



# Forest Plan Revision News

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## Key Points

The Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests' Land and Resource Management Plans need to be revised.

Public scoping for issues has begun and will continue through December 1, 2002.

The first series of Open House information meetings have been scheduled.

Some preliminary issues have been identified, but we need your help to verify these and identify any that have been missed.

## What is a Forest Plan and Why Does it Need to be Revised?

A Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) is a comprehensive, broad set of direction that instructs the Forest Service how to manage the resources of a national forest. These long-range goals and objectives attempt to strike a balance between the public's often conflicting need for values, services, products, and uses and the physical and biological capability of the land.

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) requires each national forest to have a Forest Plan. A Forest Plan must be consistent with environmental laws and regulations such as the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act.

Forest Plans are *programmatic* in nature. That is, the direction is broad in scope, meaning it is generally long-term and covers a large geographic area such as an entire forest rather than a small watershed. This is different than most of the "site-specific" or project-level planning the Forest Service conducts for such management activities as trail construction or harvesting timber.

Programmatic planning is similar to the concept of zoning a city for certain uses such as residential, light commercial business, or heavy industry.

### Decisions Made in a Forest Plan

Forest Plans contain six types of decisions. These are:

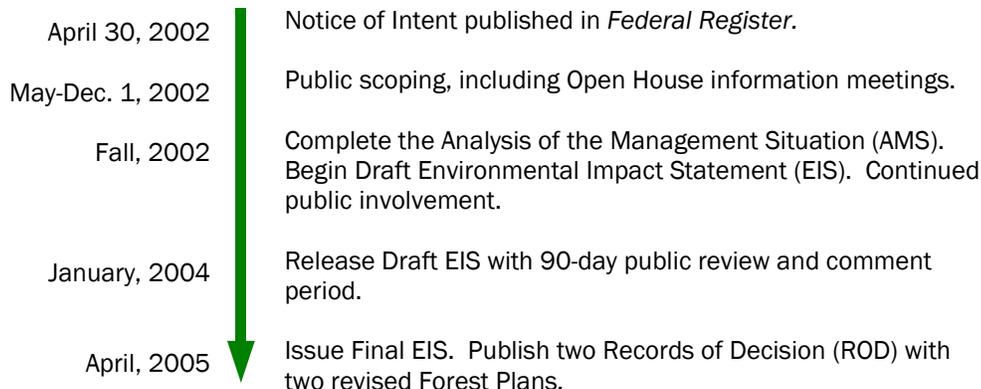
- Goals and Objectives;
- Standards and Guidelines;
- Management Area Direction;
- Special Area Designations;
- Designation of Suitable Land Uses; and
- Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy.

### Why Revise the Current Plans?

- The existing Forest Plans are near the end of their intended 15-year life.
- There have been substantial resource and social changes since the mid-1980's.
- Gains in scientific knowledge need to be considered in developing the new Plans.
- Revision is required by law (NFMA).

The new forest plans will be based on principles of sustainability. The term *sustainability* has many definitions but this one seems to sum it up best... "Meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

## REVISION SCHEDULE



## Scoping Begins

A Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the *Federal Register* on April 30, 2002, officially starting the public involvement process or “scoping” for forest plan revision. Scoping helps identify issues or potential conflicts in the way the two national forests are managed. It is also an initial opportunity to begin exploring alternatives to address the issues.

Revision of the forest plans is not “zero-based” planning. That is, we are not starting from scratch but are asking your help to identify what direction in the current forest plans needs to be changed or improved. This scoping process will provide opportunities for the public, elected officials, Tribes, and other state and federal agencies to work collaboratively with us to identify issues to address in our Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS).

The AMS will:

- Assess and document the current situation.
- Establish the preliminary need for change to the current forest plans.
- Provide the basis for a range of alternatives.
- Introduce and Provide the information base to develop the no action alternative and the proposed programmatic action.

The scoping process for forest plan revision will continue until December 1, 2002. See page 5 for more information on where to send your comments.



## First Public Meetings Scheduled

An initial series of public meetings are being held according to the schedule below. These meetings will address:

- The planning process and schedule;
- How the public can be involved and influence the end product;
- Nature of forest plan decisions; and
- Preliminary issues.

