

March 2007

Issue 10

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USDA FOREST SERVICE



Forest Plan Revision News

Dear Interested Land Management Plan Participant:

We have just completed the analysis of public comments that we received during the 120-day comment period on the Proposed Land Management Plans (LMPs) for the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests. We received over 500 unique and substantially different comment letters; and in addition, hundreds of thousands of form letters and emails. More than 3,000 unique and substantive comments were reviewed by the Planning Team and the Forest Leadership Teams and these comments were summarized into approximately 700 public concern statements. These public concern statements can be found in the Analysis of Public Comment report, which is on our web site: www.fs.fed.us/kipz. If you do not have access to a computer and would like a copy of the report, please contact Jodi Kramer at (208) 765-7235.

The Forest Leadership Teams and the Planning Team are using these comments to finalize the LMPs for each Forest. We are anticipating the release of the Final LMPs by this summer. We appreciate your patience and continued interest as we work together in finalizing our new Land Management Plans.

Ranotta K. McNair
IPNF Forest Supervisor

Paul Bradford
KNF Forest Supervisor

Summary of What We Heard

Plan Component Requests and Recommendations

Respondents requested specific Plan component changes, which included changes to the desired conditions, objectives, and guidelines. In addition, comments were received on the monitoring questions and program, which are useful in the development of the Monitoring Guide. Specific comments were requested during the comment period and the Planning Team is considering these suggestions while making modifications to the PLMPs, however are difficult to summarize and are not included below

Comments focused on the following topics:

Access and Recreation: Access to and recreation on public lands is very important to many people. Comments were general in nature and requested the Forests to increase, decrease, or maintain access for the following opportunities: summer and winter motorized use; summer and winter nonmotorized use; mountain bike use; horseback use; and dispersed and developed camping. In addition, there were comments asking for specific roads, trails, and areas to be open or closed to motorized or nonmotorized use.

Inventoried Roadless Areas, Recommended Wilderness, Wild Lands and Primitive Lands: Respondents were very interested in lands identified as inventoried roadless areas (IRAs), recommended wilderness (RW), wild lands, and primitive lands. Comments ranged from: all roadless areas should be RW; there is enough RW; the wild lands on the KNF should be RW as proposed in

Summary of What We Heard (Continued)

the starting option; all RW in the PLMPs should remain wild lands (KNF) or primitive lands (IPNF); and specific areas that should be designated RW include but are not limited to: Scotchman Peaks, Northwest Peaks, Cabinet additions, Ten Lakes, and Mallard Larkins, while others believed these areas should be managed for motorized activities.

In addition, comments on the management of recommended wilderness, wild lands, and primitive lands included: these roadless lands should be managed as wilderness, while others believed that some of the roadless lands should be managed for multiple use including motorized recreation and vegetation management; mountain biking is or is not a suitable use in these lands; and snowmobiling is or is not a suitable use in these lands.

Vegetation: Comments focused on the desired condition of the Forest vegetation and the amount and type of management that should be used to achieve that desired condition. These comments ranged from; no management to active management and using tools such as prescribed fire and timber harvest. In addition, management within old growth and management of noxious weeds were of concern.

Timber: Comments on timber production included: the need to reduce fire risk and improve forest health, the TSPQ (total sale program quantity) is too high or too low; logging should be used as a tool to improve forest health or logging is not an appropriate tool and natural processes should occur; and the effect of decreased timber production on the local infrastructure, jobs, and income on the communities in the zone.

Fire: Comments received for fire focused on: allowing wildland fire use across the Forests, including in the wildland urban interface (WUI); how the WUI boundaries were defined; use of prescribed fire versus timber harvest; fuel treatment within or outside the WUI; and that prescribed fire is or is not a tool to be used to improve forest health.

Wildlife: Comments on wildlife management included the importance of: unique, diverse and secure habitats, including old growth, to ensure thriving, viable native fish and wildlife populations; balancing the effects of human interaction with management of habitat for all species, including grizzly bears, caribou, and mountain goats; security for big game and big game winter range; and linkage and connectivity corridors for wildlife movement.

Watersheds and Aquatic Species: Comments for watersheds and aquatic species included comments on watersheds, aquatic species, soils, and riparian areas and focused on: the commitment to restore impaired watersheds is not apparent; the resource needs to be well protected from damage by management and other human uses; the incorporation of the direction in INFISH (Inland Native Fish Strategy) in the Plan; and improvement of soil productivity.

Other Topics: Comments for other topics included comments on grazing, heritage, lands, special uses, minerals, other forest products, social and economics, and tribal concerns. Comments on these “other topics” focused on the social and economic implications of forest management activities or opportunities for the local communities. Examples include: loss of jobs and income with lower timber harvest levels; loss of motorized opportunities, both summer and winter and its effect on the communities; and loss of opportunities for other forest products, such as huckleberries, firewood, and mushrooms.

Management Area Allocations: Comments were received regarding management area (MA) allocations and focused on changing or not changing Wild Lands (MA1e) and/or Primitive Lands (MA1d) to Recommended Wilderness (MA1b). In addition, there were respondents requesting the Forests to change or not change the management area Backcountry (MA5's) to Recommended Wilderness (MA1b).

Comments were also received that are not directly applicable to making changes to the Proposed LMPs. Some of these included comments about: the collaborative and public involvement process; the use of best science; the regulatory considerations under the 2005 Planning Rule, such as an EIS is not required under the new Rule; the closure or opening of a specific road, trail or area; the need to understand the Comprehensive Evaluation Report and how it relates to the PLMP; what the monitoring program consists of; and questions about the integration between the Plans and the Environmental Management System (EMS).

New Information

2005 Planning Rule – Categorical Exclusion Approved

After completing an environmental review of the 2005 Planning Rule, the Forest Service concluded that decisions made in Land Management Plans can be categorically excluded from additional NEPA documentation because:

- ◆ there are no cause-effect relationships with effects on the human environment to be analyzed until such time as specific projects and activities are proposed, and
- ◆ they do not command anyone to refrain from projects or activities, or grant, withhold, or modify contracts, permits, or other legal instruments.

However, this does not eliminate the requirement for environmental studies; it means that environmental analyses will be done in connection with specific projects that carry out Land Management Plan guidance.

In addition, the requirements for public involvement and collaboration under the 2005 Planning Rule, far exceed the requirements of NEPA. More information regarding the 2005 Planning Rule and the categorical exclusion can be found at: www.fs.fed.us/emc/plan_ce/index.

Idaho Panhandle National Forests Newspaper of Record has Changed

As of January 2007, the Idaho Panhandle National Forests will publish its appealable decisions made on or after January 2, 2007, in the Coeur d'Alene Press. Notification of this change is published in the Federal Register, at the following web site: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>. For the news release, please see: http://www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/admin/press/070112_so.html.

Forest Plan Revision Timeline

May 2006	Released Proposed Land Management Plans 120-day comment period ending 9/11/06.
Summer 2007	Release Final Land Management Plans Begin 30-day Objection Period.
Fall 2007	Issue Plan Approval Document upon Resolution of Objections.

For More Information and How to Contact Us

KIPZ Forest Plan Revision Website:

www.fs.fed.us.kipz

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Note: Names of individuals commenting on Forest Service proposals may be released under the Freedom of Information Act.



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