

**Forest Plan Revision
Spokane Workgroup Meeting Notes**

February 24, 2004

Attendees: Public- Steve Paulson, Dave Vig, Hal Rowe, Reid Ahlf, Rein Attemann, Andrew Ashmore, Miles Breneman, Chic Burge, Tom Crimmins, Will Deishl, Alan Dragoo, Marsha Jones, Mike Kaluza, Jeff Lambert, John Latta, Roger McKeon, Lorna Ream, Vicki Sola, Suzi Hokonson, and Dan & Jan Treecraft. Forest Service- Brad Gilbert, Dave O'Brien, Mark Grant, Tom Martin, Jodi Kramer, Wendy Dougherty (note taker)

Next Meeting Dates:

March 9th – Wildlife, watersheds, aquatic species

March 23rd - Access & recreation, IRA's

April 13th

April 27th

Introductions (Dave O'Brien)

Dave welcomed everyone, discussed agenda for the evening, and asked attendees to review last meeting notes and if you have any changes give or send them via email to Brad and/or Jodi and they will make the changes before finalizing them. Tonight's topics include: Fire Risk, Timber production, then discussion and wrap-up.

Fire Risk (Mark Grant)

Gave a slideshow presentation on "Integrating Fire management and Land Management Planning" and distributed a yellow & blue handout. This slideshow will be on the website. Main Objective is to provide for efficient fire protection and fire use to help accomplish land management objectives. The most common Management Area (MA) direction is to use suppression strategies appropriate to achieve the best benefit cost.

Wildland Fire use

Is not Policy.

Is not a less safe way of managing wildfire fires.

Is not a significant change in what we do.

Is not a wholesale shift to "let-burn" policy.

Agencies will utilize a full spectrum of fire management. The vast majority of wildland fires will continue to receive a suppression-oriented response.

National Fire Plan (NFP)

Coordinate a 10-year comprehensive strategy. Goals for the NFP are: improve prevention and suppression, reduce hazardous fuels, restore fire-adapted ecosystems, and promote community assistance.

Comment: Fire plan and fire wise program is a program directed at private lands using fire plan dollars for the fuel reduction. The FS is putting money in the backcountry to remove timber and it is ineffective to help communities. Bush is proposing a 40% reduction in the money to communities. **Response:** This is outside the discussion for tonight so was deferred to another time.

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Four Fire Management Units (FMUs) for KIPZ

1. WUI – Wildland Urban Interface
2. WFU – Wildland Fire Use
3. General Forest (WFU May be permissible)
4. General forest - front “40” or mixed ownership

Question: How is “front 40” similar to Wildland Fire Use areas? It is close to communities, behind the wildland urban interface? **Answer:** HFRA (2003) now defines the WUI as a specific distance around identified communities, unless a community wildfire protection plan is in place that defines WUI. We would like the communities to participate with our interagency collaborators to define WUI.

Question: What are forest disturbances? **Answer:** Natural disturbances include insects and disease, floods, fires, etc.

Question: WUI Boundaries of .5 up to 3 miles? **Answer:** Depends on how the communities define WUI, otherwise HFRA has a default boundary.

To implement Wildland Fire Use:

- We must have a NEPA compliant fire use plan.
- Appropriate management response will be determined for each fire.
- Fire use must be within prescription criteria such as:
 - Acres burned per decade
 - Maximum manageable area
 - Risk analysis
- Within first 2 hours, a determination is made as to the appropriate management response based on objectives, relative risk, complexity and defensibility.

Forest Plan would define the fire management units and provide fire management guidance for each unit.

Timber Production (Tom Martin)

Gave a slideshow presentation on “Integrating Timber harvest prescriptions and ecosystem health issues” and distributed a white and yellow handout.

Existing forest plan direction

- Optimize timber management using an agricultural production model.
- Other resource Objectives acted as constraints to timber production.

Need for change

- * Shifting emphasis to managing ecosystems.
- * Previous Forest Plan predicted an allowable sale quantity that was unsustainable under budgets and judicial interpretations of environmental laws.
- * Need to clearly tie resource objectives with desired vegetation condition.

Question: Is the focus on flora? **Answer:** Both flora and fauna habitats.

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3 elements needed to determine the amount of sustainable harvest:

1. Inventory of lands,
2. Amount of land that is available for timber harvest,
3. Appropriate methods of timbers harvest.

Question: Does that mean even age? **Answer:** A variety of silviculture techniques can be used, not just even aged.

Purpose of silvicultural prescription – forest plan revision
Showed several slides showing different types of prescriptions

Question: How small is a project? **Answer:** 5 acres to 5,000 acres

Harvest Prescriptions:

Old model – blocks

New – combinations of thinning and gaps

Question: Any old pictures to show what the older treatment of stand to compare it to, in order to bring back the natural stand types? **Answer:** We do have historic photos, however, we do not take before and after photos of every stand.