### Idaho Panhandle National Forest Meetings (4-7 pm):

Sandpoint, ID—Sandpoint Ranger District Office, 1500 Highway 2	June 5
Silverton, ID—Wallace Ranger District Office, north of I-90, exit 60	June 6
Priest Lake, ID - Priest Lake Elementary School, 27732 Hwy. 57	June 10
St. Maries, ID - St. Maries High School Cafeteria	June 11
Coeur d'Alene, ID - Supervisors Office 3815 Schreiber Way	June 12
Bonnars Ferry, ID - Panhandle Health Dist. classroom, 7402 Caribou St.	June 13
Priest River, ID - Priest River Jr. High 1020 West Albeni Road	June 17
Moscow, ID - University Inn Best Western 1516 Pullman Road	June 19
Spokane, WA - Spokane Falls Community College, Bldg 17 3410 W. Fort George Wright Dr (6-8 pm)	June 20

### Kootenai National Forest Meetings (6-8 pm):

Libby, MT - VFW Hall 108 West Second St.	June 12
Eureka, MT - Lincoln Electric Coop Osloski (Fairgrounds) Road	June 13
Noxon, MT - Noxon Emergency Services Building	June 17
Troy, MT - Troy Ranger Station 1437 US Highway 2 North	June 18

All Open House information meetings will include a presentation on the forest plan process and preliminary revision topics—IPNF meetings at 5:00 pm and KNF meetings at 6:00 pm. There will also be handouts and displays with more information and Forest Service personnel to answer questions.

If you have questions, please contact Jodi Kramer on the Idaho Panhandle at (208) 765-7235 or Willie Sykes on the Kootenai at (406) 283-7694.

## Preliminary Revision Topics and Issues

Forest Plan revisions are warranted in light of the combined effects of multiple needs for change. The preliminary revision issues have been developed from discussions with Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests employees, Monitoring and Evaluation Reports from the past 13 years, current science and assessments, and our daily contact with the public, user groups, and other agencies.

The preliminary revision topics have been developed around the ecological, economic, and social components of sustainability.

### Revision Topics:

- Terrestrial Sustainability
- Aquatic Sustainability
- Soil Productivity
- Production and Use Levels
- Access and Recreation
- Fire Risk
- Inventoried Roadless Areas and Recommended Wilderness

### Other Revision Issues:

- Special Interest Areas
- Heritage
- Lands

The preliminary issues have been divided into two categories:

**I. Revision Topics** – This category includes topics for which resource conditions, technical knowledge, or public perception of resource management have created a “need for change” in the Forest Plans.

These topics generally would be significant amendments because their resolution could result in changes to management direction over large areas of the Forests, changes in the mix of goods and services that the Forests provide, and changes to other decisions made in the Forest Plans. They involve choices in management direction where there is no clear public consensus on the best course of action.

**II. Other Revision Items** – A number of items were identified that need to be addressed in the Forest Plans, 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 these items would not require a significant amendment to the Forest Plans. There appears to be general consensus on how to resolve the issue by rewriting and updating the Forest Plans Standards and Guidelines during Forest Plan Revision.

The following sections describe the Revision Topics and Preliminary Issues identified to date in a little more detail. Further information will be available as the forest plan revision process continues.

## Revision Topics and Preliminary Issues in More Detail

### Topic 1—Terrestrial

Forest plan monitoring, geographic area assessments, the Northern Region Overview, and the Interior Columbia River Basin Ecosystem Management Project have identified problems in maintaining terrestrial sustainability on our national forest lands. Examples of findings in these assessments indicate we are lacking in early seral tree species and have an increasing amount of shade-tolerant, fire intolerant, and insect and disease prone tree species dominating the landscape. Decades of fire suppression have resulted in higher fuel loading and landscapes that may pose risk to terrestrial sustainability. There is a reduction in large snags on portions of the landscape. Past timber harvest has resulted in a decrease in interior habitat in late successional stands.

### Topic 2—Aquatic

Forest Plan monitoring, geographic area assessments, the Northern Region Overview, and Interior Columbia River Basin Ecosystem Management Project have identified problems with the hydrologic condition of many of our watersheds and aquatic life on our national forest lands. Approximately 165 stream segments or water bodies have been listed by the States as impaired water quality under section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act. Landscape assessments have found that approximately 20 percent of our watersheds are “not properly functioning,” and 30-50 percent may be “functioning at risk.” In recent years under the Endangered Species Act, two fish species have been listed as “threatened” or “endangered,” and three additional species are being studied for possible future listing.

