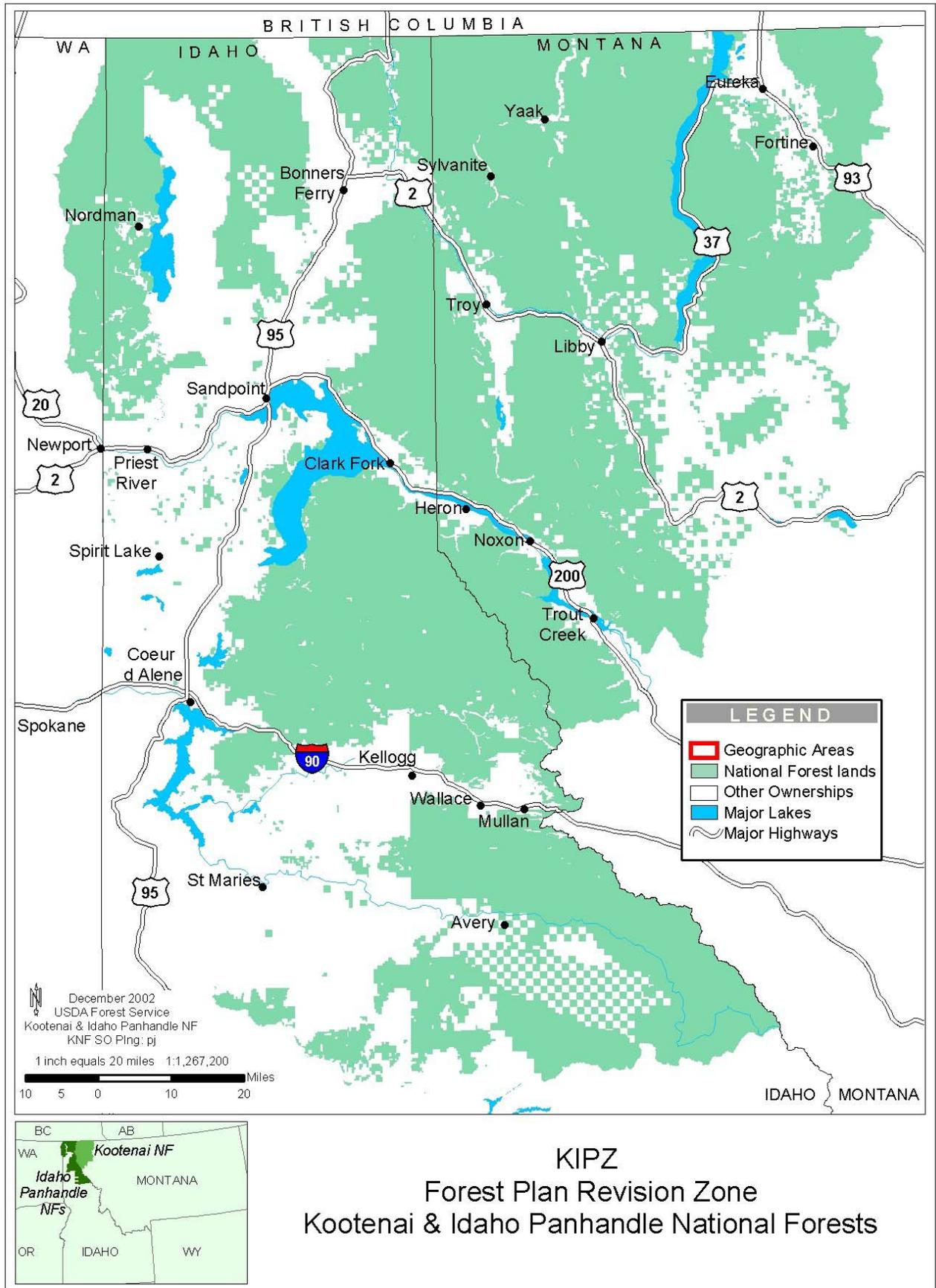


Figure 1. The physical location of the Kootenai Idaho Panhandle Planning Zone (KIPZ)

In addition, there are several production aspects to these forests. Logging, mining, and ranching have all played important community roles throughout the history of the area and continue to do so, in various degrees, in certain areas today.

