

IPNF Forest Plan Revision
St. Joe GA Workgroup Meeting (Final Notes)
December 4, 2003
St. Maries, Idaho

Attending: Roblyn Stitt, Bernie Lionberger, Dan Hammes, Wes Case, Denise Best, George currier, John Walters, Dick Harwood, Joe Epler, Neil Smith, Dale Dimico, David Galantuonmini, Peter Kuckenberger, Dave Spicer, Terry O'Donnel
Forest Service: Kimberly Johnson (facilitator), Ervin Brooks (Facilitator), Tom Martin – (Revision Core Team Member), Ken Gebhardt – note taker.

Introductions and Meeting Agenda – Kimberly Johnson
Ken Gebhardt reviewed minutes from the last meeting.

The workgroup member list and sign-in sheet that was developed by Roblyn Stitt was sent around the room for corrections and meeting attendance. Workgroup members will maintain a record of attendance for all meetings.

Agenda Item – Timber Production and Vegetation – Tom Martin

Tom Martin, Forest Plan Revision Core Team Member and Forest Silviculturist/Botany/Weeds Program Leader presented the revision topic of Timber Production.

Timber Production Revision Topic:

Tom provided a **HANDOUT** to the workgroup that went over:

- Timber Production Planning Questions
- Timber Suitability – Tentatively Suitable Timberlands and Suitable Timberlands
- Timber Demand

The first page of the handout Timber Production Planning Questions contained the following:

- What areas are suitable for providing for wood fiber production?
- What is the demand for wood fiber production from the IPNF and Kootenai National Forests?
- What volume of timber can be provided in a sustainable manner?

Tom Martin described how the Forest Service (FS) would first identify lands that are suitable for timber production and harvest. Protected lands, unproductive lands, erosion prone or potential watershed concern areas, poor regeneration sites, and areas with inadequate response information would not be considered as suitable for timber production. **See Handout.**

The FS will first start with tentatively suitable lands then subtract areas where other management objectives limit timber production. Lands proposed for resource use that precludes timber production and those areas that are not cost efficient for timber production and harvest will also be subtracted from the total area of suit timberlands available.- **See Handout.**

After subtracting all lands that are not suitable for timber production, the remaining lands will be considered. Depending upon existing site conditions and resource concerns, these remaining lands may be further refined at the project level.

There were several comments and questions:

Question: What is the timeframe attached to irreversible soil/watershed damage? *Response:* We do not have a timeframe. It's more the condition that would be produced. *Clarification Below From the Federal Register - NEPA, revised policy and procedures (1992)*

IRREVERSIBLE - describes the loss of future options. Applies primarily to the effects of use of nonrenewable resources, such as minerals, or cultural resources, or to those factors such as soil productivity that are renewable only over long periods of time.

IRRETRIEVABLE - applies to loss of production, harvest, or use of natural resources. For example, some or all of the timber production from an area is lost irretrievably while the area is serving as a winter sports site. The production lost is irretrievable, but the action is not irreversible. If the use changes, it is possible to resume timber production.

Question: Isn't stumpage price a determining factor of what is cost efficient. *Response: Yes, but stumpage prices change.*

Question: Does market demand influence the calculation of ASQ? *Response: The timber demand study will focus on the marketability of material. For example, if the demand for material is low, or more likely not cost efficient, rather than using timber harvesting as the mechanism for supply, both forests would have to investigate other strategies for removal. This could include the use of other contracting methods (stewardship contracting, for example), use of fuel dollars where this material intersects in the wild land/urban interface, etc. Again, it is important to know this market demand so we can plan a strategy to deal with it. As you know, one of our critical forest health concerns is the dense forests that have developed over the last 50-75 years. The market demand will not influence the calculation of ASQ.*

Question: Isn't timber suitability affected by the possibility of a lawsuit? *Response: This is not relevant to the Forest Plan Revision Process.*

Question: Is the soil compaction concern mitigated by soil moisture, potential equipment that could be used, skid trail density, or harvest method? *Response: Yes, this is usually taken care of during implementation at the District level.*

Question: Are all timber suitability standards required by law? *Response: No regeneration in five years and potential for irreversible soil/water damage are mandated by law (National Forest Management Act, 1976).*

Question: How many suitable acres does the Forest now have? *Response: Tom did not have that information at the meeting the Core Team is working on a draft of acres of suitable timber for the IPFN. The current Forest Plan indicated that 1.6 million acres were suitable for harvest.*

Question: What are Research Natural Areas? *Response: RNA: Research Natural Areas areas are a part of a national network of ecological areas designated in perpetuity for research and education and or to maintain biological diversity on National forest system lands. Research natural areas are for non-manipulative research, observation and study (FSM 4060, 4063). Three RNA's on the District include Thierault Lake, Five Lakes Butte, and Upper Fishhook. They are not part of the suitable timber base.*

Timber Demand –Handout

Comment: Seems like defining suitable timberlands is a simple black and white process. Identifying the amount of timber potentially produced is even more important.

