



Summary of Public Comments and Public Involvement

We would like to take this opportunity to provide you with a brief summary of where we've been and where we're heading in regards to how you've been involved, how we're using your comments, and how we will continue to involve you and utilize your comments in developing our revised Forest Plans.

From April 30, 2002 to May 31, 2004, we had extensive involvement from many of you, through comments that were submitted during the scoping process and through the workgroups work on Geographic Area Desired Conditions. The Revision Team carefully reviewed all of the public comments and workgroup input, summarized and considered it in development of components of the draft Forest Plans. The review of all public input has resulted in many products, including:

- **What We Heard From Workgroups-** comments that focused on Desired Condition (attached to this page)
- **Scoping Comment Summary (Scoping Content Analysis and Summary Document – at www.fs.fed.us/kipz)**
- **Complete Summary of Workgroup comments (available upon request)**

Your input validated the seven revision topics identified in the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS), and provided information for desired conditions and other components of the Forest Plan. The attached document is a summary, which reflects workgroup and other public comments that were specific to Desired Conditions on each Forest and/or Geographic Area. As part of the Forest Plan components, a summary of our public involvement activities, as well as how the team and the decision-makers considered these comments will be developed.

On May 12, 2005, our planning process changed when the Regional Forester made a decision for our two Forests to use the new 2005 Planning Rule. What didn't change is that all of your comments and hard work by the workgroups over the past two years is still helpful to us in developing the components of the revised Forest Plans. Workgroup input, as well as public, agency, and tribal comments, will continue to be used by the Forest Supervisors and the KIPZ team to build and refine the following plan new components:

- **Desired Conditions**
- **Strategy, which includes the Objectives**
- **Design Criteria, which includes the Guidelines**
- **Special areas and Suitable Uses**

We cannot thank you, the public, enough for your extensive participation in making the past efforts a wonderful example of collaboration. In fact, the willingness of all participants (workgroups, public and the KIPZ Team) to be communicative, responsive, and to promote an active exchange of information, desires, and ideas has brought us to these meetings where we can start talking about the Starting Option map. We hope you will continue to work with us!



DESIRED CONDITIONS SUMMARY

LIBBY GEOGRAPHIC AREA WORKGROUP

From August 2003 through May 2004, there were Workgroup meetings in which people discussed their Desired Conditions for a specific Geographic Area or the Forest. The attached Summary:

- **ONLY** reflects the workgroup comments and letters received during the scoping period that were specific to Desired Conditions on each Forest and/or Geographic Area.
- Is **NOT** a draft of the Desired Condition statements for the revised Forest Plans. This Summary is one source of information the team is using to write the Desired Conditions, both at the Forest and Geographic Area levels. We are using other information to help write the Desired Conditions (ie. Starting Option map after the public has submitted changes; specialists on-the-ground knowledge; and laws, regulations and policies we must adhere to)
- Is **one piece** of our Content Analysis of the scoping and workgroup comments. Some of the comments submitted during the Workgroup meetings and public comment process that are not addressed in the attached summary have been addressed in one or more of the following ways:
 - Incorporated into the following management direction areas: goals, objectives, guidelines, management areas/suitability, special areas, and starting option.
 - May be analyzed at the site-specific project level, where appropriate. Some comment address topics that are outside the scope of the Forest Plan revision process but that are still a Forest Service issue. However through the Forest Plan process, Management Area (MA) allocation and/or direction may or may not allow consideration of this opportunity. For example, Forest Plans will classify all National Forest System (NFS) lands as either suitable for motorized or non-motorized uses for both summer and winter seasons. Through subsequent Travel Management planning and public involvement, decisions will be made regarding individual road and trail management.
 - Addressed by laws, regulations or National and Regional Forest Service policies and are not repeated in the Forest Plan. Other comments are outside Forest Service authority and/or outside the scope of Forest Plan Revision.
- Reflects **areas of general agreement**, where possible, regarding Desired Condition statements. This does not mean these statements reflect consensus on any particular issue as this was not the goal of these meetings and it also was not a voting exercise. They simply identify areas of discussion in which general agreement occurred between the participants that attended that particular meeting.
 - IPNFs workgroups used a process called the Nominal Group Technique to help participants determine areas of general agreement within the revision topics.
 - KNF workgroups did not use this process but some workgroups did reach general agreement on some of the revision topics. However, some of the revision topics in some of the workgroups only reflect a range of desires for management.
- Consists of some Desired Condition statements that are “how to” statements instead of reflecting the condition that the group wants to see on the land or resource conditions. For example, the comment focuses on what silviculture treatments the Forest Service should use, what road improvement activities the Forest Service should implement, etc. The “how to” statements will not be included in the Desired Condition statements in the Revised Forest Plans. In general, the Forest Plan will emphasize what the Desired Condition is and leave it to project implementation to determine the appropriate tools to use to move the area toward the Desired Condition.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE Libby Geographic Area (GA) Workgroup