### Topic 3—Soil Productivity

The inherent capability of soil to support vegetative growth is central to forest management and is rooted in our land ethic and resource laws. Soil physical and chemical status, within acceptable ranges, is an indicator of maintaining or improving soil productivity. Some soil nutrients are derived from parent materials (geological types); others from organic debris (woody or vegetative materials), wind or water deposits, climate and other factors.

Management practices, such as logging or prescribed fire, may disturb the natural balance of soil nutrients and physical condition, and, particularly with potassium-limited soils, contribute to regeneration problems, slowing growth, and thereby increasing susceptibility to insects and disease.

*(Continued on page 4)*

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Current research is showing that potassium is inherently very low within portions of the Precambrian meta-sedimentary rocks known as the Belt Super-group. Approximately 80% of the KIPZ is located on this Belt Super-group formation. This research indicates that 20-30% of this area may be inherently deficient in potassium. Limited potassium nutrition has been shown to significantly affect Douglas-fir root biochemistry, making these trees much more susceptible to insects and disease. Other key soil elements that address sustainability of forest soil productivity are detrimental disturbances (compaction, displacement, erosion, and severe burns) and nutrient cycling (residual organics debris). These elements are adequately addressed in the current Forest Plans, FSH direction and best management practices, and will not be part of the plan revision topics.

#### Topic 4—Production and Use Levels

National Forest System lands contribute many values, services, outputs, and uses that allow economies and communities to persist, prosper, and evolve. Recreation, the production of wood fiber, grazing of livestock, and mining are important historic and current uses of the Forest. The level of production of these commodities and recreation uses affects the social and economic environment of local communities. These production and use levels must be sustainable in order to contribute to sustainable economies and communities. Monitoring indicates that wood fiber production levels are far below those estimated to occur in the current Forest Plans. Timber harvest levels for the past 13 years are less than 50% of those projected in the current Forest Plans. Recent assessments indicate that motorized and non-motorized recreation use has increased above levels projected in the current Forest Plans.

A view of the  
Ten Lakes area  
near Eureka, Montana



#### Topic 5—Access and Recreation

Access to national forest lands is one of the most controversial elements in forest management. Since the 1987 Forest Plans were developed, motorized and non-motorized forms of travel have increased and become more diversified.

The advent of mountain bikes and all-terrain vehicles, the growing popularity of four-wheel-drive vehicles and snowmobiles, and increasing non-motorized uses such as hiking, backcountry skiing, and snowshoeing, are all competing for the same land base.

#### Topic 6—Fire Risk

Decades of active fire suppression have altered some ecosystems by increasing fuel levels beyond an acceptable range. In addition, increasing numbers of people are moving from urban areas toward more rural areas near public lands. This has resulted in more homes and other structures being built near and around national forests. As people, homes, and structures increasingly occupy the wildland/urban interface and as hazard fuels continue to accumulate, a high risk and volatile situation needs to be addressed. Geographic area assessments, the Northern Region Overview, and Interior Columbia River Basin Ecosystem Management Project have identified an increase in fuel loading, duff depth, stand density, and a fuel ladder that can carry fire from the surface into the tree crowns. As a result, wildfire intensity has increased.

#### Topic 7—Inventoried Roadless Areas and Recommended Wilderness

Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) continue to be a topic of interest and controversy to many people in north Idaho and northwest Montana. The IPNF has 47 IRAs totaling 823,000 acres. The KNF has 43 IRAs totaling 638,000 acres. Recent efforts to resolve this issue at the national level have been unsuccessful, leaving the issue to be addressed at the local level during Forest Plan Revision. The 1982 Planning Regulations require that we inventory, evaluate and consider all roadless areas for possible inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### Other Revision Issues

Preliminary topics discussed in this section are also important issues to be addressed during Plan revision. However, they are likely not substantial or widespread enough to be major drivers in the EIS alternative themes or forest-wide management area prescriptions and standards.

These issues include:

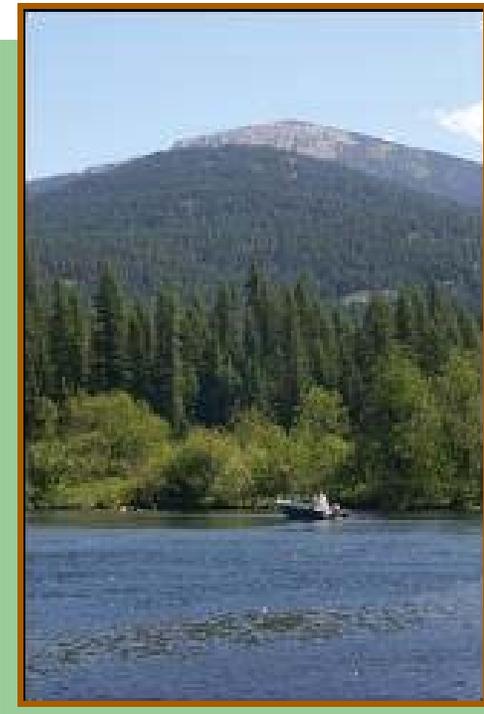
- Special Areas
- Heritage
- Lands

## We Need to Hear from You!

We would like to hear your thoughts and ideas as we begin the process of revising our Forest Plans.

Diverse recreational opportunities, critical habitats for grizzly bears and bull trout, minerals, and commercially valuable timber are just some of the important resources we know exist on our National Forests. Understanding how these and other important values in the area affect the present landowners and users will help us manage the National Forests in the future.

Working together, we can identify issues and develop long-term, balanced resource management goals.



## How to Contact Us and Where to Send Your Comments:

<b>Contacts:</b>	<b>Kootenai National Forest:</b> Willie Sykes, Public Affairs 406-283-7694 Fax: 406-283-7709
	<b>Idaho Panhandle National Forests:</b> Jodi Kramer, Public Affairs 208-765-7235 Fax: 208-765-7307
<b>Website:</b>	We strongly encourage you to use this site for the most current information: <b><a href="http://www.fs.fed.us/kipz">www.fs.fed.us/kipz</a></b>
<b>Comments:</b>	Please send your scoping comments by <b>December 1, 2002</b> to:
<b>Regular Mail:</b>	USDA Forest Service ATTN: KIPZ Revision Team 1101 U.S. Hwy. 2 West Libby, MT 59923
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:r1_kipz_revision@fs.fed.us">r1_kipz_revision@fs.fed.us</a> (For ease of processing, please send comments as an attachment.)

## Who is the Forest Service?

The US Department of Agriculture-Forest Service is the Federal agency that manages national forests and national grasslands. The Forest Service was established by Congress in 1905 to provide quality water and timber for the Nation's benefit.

Over the years, the public has expanded the list of what they want from national forests and grasslands. Congress responded by directing the Forest Service to manage national forests for additional multiple uses and benefits and for the sustained yield of renewable resources such as water, forage, wildlife, wood, and recreation. Multiple use means managing resources under the best combination of uses to benefit the American people while conserving the productivity of the land and protecting the quality of the environment.

*Caring for the Land and Serving People*

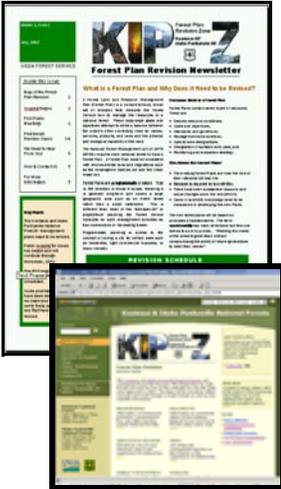
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USDA Forest Service  
 KIPZ Revision Team  
 1101 U.S. Hwy 2 West  
 Libby, MT 59923

Official Use—Penalty for Private Use \$300



## How Can I Stay Informed?

This is our first KIPZ Forest Plan Revision News. We will be publishing this several times a year, as information becomes available or when there are opportunities for you to be involved. All of our documents will be posted on our website for you to view or print.

We strongly encourage everyone to utilize our website: [www.fs.fed.us/kipz](http://www.fs.fed.us/kipz). It is the most current, efficient and cost effective way of receiving information.

**Subscribe** to our Forest Plan Revision E-Mail List to get updates and information. Sign up at [www.fs.fed.us/kipz](http://www.fs.fed.us/kipz).

Be sure to check the schedule of public meetings on page 2! These are being planned for many communities served by the Idaho Panhandle and the Kootenai National Forests. Other meetings will be scheduled during the forest plan revision process to help keep you informed.

## What if I Don't Have a Computer?

If you require information via regular mail, please fill out the following and send it back to us at: (NOTE: You will not be placed on the mailing list if we do not receive a response from you.)

USDA Forest Service  
 ATTN: KIPZ Revision Team  
 1101 U.S. Hwy 2 West  
 Libby, MT 59923

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please specify which Forest Plan you are interested in: IPNF \_\_\_\_ KNF \_\_\_\_ Both forests \_\_\_\_