

Yaak GA
Starting Option Presentation
7/13/05

Three Rivers District Ranger Mike Balboni kicked off the meeting with introductions and an overview of the status of the process.

Forest Planner Kirsten Kaiser gave a power point presentation on the Starting Option. She emphasized that new planning rule regulations mean that this Forest Plan process doesn't include site specific NEPA decisions, but rather develops a desired condition for forest resources.

She reviewed the new proposed management areas and compared to management areas in the current Forest Plan.

At this time the Forest Supervisors have decided that Proposed Wilderness will be managed as Wilderness, including no chainsaw or mountain bike use. No road management changes are associated with this process, so motorized access wouldn't change from the current situation until site specific travel management decisions are made.

Bill Fansler, Planning Team Recreation Specialist, explained the characteristics considered in the Proposed Wilderness designation, including availability, capability, and need. These were broken down into 47 criteria considered in the review of potential areas. Roderick/Grizzly/Saddle and Northwest Peaks rated out as very high on the forest. Buckhorn also ranked high, but is an important snowmobile area, so was dropped out. Someone questioned why snowmobile use in the Rock Candy area was not rated in the same way. Bill replied that he would have to check the evaluation documentation to answer that.

There was a question about the use of game carts, but someone noted that most trails aren't wide enough or suitable for game carts.

Timber harvest is allowed to meet other resource needs in the backcountry management areas 5a and 5b, but is not "scheduled." The reason almost all of the timber management areas on the district are 6b, moderate intensity, is due to the amount of the district in a grizzly bear recovery area.

Bill noted that it is not expected that non-winter motorized use won't change much due to restrictions in the off highway vehicle (OHV) amendment. However, under new national OHV direction, we are to look off highway use again. Also, many areas on the Three Rivers Ranger District are in grizzly bear core, where motorized access is not allowed during the active bear year.

Mike explained the opportunity the forest is providing for workgroup members to collaborate on changes to the Starting Option. A form was provided if individuals were

interested in participating in this collaboration. It was requested that once a smaller group forms to collaborate on possible changes to the Starting Option, that overlays be provided so they can see the difference in the current Forest Plan and the Starting Option, etc.

Commissioner Rita Windom questioned whether the management areas in the area of the Pipe Cr. road upgrade work were appropriate.

There was a question on Wild and Scenic River Designations. Bill gave an overview of new areas designated as “eligible” for Wild and Scenic River status, and suggested that people refer to the suitability use table that was provided before the meeting. The forests will need to go through a suitability study (which takes a long time) before Congress can act on a designation. The lower Yaak River canyon is currently eligible as a “wild” river. Other portions of the upper Yaak are eligible as “scenic.” The forest manages these areas to protect the values that made it eligible.

There was a question on whether bear management units would continue to be protected. Yes, we would follow standards set out under the grizzly bear access amendment.

Another participant questioned how tribal involvement occurs. The response was through consultations with the forest tribal liaison and coordination help from the forest archeologist.

Again, participants were encouraged to fill out forms provided if they were interested in participating further in the collaboration process. Those persons expressing interest will be contacted by mail with a date for the next meeting.

s/Kathy Mohar