

CHAPTER 5 – PLANNING PROCESS, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COLLABORATION AND NEXT STEPS

Planning Process and Public Participation

One of the goals throughout the entire KIPZ Forest Plan Revision process is to encourage participation and collaboration by providing numerous opportunities for public involvement. In order to better understand where, when and how the public is involved throughout the process, following is a brief discussion about the planning process as guided by NEPA regulations and the current 1982 planning regulations:

Notice of Intent: A Notice of Intent (NOI) formally initiates the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The NOI for the KIPZ to begin Forest Plan Revision was published in the Federal Register on April 30, 2002. The NOI for these two forests described the proposed action, preliminary revision topics and issues with the 1987 Forest Plans; dates for filing the EIS; information concerning public participation; names and addresses of the agency officials who can provide additional information; and some possible preliminary proposed actions/strategies.

Scoping Comment Period: The first formal and important opportunity for the public to comment is during the scoping period, which began on April 30, 2002 and currently ends on March 21, 2003 (FR Doc. 02-31136). During this time, the public is to review and provide their comments on the Preliminary Revision Topics/Issues that were identified in the NOI, are on the website www.fs.fed.us/kipz, were in our May issue of “KIPZ News”, and were also presented at the open houses held in June 2002. This document is a tool to provide more information to the public about the revision topics in order to provide comments during the scoping comment period.

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Proposed Revised Forest Plans: The 1982 Planning Regulations require the preparation of an EIS when a Forest Plan is revised. The EIS must be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the NEPA and display information used to make the decision on which alternative to adopt as the revised Forest Plan. The next planning step will be to develop one DEIS for both forests and one proposed revised Forest Plan for each forest.

DEIS Comment Period: The second formal and important opportunity for the public to comment is after the DEIS is completed. There will be a 90-day public comment period on the DEIS. To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the DEIS should be as specific as possible, refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement, address the adequacy of the DEIS or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement.

Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Revised Forest Plans: After the comment period on the DEIS ends, one of the important first steps during the preparation of the FEIS is reading, analyzing, considering, and then responding to all of the comments by the Forest Service. These frequently lead to a number of changes that are made between the DEIS and FEIS. The current projection is that work on the FEIS will occur from fall 2004 to fall 2005. Documents that we will produce during this phase include: one FEIS for both forests; one Record of Decision for each forest; and one revised Forest Plan for each forest.

Record of Decision (ROD): The responsible official will consider the comments, responses, environmental consequences discussed in the FEIS; and applicable laws, regulations, and policies in making decisions regarding these revised Forest Plans. The discussions and reasons for the decisions will be documented in the RODs for the revised Forest Plans. The decisions will be subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 217 and the public will be notified upon completion of the FEIS.

Public Participation

Since the 1987 Forest Plans, there have been significant changes in public perception, social conditions, and how the public wants to be involved. A Social Science Assessment, which is one of our public involvement tools for determining how the public wants to be involved and what they value most, has been completed on each of the KIPZ forests (Impact Assessment, Inc. 1995 and Parker et al., 2002).

The majority of the people interviewed for the Social Science Assessments, attended public meetings, and submitted comment letters indicated that they want to be more involved in actions that affect the NFS lands and their use of this land. They also feel that traditional public involvement, for example informational briefing meetings, has not been effective, nor efficient. One of their suggested solutions is for the Forest Service to focus on ways to bring people with differing views, together to discuss an issue.

To organize the public involvement activities for the various stages of the KIPZ planning process, a Communication and Collaboration Plan was created. The purpose of this plan is to ensure that goals of public activities are clear, responsibilities are identified, contacts are known and timelines are set. The KIPZ has set up a Communication Team, comprised of public affairs specialists, planners, and line and staff officers from the two forests, to guide and support this process. This Communication and Collaboration Plan will be continuously updated to reflect changes in activities or personnel. The intent is to identify our public involvement responsibilities and implement them in a timely effective manner.

Public Involvement Activities to Date

Several news releases have been published throughout the 3 state area and the first “KIPZ News” was distributed in May 2002. The KIPZ News was sent to approximately 2,500 people from existing forest mailing lists and also posted on the KIPZ website. It summarized the preliminary revision topics, advertised the June 2002 open houses, and listed contact information.

During June of 2002, open houses were held on both forests to provide information and get feedback on the preliminary Revision Topics. Thirteen meetings were held in the following locations with over 250 people in attendance:

- **Idaho:** Bonners Ferry, Coeur d’Alene, Moscow, Priest Lake, Priest River, Sandpoint, Silverton, and St. Maries
- **Montana:** Eureka, Libby, Noxon, and Troy
- **Washington:** Spokane

These open houses provided an excellent opportunity to speak individually and collectively with interested members of the public. Many of these meetings had press coverage and newspaper articles in local papers. The concerns raised by the people who attended these meetings are summarized and available on the KIPZ website, and are presented both by community and by issue.