The input in the following desired condition summaries sometimes reflect areas of general agreement but in some cases they reflect a range of desires for a specific concern statement within a revision topic. For example, within the revision topic *Timber Production*, concern statements related to the question, “*What do you see as appropriate objectives for timber harvest on NFS lands?*” may vary from a desire to utilize harvest for a range of management objectives (fuels reduction, local economies, etc.) to the desire to harvest only trees on the ground and diseased trees.

REVISION TOPIC – VEGETATION

Desired condition is to have an accessible, productive, healthy forest with balanced structure and diverse species composition. Tools available to achieve this desired condition include, but are not limited to timber management; prescribed fire; fire use, noxious weed treatment, and public awareness/education programs. Specific emphasis was placed on treating noxious weeds on road sides, warm/dry sites, trails and the WUI; maintaining Research Natural Areas (RNAs); eliminating grazing; increasing weed-related public education; and aggressive management for and treatment of noxious weeds (especially knapweed) to control and reduce spread.

REVISION TOPIC – FIRE

Desired condition includes a forest trend toward a more fire-tolerant stand composition while maintaining reasonable access (roads and trails) for fire suppression and evacuation. Specifically within:

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

Management activities should include reducing fuels inside and outside the WUI (to include reducing overstocking and leaving all trees over 15 inches within the HRV), treating areas affected by insect and disease, and health-related concerns for smoke resulting from the use of prescribed burning as a method of fuels treatment.

General Forest Areas

Utilize mechanical treatments to reduce fuels and overstocking (leaving all trees over 15 inches within the HRV), improve ability to treat areas affected by insect and disease, and decrease air quality issues by encouraging uses for slash/waste materials resulting from fuel treatments that occur outside the Wildland Urban Interface.

REVISION TOPIC – TIMBER PRODUCTION

Desired condition is to use timber harvest as a tool to achieve many objectives including healthy forest composition and structure; reduced fire risk; sustained utilization of wood resources and economic stability; improved wildlife habitat; maintenance of existing roads; and to provide funds for watershed improvement activities. Specific emphasis was placed on maintaining timber management at current levels outside roadless areas except in West Fork Quartz Creek (due to steep terrain with hemlock) and faces of ridges along the east Cabinet Mountains (due to steep terrain and high visibility), use of local workforce; smaller contracts; and stewardship (economics and forest products industry).

REVISION TOPIC – WATERSHEDS AND AQUATIC SPECIES

Desired condition addresses two major issues **Watershed Restoration (to include water quality/quantity and soil productivity)** and **Fisheries**.

Specific **Watershed Restoration** desires include:

- Maintaining and protecting all community drinking water systems (e.g., Flower Creek for Libby).
- Maintaining and/or improving native fish habitat by focusing on methods other than road relocation.
- Where feasible restore watersheds and riparian areas to properly functioning conditions (PFC).

- Study sediment delivery and risk of sedimentation related to culvert removal and road decommissioning activities.
- Utilizing local workforce to accomplish watershed restoration activities.
- Maintaining fish habitat and connectivity, T&E species, amphibians, and native non-salmonid fish habitat.

REVISION TOPIC – IRAs AND PROPOSED WILDERNESS AREAS

Desired condition for management of Inventoried Roadless Areas includes:

Which IRAs Proposed for Wilderness

Discussions of specific IRAs to propose for Wilderness designation included the NE corner of the Cabinet Mountains (excluding the existing mechanized trail along historic old Highway 2) and the Cabinet Addition.

Management of IRAs Not Proposed for Wilderness Designation

Management of IRAs not proposed for Wilderness designation included prioritizing the establishment of natural fire regimes (conditions permitting) to be coordinated with management objectives for the areas and retaining existing uses of IRAs (e.g., Gold Hill West).

Management of Proposed Wilderness Areas

Management should include cost-efficient and practical use of chainsaws until Congress makes a decision.

REVISION TOPIC – ACCESS AND RECREATION

It is important to note that the revised Forest Plan will classify all National Forest System (NFS) lands as either suitable for motorized uses or suitable for non-motorized uses for both summer and winter seasons. The Forest Plan will not make individual road and trail decisions. Travel Management Plans and project level planning will make individual roads and trails decisions. Travel management plans will be based, in part, on information in the Forest Plans, specifically: (1) the motorized/non-motorized designations found in the Management Areas, and (2) the desired conditions for the Geographic Areas. These two items from the Forest Plan will be the foundation of the Travel Management Plan.

