

Priest Workgroup in Priest Lake, ID

Meeting Notes

04/07/04

Attendees:

Forest Service – Kathy Murphy, Jodi Kramer, Jenny Taylor and Camilla Cary - Notetaker.
Public – Mike Sudnickovich, Tom Holman, Larry Townsend, Steve Booth, Wendy Booth, Rich Bencoter, Craig Hill, Mark Sprengel, Margy Hall, Kris Howell, Ted Parvin, Ken Wimer, Vince Aguirre, Grant Brockus, Lee Lubig, Garrett Wight, Maralyse Wight, Ron Marak, Weldon Warren, Susy Sterner, Mark Kabush, Mike Sackett, Tim Ventress, Tim Kyлло, Eric Hesse, Doug McFarland, Carolyn McFarland, Paul Storro, Bart Triesch, Bill Donahoe, Matt French, and Tim Petek.

Kathy Murphy welcomed everyone and everyone introduced themselves. Jodi Kramer went over the ground rules.

Jodi explained the sensing process and how it is not a vote. The sensing process is to provide feedback to the workgroup on issues/statements that they generally agree with, disagree with and are split on the issue. All of the workgroup issues/statements, including comments received outside the workgroup will be going to the revision team for them to consider as they develop the draft Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. Everyone was handed the DC statements for Access & Recreation – Motorized/Non-Motorized Area Allocation and spent some time at the meeting individually indicating which statements they A = Agreed with, C = Can live with, or D = Disagree with. The group then finished the sensing task for these Desired Conditions.

Following are the results of the sensing process for the Priest workgroup to consider in their discussion at their 4/26 meeting (last meeting to discuss all DC statements).

Access & Recreation – Motorized/Non-Motorized Area Allocation

GENERALLY AGREE

General

- It should first be recognized that there is only one Public Authority that represents the community and that authority would be the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce is a representation of the economics of the area. Because any decision making within the Forest Plan could alter the community, good or bad the public authority should be notified and involved in the process.
- Provide more clarity of caribou and other species seasonal habitat needs in decisions regarding seasonal access restrictions and decisions.
- Reduce interference by outside groups who do not contribute to the well being of the local economy.
- Make GIS information available to the public on the website.

Motorized and Non-Motorized - Summer and Winter

- The USFS needs to work with the business community, the Priest Lake Chamber of Commerce, to develop a winter and summer economic impact study that would become part of the Forest Plan, which would be reviewed before any decisions are made that, would limit any type of recreation. The majority of the employment rate of Priest Lake is recreation based, directly or indirectly. Any plans that will effect any employment in the community should be reviewed before any actions are taken.
- The USFS needs to work with the business community, the Priest Lake Chamber of Commerce, to develop a winter and summer economic impact study that would become part of the Forest Plan, which would be reviewed before any decisions are made that,

would limit any type of recreation. The majority of the employment rate of Priest Lake is recreation based, directly or indirectly. Any plans that will effect any employment in the community should be reviewed before any actions are taken.

- Trails and FS roads are the “arteries” of the Priest Lake economy. These routes need to be improved and maintained to provide for sustainable use.
- The USFS needs to work with the community to develop a recreation needs study that serves as the social component that would be reviewed before any changes are made on the Forest that would affect the social component of the community.
- Do a capacity analysis across the entire GA for all uses. (Including density of use).
- The regional trail system design needs to include areas of challenge, for all types of recreation use, accessible from the main trail system.
- In areas where invasive weed control is a problem, post procedures explaining how all types of users transfer seeds and how to prevent these transfers. If needed, to provide proper cleaning stations to remove seeds from shoes, animals, and equipment before entering the forest.
- On annual basis, review any areas that have been restricted, via community meetings, to determine if the restriction is still warranted.
- Any area, trail or road closures for T&E species need to be reviewed for seasonal application and opened to the public when they are not seasonally sensitive.
- Allow law enforcement behind gated roads as needed. (Emphasis on border patrol and drug control). Border patrol should have keys to locked gates.
- Maintain recreational uses as defined in the current Forest Plan in the currently defined Management Areas.
- When studying or reviewing recreation use in the national forest where it’s possible there may be disturbances that could cause an event that could alter the structure, composition or function of the forest it’s important the study also shows that recreation by human use is no different from drought, floods, wind, wildfire or insects. Man was placed here to use its resources by the same process.
- Recognize recreation use as a resource of USFS to maintain/increase funding to support recreation use and staff to support it.
- If closed to motorized for caribou, then close to non-motorized recreation as well.
- Clearly post restrictions.
- USFS is responsible for managing the forest as a renewable resource. Recreation is a renewable resource. USFS needs more emphasis on managing and expanding recreation. Recreation pursuits are part of our tradition and needs to be maintained.
- Keep current on recreation trends and make certain there are adequate facilities to accommodate these in order to protect sensitive areas of our forests.
- Provide some type of adopt-a-trail program to help maintain trails, road culverts, etc.
- If summer closure is installed, ensure winter access is maintained. This includes berms, culverts, gates and other structures.
- Utilized volunteer efforts to offset the fees charged.
- No fees charged to use NFS lands.

