

**St Joe Workgroup Meeting
March 18, 2004
St. Maries Federal Building**

Draft with USFS Comments 3/25/04

Work Group Members: Denise Best, Dave Best, Dale Dimico, Dave Spicer, George Currier, John Walters, Terry Odonnell, Bernie Lionberger, Neil Smith, Del Rust.

Forest Service: Chuck Mark, Kimberly Johnson, Chuck Stock, Ken Gebhardt, and Mark Grant

6:00 Group Introductions

Chuck Mark presented the agenda for the meeting

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

Change Black Price to Black Prince Creek

Change fire to Doug Fir

Workgroup discussed topics from the March 4 meeting. No changes to the decisions made at the last meeting.

Kim Johnson suggested that the workgroup continue with the agenda for this meeting.

Fire Management Planning - Mark Grant, Forest Fire Management Officer

Handout provided (KIPZ – Integrating Fire Management and Land Management Planning)

- Description of Fire Management Planning Guiding Principals (Forest Plans, Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review, National Fire Plan, Agency Policy)
- IPNF Plan
 - Need For Change – integrate fire as an ecological process in forest planning, define wildland urban interface, incorporate new policy, and develop wildland fire use programs.
- Wildland Fire Management Policy (WFMP) and Objectives
 - Firefighter and public safety are a priority. Role of wildland fire as an essential ecological process. Fire management plans provide guidance to line officers.
 - WFMP is not a less safe way of managing fires, not a significant change from what we do. Is not a wholesale shift to “let burn” policy.
- National Fire Plan and the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy (Improve prevention and suppression, reduce hazardous fuels, restore fire adapted ecosystems, promote community assistance)
- USFS Fire Management Planning
 - Base fire program on the Forest Plan Objectives.
 - Develop, review, approve, and maintain Fire Management Plans for each Forest,
 - Delineate fire management units based on the Forest Plan.
- Envisioned Are Four Fire Management Units for the KIPZ (Wildland Urban Interface, Wildland Fire Use, General Forest, and General Forest “Front 40” or mixed ownership lands).
 - Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) FMUs will be based on the WUI definition incorporated into Community Protection Plans being completed by each of the North Idaho Counties consistent with the Healthy Forest Restoration Act.

- In defining the wildland fire use FMU, the Forest will start with those areas that local fire managers feel that a wildland fire use program is obtainable (e.g. Salmo Priest, Lightning Creek, Upper St. Joe River). Different alternatives to the Forest Plan will explore more or less wildland fire use than this starting level.
- General Forest FMU's will be areas between WUI and Wildland Fire Use management units.
- KIPZ Fire Program – Forest Plan Objectives, Standards, and Guidelines will be developed for each FMU.
- Wildland Fire Use – A NEPA complaint wildland fire use plan will be completed and incorporated into the Fire Management Plan. Appropriate management response will be determined for each fire based on acres burned, maximum manageable area, and risk analysis.

Comment: Workgroup member thought that spring burning should be increased. *Response:* The St. Joe Ranger District routinely burns in the spring.

Discussion of fire history on the IPNF.

Question: Are the lodgepole pine stands in the upper St. Joe a result of historical fires? *Response:* Most likely they were originally mixed conifer stands that were affected by historic fire.

Discussion of crown fires in historic white pine stands and possible use of spring crown fires as a management tool in existing lodgepole stands in the upper St. Joe.

Discussion of potential harvest in upper Joe lodgepole stands. Harvest could also serve as firebreaks.

Wildlife – Chuck Stock, St. Joe Ranger District Wildlife Biologist

Presented Highlights from the AMS for Wildlife

Objective: Provide an overview of the wildlife AMS with focus on the St. Joe (Copy of the AMS Wildlife Summary mailed to workgroup members and handed out at meeting).

Need for Change:

- 1) Based on FP monitoring, existing FP direction may not provide suitable habitat to maintain viable populations of some species.
- 2) There have been changes in species listed under ESA and FS sensitive species.
- 2) Population viability will need to be addressed in new FP.
- 3) Current Management indicator species are not easily monitored and may not adequately represent habitats.
- 4) Other issues have emerged - Big Game security, access management, increase in demand for Forest use.
- 5) New scientific information is now available.
- 6) Invasive Species
- 7) Fire Risk

Laws and Regulations

- 1) National Forest Management Act and Endangered Species Act

Historic and Current Habitat Conditions

- 1) Little turnover in species presence on the Forest (numbers and distribution have changed).
- 2) There has been a reduction in early and late succession habitat types.
- 3) There has been a loss of fire killed trees, large snags, and downed wood.