There are many land management issues that both forests have in common. A few examples include:

- Ecological conditions and risks
- Presence of wide ranging carnivores
- Presence within the Interior Columbia River Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP) – for consideration of assessment findings and recommendations
- Threatened and Endangered Species (TES) – Grizzly bear, lynx, bull trout
- Recreation and access issues and opportunities

There are also some issues that only one forest has to address such as endangered Caribou found only on the IPNFs. However, most issues apply to the entire KIPZ.

### **Background and Purpose of Forest Plan Revision and Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS)**

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 requires National Forests to develop a Forest Plan and to update or revise it every 15 years or when conditions significantly change. The KNF and IPNFs Forest Plans were approved in 1987 and must be revised according to the regulations (see Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) at 36 CFR 219). Forest Plans describe the intended management of National Forests. Key decisions made in the Forest Plan for long-term management of National Forests are:

- Establishment of forest-wide multiple use goals and objectives, 36 CFR 219.11(b);
- Establishment of forest-wide management requirements (forest-wide standards and guidelines), 36 CFR 219.13 – 219.17;
- Establishment of management area direction, 36 CFR 219.11;
- Designation of suitable timber land and establishment of allowable sale quantity. Designation of land suitable for grazing and browsing. Identification of lands suitable and available for oil and gas leasing. Provision for a broad spectrum of forest and outdoor recreation opportunities. 36 CFR 219.14 – 219.16, 219.20 – 219.21;
- Establishment of requirements for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the revised plan to meet the requirements of 36 CFR 219.11(d);
- Documentation that will/will not recommend any further additions to the wilderness preservation system.

### **Analysis of the Management Situation**

Experience, monitoring, and new science are indicating a need to revise certain aspects of how our 1987 Forest Plans addressed the above-required decisions. One of the first steps in *Forest Plan Revision* is the completion of an Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS). The AMS is a collection and analysis of data describing monitoring and evaluation findings; historic and current condition and trends for revision topics; and applicable information from current science and assessments. This information will be used to establish the need for revising the Forest Plans and assist in the development of a range of alternatives for the associated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

An AMS is also required to include:

**1. Current level of goods and services and the amount that would be provided if current direction continues.**

Chapter 3 of this document, as well as Chapter 1 of the AMS Technical Report, addresses the current level of goods and services and briefly describes the implications of current management direction for each revision topic.

**2. Benchmark analysis to define the range within which alternatives can be developed.**

The Kootenai and the Idaho Panhandle National Forests each completed an AMS in the 1980s as part of the forest planning process. The 1982 planning regulations require benchmark analysis to help define the range of alternatives to analyze in Forest Plans. These benchmarks were not to be constrained by budget but needed to be consistent with the minimum management requirements of section 219.27. Examples of these benchmarks from the first round of planning included an analysis of maximum timber production. In the 1987 Forest Plans, the KNF established 255 million board feet (KNF Forest Plan FEIS Vol. I, Chapter 2, page 6) and the IPNFs 573 million board feet (IPNFs Forest Plan FEIS, Chapter 2, page 10) as benchmarks for maximum timber production. These benchmarks may no longer be appropriate, as new inventories, models, and minimum management direction have changed the assumptions by which the benchmarks were established. Further analysis will be conducted as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to redefine appropriate benchmarks.

**3. Determination of the potential to resolve public issues and management concerns.**

The two forests have determined that a “need for change” exists for seven broad categories described in Chapter 3 of this document. Revising goals, objectives, and management area prescriptions for the revision topics that reflect an understanding of natural disturbance patterns while also striving to balance local, regional and national concerns is a tremendously difficult task. Working collaboratively with the public and other government agencies to understand the issues and develop alternatives that best represent management concerns is a fundamental aspect of this revision effort.