Motorized - Summer and Winter

- Consider motorized access for handicapped individuals in specific locations. Reference White River Recreation Plan 2-31. Closed roads and motorized trails are necessary to accommodate elderly and others with disabilities (e.g. berry picking, hunting, fishing).
- Maintain access behind gates for administrative uses.
- Work with local and regional groups in developing connecting trail systems to connect regional communities. These trail systems to be used by all types of recreation in

summer and winter. This process to take place before any additional areas are closed to recreation use of the Forest.

- Need to stay flexible to allow for changing needs and events.
- Keep the same roads open in the fall hunting season as are open in summer.
- All USFS roads need to be open to the public during periods when there is no seasonal conflict with intended closure.
- Areas should not be closed arbitrarily to motorized recreation.
- Re-establish access to more high elevation areas that provide visitors for those who are not able to walk extended distances.

Motorized - Summer

- Meet current grizzly bear standards before making any decisions for motorized use.
- Clearly recognize the differences between motor types (combustion vs. electric).
- Protect evacuation routes.
- Consider designation of streams and sensitive areas during development of motorized trails/roads.

Motorized - Winter

- Use snowmobiles to accomplish thinning objectives.
- Provide for brush removal from groomed and un-groomed designated snowmobile routes.
- Non-Motorized – Summer
- Retain the historical right to use stock in all areas that are currently open to stock/pack stock use. (from Bob Savage)
- Retain all trails that are currently on inventory as open to stock use. (from Bob Savage)
- Improve trail access for stock and maintain in a usable manner. (from Bob Savage)

GENERALLY ARE SPLIT (Disagree and Agree)

- All input (local and national) is treated equally.
- All concerned public should “pay to say”.

Motorized and Non-Motorized - Summer and Winter

- Establish a monitoring plan to document use and users.
- Develop recreation guidelines for proper care of our forestlands and post in trailhead locations. Also post information regarding any sensitive areas that are accessible via the trailhead so the public knows to respect these areas. Need to educate the users on ethics of use. Pro-active education. The community works with the Forest Service to help communicate proper use and ethics (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Churches, Retail and objective organizations, etc).
- Enforcement of violators of posted regulations. Increase emphasis and funding for law enforcement. Enforcement action is needed to avoid resource damage and keep motorized on designated areas (compliance).
- Due to enforcement limitations, if violations (use in restricted areas) continue then implement further restrictions.
- Roads should be rehabilitated in the Caribou recovery area and placed in special designation that focuses on caribou recovery. Make a National designation for the caribou recovery area, ie. a Biodiversity Reserve.
- Fees should be charged to all users. Look at utilizing user fees for maintenance, education, monitoring, and enforcement and developing new facilities.
- Fees charged should reflect full and actual mitigation and maintenance costs and split out by particular use.

Motorized - Summer and Winter

- If gate/road is closed, closed to everyone (motorized) including administrative use. (Okay for emergency use and some exceptions). Whenever a road is rerouted around a stream or closed near a stream that access be maintained for handicapped unless it creates an impossible situation.
- Put roads to bed (obliterate) for 4.5 miles from border to strengthen the northern border.
- Need more space and more trails to accommodate increasing number of user for single track and two track users.
- Consider damage caused by snowmobiles to regeneration that may affect wildlife habitats, especially caribou.

Motorized - Summer

- Disperse the motorized use to reduce concentrated effects.

Non-Motorized – Summer

- Bicyclists (mechanized) restricted to existing roads if we're restricting motorized use to existing roads. Treat motorized and non-motorized (mechanized) equally.
- Bicycles are allowed access on all road and trail routes (open and closed).

GENERALLY DISAGREE

Motorized and Non-Motorized - Summer and Winter

- Areas and/or miles of trail should be proportionate to the types of use.

Motorized - Summer and Winter

- Upper Priest Lake and Thorofare should be closed to motor boats.

Motorized – Winter

- End off trail use in caribou recovery area until scientific review is complete. Defer to caribou until scientists agree that snowmobiles and caribou are compatible.

Non-Motorized – Summer

- No canoes or kayaks in the Thorofare or Upper Lake to protect nesting loons along shoreline. Eliminate the canoe portage because it is a sediment source.

Access & Recreation – Motorized, Wheeled Cross-Country Travel

GENERALLY AGREE

- The forest needs to remain open to motorized access unless there is a specific reason to close an area – allow motorized, wheeled cross-country travel.
- Any area that is recommended for closure to motorized or non-motorized access needs to have a detailed study indicating how the area is being harmed and a public review process needs to be conducted before any on the ground action is taken.
- No restriction in Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat unless there is peer review science that verifies the activity being restricted is contributing to the loss of the species in question.
- No new restrictions or reductions of dispersed recreation unless closure is mandated after peer reviewed scientific evidence has proven that activities are detrimental to the animals in that area.
- No net loss of cross-country recreation access. If any area that is currently part of a recreation activity has restrictions applied to it then another area of equal value based on community and Forest Service input is opened to the activity that has been restricted.
- Create designated off trail areas.