General Access and Recreation (includes general summer and winter uses (directly below) and summer/winter motorized uses, and summer/winter non-motorized uses) desired conditions include the following:

- Maintaining current levels of road and trail access to the Libby GA for multiple uses including recreation, vegetation management, fire suppression, mining, special forest products, and evacuation routes.
- Adequate parking and turnaround areas at recreation use sites.
- Cost-efficient maintenance of trails in Libby GA (e.g., use of chainsaws). Consider use of partnerships in relation to trail maintenance.
- Include preservation and maintenance of historic saddle stock use travel routes in the trail/travel management plan.
- Protect the Kootenai Falls area for cultural properties.
- Preserve rural character and viewshed of Libby GA (e.g., conservation easements).
- Safe passage around gates for winter motorized recreation use (e.g., Libby, Ramsey, Poorman, Cable, Bear and Cherry Creeks).
- Prioritize access in the following areas: Snowshoe Road, Bear Creek Road, Flagstaff Mountain Road, and River Road Trail. Consider connection between Troy and Libby along the Kootenai River. Prioritize adequate access for the following areas: entire NE slope of Cabinet Mountains, head of Pipe Creek, Pipe Creek Summit, Bear Creek Road terminus in east side of Cabinets.
- Adequate handicap and non-ambulatory access and recreation opportunities.
- Ensure accuracy of signs and maps.
- Minimize user conflicts.

- Reduce/control noxious weed spread.
- Consider temporary (two weeks or longer) seasonal openings for various recreational opportunities if not in conflict with closure restrictions.
- Maintain travel corridors on trails (eight feet in width), remove safety hazards (e.g., barricade bolts) for snowmobile and horse use).

Summer Motorized

Desired condition for summer motorized access includes the following:

- Proactive planning and management regarding summer motorized recreational access.
- Utilize partnerships with user groups to evaluate, plan, and maintain an ATV road and trail system and a multiple-use motorized (e.g., loop routes).
- Evaluate current road closures for possible routes.
- Create an ATV user map to include routes, restrictions and points of interest.
- Clearly signed motorized routes.

Winter Motorized

Desired condition for winter motorized access includes the following:

- Proactive management and planning of winter motorized recreation access.
- Utilize partnerships with user groups to evaluate, plan, and maintain an ATV road and trail system and a multiple-use motorized (e.g., loop routes).
- Adequate parking, sanitation, and warming huts.
- Maintain or increase current open route density levels.
- Provide for route flexibility to accommodate changing vegetative conditions (evaluate every 10 to 15 years).
- Continue use in areas that do not contain critical wildlife habitat (including T&E species) or where conflicts can be avoided.
- Prioritize maintaining existing routes as represented in the Kootenai Snow Trails Map Areas 1, 2, and 3.

REVISION TOPIC – WILDLIFE

Desired condition addresses **wildlife habitat** and **access**.

The desire for **wildlife habitat** includes vegetation management while maintaining access for the purpose of preserving and improving wildlife forage and habitat. Vegetation management tools for this purpose include, but are not limited to thinning, fuels reduction, prescribed burning, and noxious weed control. The desired concerns include managing vegetation for both habitat and security needs, and restoring and maintaining T&E species habitat. Specific priorities include managing for and maintaining old growth and grizzly bear, lynx, and wolf habitat areas. Emphasizing local social and cultural traditions and managing wildlife consistent with the social and economic needs of the area were also considered priorities.

Specific **access** concerns include providing recreational opportunities (motorized, non-motorized and Special Forest Products uses) while protecting habitat and security. Management tools to accomplish this may include short-term and/or seasonal closures and consistent access policies in habitat management areas.

INFORMATION, INTERPRETATION, AND EDUCATION

Desired condition is to utilize public education, interpretation, law enforcement, and information programs as tools to achieve the following:

- Increased awareness and use of Stewardship authority/projects, and of opportunities for local involvement in management of the Kootenai National Forest.
- Increased understanding of forest rules, regulations, and responsible use.
- Improved/expanded methods of notification (to include website and/or media coverage) regarding burning activities relative to public health issues (smoke).
- Clear, accurate, and consistent signage throughout the forest.
- Increased education regarding the use of various management activities to achieve forest goals (e.g., prescribed burning to accomplish fuels reduction).

- Increased public education regarding burning and wildfire.

ECONOMIC CONCERNS

Desired condition includes updates of social and economic conditions of the Libby GA to improve the management of the Kootenai National Forest.