In addition to the open houses, the website, and the newsletter; the Forest Supervisors, District Rangers and individual KIPZ planning team members have been attending a variety of meetings with local interest groups, environmental organizations, other state and federal agencies, and talking with members of the public about the plan revision.

Summary of Public Comments to Date

The scoping comment period has been in effect since April 30, 2002. Many comments have been received on a wide range of issues. These comments are listed in the AMS Technical Report (USDA 2003) and on the KIPZ website (www.fs.fed.us/kipz). These comments have not yet been through the process of content analysis and reflect what people think about public lands, the Forest Service, personal use of National Forests and land management activities. The public comments available on the KIPZ web site are presented in two ways: (1) what was heard in each community, and (2) what was heard

collectively on each issue. This information is valuable in showing which issues are important in which communities. This will be used in identifying management options in the revised plan that are responsive to local concerns where possible.

Tribal Consultation

It is the responsibility of the Forest Service to recognize and honor the government-to-government relationship that exists between the United States government and tribal governments. The objective is to work effectively with the tribes in ways that they feel are meaningful government-to-government relations. All of the tribes that are within or adjacent to the KIPZ have been contacted by the appropriate Forest Supervisor regarding the Forest Plan Revision effort.

The KIPZ planning effort could potentially involve seven tribal governments. The following tribal groups requested a presentation and meetings were held by KIPZ planning team members and the Forest Supervisors: Coeur d'Alene Indian Nation, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Kalispell Indian Community of the Kalispell Reservation, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe. The following tribes have been contacted, but they have not requested a meeting or presentation to discuss the KIPZ Forest Plan Revision process: Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho and the Spokane Tribe of the Spokane Reservation. The Confederated Tribe of the Colville Reservation was also contacted and there has been no expressed interest in consulting on the KIPZ Forest Plan Revision process.

The objectives of the initial meetings with these tribal groups was three fold: (1) to discuss how we can accomplish meaningful government-to-government relationships as defined by the tribes, (2) identify appropriate contact people, and (3) begin discussing and identifying issues important to the tribes. These discussions will continue throughout the Forest Plan Revision process and at any time requested by a tribal group.

Collaboration Activities

The success of any project depends heavily on the agencies ability to create an atmosphere for effective collaboration and to honestly listen, be open to what the public has to say and to allow true participation. Currently, a collaboration strategy is being developed and will be one of the many public involvement tools that we will use to inform and engage people in the Forest Plan Revision effort. We view collaborative planning not as consensual decision-making, but rather a shared understanding and learning process. We recognize we cannot eliminate the controversy inherent in some public land issues. However, collaboration promotes our ability to better understand each other and appreciate the choices and trade-offs that must be made. Collaboration also promotes learning from people who contribute new and creative ideas we may not have considered otherwise.

Public notice of dates, times, and locations for any upcoming meetings will be provided in local newspapers, posted on the KIPZ website <http://www.fs.fed.us/kipz>, and notices/newsletters to those on our email and hard mail Forest Plan Revision mailing lists.

Next Steps

The following is a list of ongoing and immediately upcoming public involvement activities, or activities involving public comment:

- **Availability of the AMS and the AMS Technical Report** - These two documents will be posted on the KIPZ website <http://www.fs.fed.us/kipz>. They will also be distributed to tribal governments, elected officials, Forest Service offices, and libraries.
- **Close of the scoping comment period** - Content analysis of public comments received through scoping will be done and used in the formulation of the DEIS and proposed revised Forest Plans.

- **Collaboration Activities** - The next round of Collaboration activities and/or meetings will be posted on our website, in our next newsletter and local newspapers as soon as they are finalized.
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Sources of Information

Website (www.fs.fed.us/kipz) – The KIPZ website is continuously being updated and kept current. Currently, open house public comments, the newsletter, news releases, this document and the AMS Technical Report, and other information are posted on the site. Content analysis results, an additional newsletter, and other information are expected to be posted in the next few months. For the most current information, the public should view our website.

Contact Information - If someone requires information via regular mail, they need to request to be on our mailing list by sending a note to: USDA Forest Service, ATTN: KIPZ Revision Team, 1101 U.S. Hwy. 2 West, Libby, MT 59923 or an email to rl_kipz_revision@fs.fed.us.