**Revision Issues:**

This document, along with the accompanying AMS Technical Report, describes the historic and current conditions for the KIPZ and establishes the need for revising current management direction for seven revision topics. These seven Revision Topics have been identified through monitoring and evaluation, current science and assessments, and our daily contacts with the people who work in and recreate on our national forests. Revision topics are broad categorizations of the issues that have been identified where resource conditions, technical knowledge, or public perception of resource management has created a potential “need for change.” Revision topics may cover one or more significant issues identified on the forest.

If the 1987 Forest Plans were not being revised, resolution of any one of these topics would generally result in a significant amendment for the following reasons:

- Changes in resource management could result in significant changes in the mix of goods and services the forest is producing.
- Changes in resource management could indicate that the 1987 Forest Plan direction needs change over large areas of the forest.
- There appears to be no clear public consensus on how to resolve the topics.

The Revision Topics are listed below:

- 1) **Vegetation**
- 2) **Fire Risk**
- 3) **Timber Production**
- 4) **Wildlife**
- 5) **Watersheds and Aquatic Species**
- 6) **Inventoried Roadless Areas and Proposed Wilderness Areas**
- 7) **Access and Recreation**

**Other Revision Items:** A number of items were identified that need to be addressed in the Forest Plan, but do not meet the above criteria for revision topics. In general, these items represent inadequate or out-of-date Forest Plan direction and addressing them would not require a significant amendment to the Forest Plan. Additionally, there appears to be general consensus on how to resolve the issue by rewriting and updating the Forest Plan Standards during Forest Plan Revision.

- Minerals: Management direction for minerals (locatable, leaseable, saleable) and initial evaluation of the Forest Plan direction suggests only minor changes in direction may be needed.
- Designated Wilderness Management and Wilderness Study Areas: Management direction for designated wilderness areas will be reviewed and revised as needed.
- Facilities: Management direction for facilities will be reviewed and revised as needed.
- Research Natural Areas (RNAs): Several areas have been established and several more have been proposed for establishment since the 1987 Forest Plans were completed. The revision process provides an opportunity to review proposed RNAs and update the Forest Plans to refine management direction for these areas.
- Heritage Resources: Heritage Resource information and direction in the 1987 Forest Plans was brief and provided minimal direction. Management direction for heritage resources will be reviewed and revised as needed.
- Scenery Management: The Visual Quality Objective (VQO) system used in the 1987 Forest Plans has been revised and updated to the Scenery Management System (SMS). The revision process will provide an opportunity to verify and, if necessary, modify the scenic objectives.
- Lands: Management direction for lands (land exchanges and adjustments, rights-of-way, special uses, communication sites, utility corridors) will be reviewed and revised as needed.
- Special Interest Areas (SIAs): Several areas have been established and several more have been proposed for establishment since the 1987 Forest Plans were completed. The revision process provides an opportunity to review proposed SIAs and update the Forest Plans to refine our management direction for these areas.
- Wild and Scenic Rivers: The revision process will allow a verification of the status of rivers nominated for Wild, Scenic, or Recreation designation. Management direction will be reviewed and revised as needed.
- Range: Direction contained in the 1987 Forest Plans is minimal. Management direction for Range resources and management will be reviewed and revised as needed.

## **Direction Guiding Forest Plan Revision**

**Planning regulations:** Direction for Forest Plan content and for certain analysis procedures and requirements is found in the CFR at 36 CFR 219. This direction is commonly referred to as the “planning rule” or the “planning regulations (regs)”. The planning rule currently in place was completed in 1982 and these are the regulations in which the 1987 Forest Plans were developed. On December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2002, a proposed planning rule was issued in the Federal Register for public comment.

If the proposed planning rule is finalized during the KIPZ revision process, an analysis will be completed to determine if the planning process should be altered to follow new regulations. This analysis may examine the potential impact of following new regulations on the time schedule for Forest Plan Revision, the financial cost of changing regulations and additional work that would need to be done to comply with the new proposed planning rule.