Question: Could numbers go up or down depending upon health of the Forest? *Response: We need to consider what the Forest Plan process is supposed to do. We can model for certain circumstances such as disease and fire but this is just for planning purposes. Harvesting can occur for other resource needs such as to control Douglas fir beetle problems in or near a FS campground. This would be decided at the project level and would have to follow guidelines established in the Forest Plan.*

Question: What is the mandate that required InFish Standards?

Interim InFish direction was the result of a programmatic environmental assessment that examined 5 alternatives (including no-action) that addressed issues identified through scoping and public involvement. A Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact were completed in 1995. InFish was to be applied to proposed and new projects or activities that must comply with requirements of the Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and National Forest Management Act, and other applicable laws.

This standard generally requires specific buffers on fish bearing and non-fish bearing streams, wetlands, ponds, lakes, and wet soils. It also established interim objectives for stream and riparian habitat as well as standards and guidelines for timber management, roads management, grazing management, recreation management, minerals management, fire/fuels management, lands, riparian area management, watershed and habitat restoration, and fisheries and wildlife restoration.

Long-term direction for lands in Idaho and portions of Utah, Wyoming, Nevada, and Montana was to be developed through the Upper Columbia River Basin Environmental Impact Statement. **Requirements or Authority for New Long-term Management Direction** <http://www.icbemp.gov/html/projectinfo/web/int-dir.htm> - Requirements or authority for permanent ecosystem-based management direction have come from: directives; commitments made through interim direction; and court orders including Pacific Rivers Council vs. Thomas.

INFISH - Inland Native Fish Strategy (July 28, 1995): Calls for long-term management direction to protect habitat and populations of resident native fishes outside anadromous fish habitat.

Related Litigation - There have been an increasing number of appeals and lawsuits over federal land management decisions, plans, and activities. Several legal cases have influenced the decision to plan at the broad-scale to address the issues such as species viability, biodiversity, and related cumulative effects.

Biological Opinions - Biological Opinions on the Land and Resource Management Plans as amended by PACFISH and INFISH provide reasonable and prudent measures, implementing terms and conditions and conservation recommendations. These Endangered Species Act requirements and recommendations, which are applicable to significant portions of the project area, are included in Alternative S1, Chapter 3, as part of the no-action alternative.

- August 1998 - USFWS issues a Biological Opinion on 40 USFS and BLM land management plans as amended by INFISH or instruction memorandum in response to the listing of bull trout. USFWS concluded that continued implementation of the land management plans is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of bull trout. No critical habitat has been designated for the species, therefore, none will be affected. This opinion contained similar reasonable and prudent measures and terms and conditions as the June 1998 NMFS Biological Opinions.

Comment: InFish standards seem excessive and decrease the amount of suitable timberlands.

Question: **What is the total area of the IPNF?** Response: 2.5 million acres.

Question: **What ever happened to the Off-Site Pine EIS?** Response: We are currently harvesting timber as a result of this EIS. Kim will look up information regarding implementation of this EIS and provide at the next meeting.

Question: **Is there any good reason not to get rid of beetle infested timber?** Response: It may occur in a wilderness area or in an area that does not allow timber harvest. There are opportunities to provide direction on controlling insect and disease problems in the new Forest planning process.

Comment: Insect infestations are somewhat predictable. Technology does allow us predict where infestations may occur.

Question: What was the timber harvest on the Forest 20 years ago? *Response: 246 million board feet in 1988.*

Question: Would more harvest prevent future bug kills and disease problems? *Response: Historic high volume timber harvests really had a great impact on the watersheds. Timber harvest can be used to control bug infestation and disease problems if done correctly.*

Comment: Everyone wants an acre for there own cause. The Forest Service has a challenge on how to make everyone happy on a limited piece of land.

Question: What is the size of the Mallard Larkins Pioneer Area? *Response: approximately 130,000 acres on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. Part of this area is also on the Clearwater NF – 259,000 acres.*

Comment: Our next meeting should be used to discussed Desired Future Conditions for Timber Production. *Response: Yes, our next step will be to identify desired future conditions as a workgroup.*

Question: If lands have existing roads, are they considered more suitable for timber production? *Response: Not necessary, but roads would be considered in an economic analysis for the area.*

We did not have time to discuss any other revision topics.

Next Meeting will be December 18th. Same place same time.

Question: How does the workgroup want to proceed and what is the agenda for the next meeting?

Motion: Stay on this subject (while fresh in everyones mind, and address timber production revision topic). **All in Favor.**

DECISION: The workgroup will discuss desired future conditions for timber production at the next meeting. The workgroup will work on desired condition, but will not turn the product in right away. They would like to listen and work on other topics and then revisit the timber production topic.