

IPNF Forest Plan Revision
St. Joe GA Workgroup (Final Notes)
November 20, 2003 – 7:00 pm
Federal Building
St. Maries, Idaho

Attending: Wes Case, Roblyn Stitt, Denise Best, Bernie Lionberger, George Currier, John Walters, Gary Simons, Joe Epler, Neil Smith, John Adams, Dale Dimico, Dick Harwood.
FS present: are Kim Johnson (coordinator), Ken Gebhardt (notetaker), and Gary Ford (Forest Plan Revision Team Leader)

Introduction – Gary Ford

Gary Ford (USFS) reviewed the first meeting. He explained the purpose of the Forest Plan revision process and the importance of community workgroups.

Discussion of work group tasks and timelines. – ***First Handout. It discussed, What are we doing? And When are we doing it.?***

- Geographic Area (GA) – Desired Future Condition (due March)
- Checking and validating the St. Joe Geographic Area
- Review preliminary alternatives (May)
- Review of the Draft EIS and public comments on the draft document. (winter)

Gary explained the revision process, that it consists of a Draft EIS and then the Final EIS and that it includes an economic analysis. He also explained that Forest Plans are generally revised every 15 years.

Desired Future Conditions – 2nd Handout –What is it? And How Do We Write It?

Gary explained that the first step for the workgroup will be to look at the current conditions existing in the St. Joe Geographic Area regarding the revision topics of: vegetation, fire risk, timber production, wildlife, watersheds and aquatic species, IRAs and proposed wilderness areas, and access and recreation. The work group will utilize existing information and/or specialists to assist in understanding current conditions on the Forest. Sources of information regarding existing conditions include the GA map packets, draft Forest-wide goals, AMS, current Forest Plan, visitor maps, social assessments, county plans, tribal plans etc.... The social assessments came from the University of Idaho, and workgroup member J.D, Wulforth is the author, we have copies of that available.

Question: How will the Forest Plan revision process address handicap access issues?

It is an issue/concern that will be discussed and addressed with other access issues under the revision topic of access/recreation.

Question: Is the Forest Plan a rule or a vague guideline because laws change all the time?

The Forest Plan is not a vague guideline. The Plan establishes direction for forest management. Changes to the plan are considered Forest Plan amendments.

Question: Are there parts of the last Forest Plan that worked well and others that did not? Can we improve the Forest Plan based upon the problems with the last Forest Plan? The current Forest Plan revision process is a way for us to address issues/concerns with the last Forest Plan.

Question: Are Forest-wide goals the same as District-wide goals? Yes, Forest-wide goals are the same for all Districts. Methods to accomplish Forest-wide goals may be different on each District. Gary then explained the difference between goals and objectives and information sources - ***Handout.***

Question: What do you mean by “the Joe”, National Forest or the St. Joe River? The St. Joe is the Geographic Area (GA) that the workgroup will address for the Forest Plan Revision and is basically the former “St. Joe National Forest”..

Steps in Starting to Work on Desired Conditions – Handout

- Review description of GA
- Review handout of desired future conditions
- Work group needs to concentrate on specific revision topics for the GA
- Review existing conditions/management within each GA
- Begin working through the example/template for developing a desired condition.

Question: What does assistance to private landowners mean (as referenced in the second handout under Forest Wide Goal #3)? There is direction at the National level but the Forest has not yet determined the best way to fully implement this direction. Current examples include: urban fuels reduction, weed management, and community assistance grants.

Example of GA Issues, Goals and Objectives – in Second Handout

There are Examples in the second handout that relate to the following revision topics: Access and Recreation, Fire Risk, Watersheds and Aquatic Species - Handout

The group went over some examples of Forest-Wide Goal Statement, Potential Desired Condition Topics-, Desired Condition Statement, How to Identify Priority Areas for Opportunities-and how to describe why this is a priority.

Comment/Concern: “You allow the public to take part in the planning process but do not allow the public to review and provide input into the travel plan maps.” A couple work group members described how the public has been involved in travel plan map development on the Central Zone. The current workgroup process will allow input from the public on the St. Joe District.

WORKGROUP ORGANIZATION:

The workgroup needs to decide how to officially organize and establish a formal process. Member communication and meeting organization should be priorities.

Roblyn Stitt and Wes Case volunteered to contact workgroup members.

Comment: BEFORE WE GET STARTED, We need to understand the laws and legal constraints before we attempt to address issues. Yes. This is a good idea. The FS can provide that information or a specialist may be invited to a meeting to describe specific legal requirements.

Comment: Is there a possibility of forming subgroups? Yes, you may proceed as the workgroup deems appropriate although this process is not intended to separate groups with differing opinions or interests. The workgroup concept is a way to discuss issues even if all people do not agree.

Comment: The workgroup needs to concentrate on just one or two revision topics to initially understand legal issues and constraints.

New members described individual interests and concerns. Priority topics/issues were tallied on the revision topic poster. A workgroup member again expressed his concern regarding handicap access issues.

Question: Our workgroup can have great ideas and suggestions for revising the Forest Plan but these ideas may be appealed. Will our work be a waste of time? **Comment:** We need to provide input as the public. This is our chance to make a difference. Good ideas will eventually be developed and supported.

Things that need to happen to move the workgroup process forward:

1. Establish date for the next meeting?
2. Establish an agenda or identify agenda items for the next meeting.
3. Decide who will record minutes for meeting.
4. Decide who will contact workgroup members (workgroup coordinators).
5. How will workgroup decisions be made in the future?
6. Meeting time.

DECISION: Everyone was in agreement. The workgroup decided that one or two speakers/Forest Service specialists would be invited to attend the next meeting. Each specialist would describe existing conditions and legal constraints/sideboards for their resource. Following the presentation, the workgroup would discuss the issue(s) for one hour.

Kim Johnson will provide email contacts to Roblyn Stitt. For those workgroup members who do not have email, hardcopies of minutes will be available at the next meeting.

Question: Have other boards established chairpersons or group leaders? It depends upon the group. Some groups have multiple leaders depending upon the meeting or the issue. There needs to be organization regardless of the workgroup. Most work groups work through the District Ranger.

DECISION - Agreement: Workgroup decided that they wanted to meet every two weeks. Meetings would occur on the **first and third Thursday of each month..**

Question: Do we need a volunteer coordinator? Kimberly Johnson and Ken Gebhardt will assist in coordinating workgroup meetings and provide facilitation.

Comment: The workgroup needs to agree on how they will make decisions.

Comment: Consensus will not work. You need to go with the majority vote.

Question: Who is the group?

Comment: Majority may not work because one group could anticipate a topic at a meeting and bring several people to the next meeting.

DECISION: Need to have attended at least three meetings to have voting rights. Supported by several members.

Comment/Suggestion: When disagreement occurs, subcommittees will be developed to discuss issues. Subcommittees will then come back together to discuss disagreement and work toward an agreement

DECISION/Agreement: Meetings will occur at 7:00 pm. **All in favor.**

Motion: Watersheds should be discussed at the next meeting. **All in favor.**

Motion: Timber production should be discussed at the next meeting. **All in favor.**

Gary will check with the planning team and District specialists to see if they are available for the next meeting. End meeting at approximately 9:20 pm.