**Resources Planning Act Assessment:** The Resources Planning Act Assessment (RPA) provides programmatic context and a general strategic course the Forest Service strives to follow. The 2000 RPA Assessment presents a long-term strategy for a period of time from 1995 to 2045. The RPA describes all Forest Service activities under its jurisdiction and identifies broad resource and program needs that respond to anticipated demands. It provides general guidance for forest, state assistance, and research planning. Among priority management actions, the following items illustrate the strategic direction of Forest Service programs and activities over the next 50-year planning horizon as set forth in the RPA:

- Conservation of biological diversity.
- Maintenance of productive capacity of forest and range ecosystems.
- Maintenance of forest ecosystem health and vitality.
- Maintenance of forest contribution to global carbon cycles.
- Maintenance and enhancement of long-term multiple socioeconomic benefits to meet the needs of societies.

**USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan:** The USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan (2000a) was prepared to address how the Forest Service will achieve the goals of RPA. This Strategic Plan establishes goals, outcomes, performance measures, and strategies, which apply to management of the National Forest System (NFS) lands as well as other Forest Service mission areas. The Forest Service Mission is “To Sustain the Health, Diversity, and Productivity of the Nation’s Forests and Grasslands to Meet the Needs of Present and Future Generations”. This Mission is supported by four goals:

1. Ecosystem Health: Promote ecosystem health and conservation using a collaborative approach to sustain the Nation’s forests, grasslands, and watersheds.
2. Multiple Benefits to People: Provide a variety of uses, values, products, and services for present and future generations by managing within the capability of sustainable ecosystems.
3. Scientific and Technical Assistance: Develop and use the best scientific information available to deliver technical and community assistance and to support ecological, economic, and social sustainability.
4. Effective Public Service: Ensure the acquisition and use of an appropriate corporate infrastructure to enable the efficient delivery of a variety of uses.

**Regional Guidance:** The KNF and IPNFs are an integral part of larger ecosystems. A number of regional and large geographic scale assessments and strategies help identify or maintain future public land management options and set the context for KIPZ planning efforts. The Forest Plan Revision process will consider the findings and management strategies contained in these larger assessments and/or strategies such as ICBEMP, Northern Region Overview, and the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH).

## **Evolving Agency Direction since Forest Plans were Adopted**

Since the 1987 Forest Plans were adopted the Forest Service's resource management direction has continued to evolve. Several Chiefs of the Forest Service have provided new direction for the following areas: New Perspectives, Ecosystem Management, and Sustainability and are summarized below.

**New Perspectives:** From about 1990-1992, the agency explored a new program called New Perspectives. It was a "project to bring about new thinking, new technologies and new alliances to improve ecological management of the National Forest System. Managing ecosystems to sustain their diversity and productivity for resource uses, values, products, and services people need and want for the future is the major focus of New Perspectives" (Overbay 1992).

**Ecosystem Management:** Leavell (2000) provided the following summary of the evolution of Forest Service ecosystem management direction:

Dale Robertson, Chief of the Forest Service sent a memo to all employees on June 4, 1992. The memo officially directed the Forest Service to take the Agency's first step toward achieving ecosystem management objectives. It stated:

"We have made good progress over the past 3 years in experimenting with more environmentally sensitive ways to manage the National Forests and Grasslands under our New Perspectives program. ...Mostly what we learned is that ecosystem management works and it is where we need to be headed...by ecosystem management, we mean that an ecological approach will be used to achieve the multiple-use management of the National Forest and Grasslands. It means that we must blend the needs of people and environmental values in such a way that the National Forests and Grasslands represent diverse, healthy, productive, and sustainable ecosystems."