- 4) Reduction in long lived seral species (e.g. western white pine, ponderosa pine, western larch).
- 5) Loss of riparian and wetland habitat.
- 6) Noxious weeds have affected big game habitat (low concern on the St. Joe).

Current Management Indicator Species

- 1) Gray wolf – general forests, bald eagle – large lakes and rivers, elk– general forests, moose – mature timber & Pacific yew, pileated woodpecker – snags & old growth, northern Goshawk – old growth, pine martin– old growth.

Species listed under ESA:

- Gray wolf – non-essential experimental population. Recovery goals are currently being met under the 1997 Forest Plan.
- Bald Eagle – Not a big issue on the St. Joe, but they do occur. Forest Plan direction in adequate in the 1997 Plan.
- Canada Lynx – Status on Joe is not really known. Identification of Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs). Some reliable sightings but animals have not been positively identified by hair and genetic analyses.
- Grizzly Bear – Not an issue on the St. Joe
- Woodland Caribou – Not an issue on the St. Joe Ranger District.

Sensitive Species:

- Black Backed Woodpecker (sensitive species) – Habitat has declined since historic times.
- Common Loon – No large lakes on National Forest System Lands.
- Fisher – Additional information is required for this species.
- Flammulated Owl – Not a lot of habitat on the St. Joe. Need to improve habitat for this species
- Harlequin Duck – Do occur on the upper St. Joe River. At very low numbers. Surveys occur every spring in the St. Joe. May be necessary to incorporate additional standards in Forest Plan.
- Northern Bog Lemming-Not an issue on the St. Joe
- Northern Goshawk – Difficult to survey. Known to occur/may not be uncommon. May be necessary for additional standards.
- Thompson's Big Eared Bats – Not known to occur on the St. Joe Ranger District.
- Wolverine – Occasional reports on the Forest. Large home range. Need additional information and monitoring.
- Peregrine Falcon – Do not know if they occur on the St. Joe not suspected, no historic occurrence records little to no suitable nesting habitat.

Species at Risk

- Louis's Woodpecker – Habitat loss has occurred. Need management intervention in dry habitat types.

Question: How does the USFS manage federal lands for T&E species? Does the Forest Service Plan to block access to protect species? *Response:* Restricting access to protect listed species has only occurred to protect grizzly bear and woodland caribou. The Forest will continue to protect listed species as required by the Endangered Species Act. The State of Idaho is responsible for managing animal populations while the USFS is responsible for managing habitat.

Discussion of big game forage area management. The USFS, State of Idaho, and Potlatch Corporation have burned open brush fields annually

Discussion of the value of aging clear cuts to wildlife.

Wildlife Desired Condition Statement (Handout provided at last meeting and mailed to workgroup members)

Issues/Concerns/Changes

- The wolf is considered to be an undesirable species because it is an unmanaged predator.
- Forest Service must provide habitat for prey species.
- Increase in moose and wild turkeys (Desirable).
- Loss in forage (game) due to noxious weeds (undesirable).
- Loss of big game forage and range due to reduction in clear cuts.
- There is a lagging indicator. Need to use clear cuts as a tool.
- Impacts to closed forest canopy species due to increase clear cuts.
- Shift towards single species management is undesirable. Need to manage for a balance of species. There has been a misuse of single species management to protect listed species populations and habitat.
- Mimic historic fire regimes would maintain desirable species.
- Manage for featured species (elk, deer) that are socially and economically important.
- Provide for all special emphasis species.
- There has been a dramatic improvement in riparian management over the past 20 years.
- Need to see an increase in funding for wildlife/habitat monitoring.
- There has been an increase in raptors (red tailed hawk and osprey).
- There has been a dramatic change in access restrictions on the Forest.
- There has been an increase in 4x4 vehicles.

Handouts – Summaries from the March 4 meetings provided on desired condition worksheets.

Homework

- Desired condition statement needs to be completed for fire.
- Workgroup members should come to the next meeting to discuss watersheds and aquatics. Is the desired condition statement for vegetation complete?
- Come prepared to work on desired condition statement for wildlife.

Next Meeting - April 1st, 7:00 pm.