Question: How old is the science of silviculture? **Answer:** Silviculture began in Europe and is several hundred years old.

Question: Are pictures used for looking back? **Answer:** Yes, there are some using photo points some as early as 1900's.

Question: What are patented mining claims and what rules do they have to model? **Answer:** Patented mining claims are private land and are regulated by the state. They must comply with the Idaho Forest Practices Act

Question: Processes are more costly compared to years before? How does the Forest Service pay for that? Are we causing more problems? Is the timber program losing money? What is the tax burden on the general public? **Answer:** There are more benefits than dollar returns, like meeting oather resource objectives such as wildlife habitat, recreation and fuels reduction. We definitely could make money if that were our only objective, similar to the state trust lands. Timber sales on the Idaho Panhandle NFs are typically above cost.

Factors influencing Decision Space

- Species viability
- Other resource objectives
- Methods of timber harvest and rotation length
- Long-term sustained yield (forest growth and mortality, which reduces the inventory)
- Amount of land considered suitable for timber production.

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Question: What is the time frame for long-term sustained yield? **Answer:** We analyze about 150 years to make the determination a harvest level is sustainable.

Question: What is the projection of growth of The Idaho Panhandle? **Answer:** The 1987 Forest Plan project about 500 million board feet of growth per year.

Desired Condition Exercise:

The group split up into 3 groups and went through a brainstorming exercise to develop DCs for Fire and Timber Production.

Group 1 (Members: Tom, Miles, Will, Jan, Jeff, John, Jodi)

Fire Desired Conditions

WUI's

- Use mechanical treatment to reduce fuels.
- Reduce fuels as close to communities as possible.
- Prescribed fire commensurate with risk to structures, communities, etc.
- Treatment of insect and diseases
- Use type of logging commensurate and/or to maintain visual qualities.
- Allow natural fires to burn w/in prescription (list of criteria).
- Allow natural fires to burn.
- No mechanical treatment.
- Limited mechanical treatment.
- Use prescribed fire to reduce fuels.
- Use fire to control noxious weeds.

General Forest

- Use prescribed fire.
- Use mechanical treatment and timber harvest.
- Allow wildland fire use fires.

Timber Production Desired Conditions

- Timber harvest is outside IRA's.
- Timber harvest not allowed in proposed wilderness.
- Consider cost of road construction compared to other alternative methods when harvesting timber.
- Timber harvest is a tool to:
 - Improve forest health
 - Reduce fuel loads.
 - Improve wildlife habitat.
 - Benefit community stability.
- Be careful about timber harvest in upper Coeur d'Alene GA- sediment into the watershed and existing sediments.
- Timber harvest is sustainable.
- Forest Service payments (to county and schools) not tied to timber harvest.
- Retain integrity of old growth in upper Priest River Basin (upper Priest Lake to Canadian border).

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- Protecting forest ecosystem is essential to quality of life and regional economy (this is a higher priority than timber resources industry)
- Timber harvest is one of the contributors to the regional economy
- Prioritize timber harvest in conjunction with FMU's.

Group 2 (Members: Dan, Chic, Rodger, Hal, Dave, Rein, Andrew, Brad)

Fire Desired Condition

- Long term- return to a natural regime.
- Majority feels that fire is ok in wildland forest.
 - Salmo Priest
 - Upper St. Joe
 - Lightning Creek/Spar Lake
- Fire only in wilderness (dissenting voice).
- Wildland forest fires ok in roadless areas (dissenting voice).
- Use scientific data instead of political – educate the public.

Timber Production Desired Condition

- Growth versus harvest.
- Adjust harvest so other events such as insect and disease, wildfire (F& F) do not deplete below reasonable sustainable harvest levels with emphasis on forest restoration.
- Lands council forest restoration alternative
- Maximum harvest – sustainable
- Educate public to goals and possible end results.

Group 3 (Members: Vicki, Mike, Reid A. Lorna, Alan, Marsha, Dave)

Fire Desired Condition

- Let fires burn if the risk is ok.
- No WUI - fuels are too high and in the front 40.
- Prescribed fires a valuable tool.
- Human caused fires may also be ok to let burn in the right conditions.

Timber Production Desired Condition

- Harvest ok if unhealthy.
- Use land exchange to consolidate in backcountry.
- Do not harvest "healthy" stands.
- Products ok to supply needs if restoration goals are achieved.
- Visual and resource (flora & fish, slides) concerns limit clear-cut size, if at all.
- Leave roadless out of timber base.
- If have timber then priority is with the areas needing restoration.