Jack Ward Thomas replaced Dale Robertson as Chief of the Forest Service in 1993. He reinforced the direction to implement ecosystem management objectives and to, ..."display honesty in all things, be adaptable, and have a firm foot in scientific principles". Chief Thomas also defined the management context and focus of priorities within the Agency as the following: 1) Protect ecosystems; 2) Restore deteriorated ecosystems; and 3) Provide multiple benefits for people within the capabilities of ecosystems. He said this could be accomplished within existing laws (Thomas 1996).

Michael P. Dombeck succeeded Jack Ward Thomas as Chief in 1997 and reiterated the objectives of his predecessors by proposing "A Natural Resource Agenda for the 21st Century". This Agenda focused on four key areas: Watershed Health and Restoration; Sustainable Forest Ecosystem Management; Forest Roads; and Recreation (Dombeck 1998).

**Sustainability:** For the past 100 years, the nation has been attempting to define what is meant by sustainability" (USDA 1999a). Many laws have been passed that call for Federal Agencies to pursue sustainability. Some of the major ones are the: Organic Act, Lacey Act, Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, National Forest Management Act, Clean Water Act, and Clean Air Act (USDA 1999a). Sustainability is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

In 1997, Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman convened a Committee of Scientists to "review and evaluate the Forest Service's planning process for land and resource management and to identify changes that might be needed to the planning regulations" (USDA 1999a). Citing ecological sustainability as a necessary foundation for stewardship, a synopsis of the Committee's findings states:

"... ecological sustainability provides a foundation upon which the management for national forests and grasslands can contribute to economic and social sustainability".

## **Need for Change**

Forest Plan Revisions are based on the concept of “need for change”. This means that the 1987 Forest Plans will be examined and portions that are working may be carried forward essentially in tact, and portions that are not working (that “need change”) will be reviewed and changed or updated.

There are several reasons that a section of a Forest Plan may need to be changed. Each individual revision topic discussion in Chapter 3 identifies conditions and/or reasons for the need for change. These reasons for change can be characterized as follows:

**Changing Social Values:** There have been many changes to our society since the Forest Plans were approved in 1987. Changes are evident in population growth, recreation activities, land uses, and urban development. Changes are also evident in people’s values, attitudes and beliefs regarding public lands. These human issues are one reason the 1987 Forest Plans need to be reviewed. A description of many of the changes to the local communities and residents is found in Chapter 2 of the AMS.

An example of a changing social value is an increasing awareness and concern with wildfire and access to national forest are indicators of the social change that is occurring within and beyond the Planning Analysis Area. Another example of social change that has occurred and continues to occur is the reduction in mills operating and providing employment.

**Laws/Regulations/Policy:** Since the 1987 Forest Plans were finalized, there have been many changes to the directions that guide such documents. This direction is found in laws; regulations that implement laws; Forest Service directives (Manuals and Handbooks); and internal policy. Internal policy comes to forests through letters from the Chief of the Forest Service and from Regional Foresters. Each revision topic in Chapter 1 of the AMS Technical Report identifies some legal requirements and new sources of management direction. Also refer to previous section, “Evolving Agency Direction since Forest Plans were Adopted” for previous policy information.

An example of a new policy since 1987 Forest Plans were adopted is the new direction in the Roadless Conservation. Other examples of a new policy since then are the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review; and Forest Roads Rule and Policy issued in 2001.

**Science Developments:** In the past decade, there have been many scientific studies and assessments that have become available that address land management issues applicable to the KIPZ. Such developments include, but are not limited to the ICBEMP science assessment, Forest Plan monitoring reports, scientific publications, and other studies. In addition, analytical models and data used in models have changed and improved in recent years. New modeling techniques and new data sources will be used in the KIPZ revision. Improved analysis and data should also result in revised estimates of outputs and outcomes that are realistic and attainable. Each revision topic, in the AMS the DEIS, and the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), will cite specific sources of scientific information that was used in the planning analysis.

Grizzly Bear management or old growth dependent species needs are examples of the changes that occur in Forest Plan direction as a result of scientific study or assessments.