GENERALLY SPLIT (Disagree and Agree)

- No motorized use off of open, designated/system roads and trails. Shouldn't be riding ATV's next to streams, etc. Eliminate user created trails. This should not occur until good ATV travel routes are planned and designated.
- No cross-country motorized use.

GENERALLY DISAGREE

- No motorized use off of existing roads. Current motorized trails would be closed. No new road construction.
- End off trail use in caribou recovery area until scientific review is complete. Defer to caribou until scientists agree that snowmobiles and caribou are compatible. Voluntarily restrict snowmobile use only if caribou are present.

Access & Recreation – Dispersed/Developed Recreation & Special Forest Products

GENERALLY AGREE

- Have Forest Service office hours reflect seasonal uses. Maintain a Forest Service Ranger Station office and a presence at Priest Lake.
- Dispersed recreation sites and special forest products remain the same as in the 1987 Plan.
- Improved recreational developed and high-use dispersed sites for sanitation (i.e. shower facilities so people don't use river or lake, outhouse facilities on the islands).
- Update and improve developed recreation sites.
- Management/balance between developed and dispersed sites to lessen concentrated resource damage.
- Start a monitoring plan for commercial forest products. Capture economic value and harvests.
- If restrictions to NFS facilities and lands continue to increase, public dollar support of the NFS will decrease.
- Increase and continue to support day use sites (ie. Ledgewood).
- Provide education (educational material) on sustainable harvesting practices to commercial and non-commercial (personal) users. (from Margy Hall)
- Manage recreation use to within area's capacity as determined by a forest-wide capacity analysis. Complete a site-specific capacity analysis if needed. (from Margy Hall)

GENERALLY SPLIT (Disagree and Agree)

- No private extraction of public resources for commercial profit.
- Harvesting Christmas trees in caribou & lynx habitat need to be coordinated. Monitor damage that may or may not occur from snowmobiles.

GENERALLY DISAGREE

None

Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs)

GENERALLY AGREE

- All Roadless Areas be managed to allow all types of recreation, fuel reduction and management activities. Manage IRAs as general forest areas.
- That an area not be considered for roadless designation if the area has historically contained roads that have been abandoned.

- IRA on the Selkirk Crest be open to winter motorized use. Not including current closures.
- IRAs should be managed at the local level to incorporate local issues and concerns.
- (Tightly) control noxious weed invasion into IRA's and proposed wilderness areas by any allowed motorized or mechanical apparatuses, humans, or domesticated & stock animals.
- In IRA's and Proposed Wilderness Areas, administrative or emergency access (including the US/Canadian Border Patrol) into an area should be done in a manner that minimizes the impact to the area.

GENERALLY SPLIT (Disagree and Agree)

- Acquire Idaho Department of Lands roadless lands and place in NFS IRA status.
- Exclude IRAs from fuel reduction activities.
- Examine areas adjacent to IRAs for inclusion into the IRA.
- Manage IRA's and Proposed Wilderness Areas to provide rare or unique benefits that may not be common or available from other public or private lands, such as opportunities for experiencing solitude in remote settings, recreating where lakeshores are undeveloped, harvesting unique natural resources, and providing habitat for Federal and/or State endangered, threatened, or sensitive species indigenous to the area.

GENERALLY DISAGREE

None

Proposed Wilderness Areas

GENERALLY AGREE

- Due to the affects of the Endangered Species Act on North Idaho public lands, that there be no more Proposed Wilderness Areas in North Idaho.
- Any existing Proposed Wilderness Areas be managed to allow all types of recreation, fuel reduction and management activities until a final decision is made regarding the area status.
- Border patrol access to proposed wilderness and IRAs as deemed necessary.
- Allow for winter motorized uses in proposed wilderness.
- Allow for fuel reduction projects in proposed wilderness areas to maintain forest health.

GENERALLY SPLIT (Disagree and Agree)

- No IRAs should be proposed as wilderness and un-propose the Salmo Priest for wilderness.
- No proposed wilderness be put into wilderness status and should be returned to general forest allocation.
- Continue the current proposed wilderness areas that are in the 1987 Plan.
- Exclude proposed wilderness from fuel reduction activities.
- Manage same as general forest utilizing the same management practices.
- Manage same as wilderness.

GENERALLY DISAGREE

- All IRAs be proposed for wilderness.
- No fire suppression in proposed wilderness.
- Proposed Wilderness Areas are managed to protect their wilderness characteristics until Congressional action is taken. Non-conforming activities may be limited or restricted. ---- More specifically, management actions or proposed new uses that would be the basis for not recommending the area classification or would alter the wilderness characteristics will not be allowed.

- The Upper Priest Proposed Wild and Scenic River Area should be managed as a wilderness area with a possible allowance of mountain bikes after review and analysis of potential impacts and methods of mitigation is completed.

The next topic was Social and Economics and Kathy gave a brief overview and handout on the subject. The group then did a brainstorming session on this topic and following are the results:

- Participate with local communities: the chamber, industries, local elected officials and recreation associations, in assessing social and economic needs.
- Participate with local communities: the chamber, local elected officials, industries, and recreation associations, with implementing programs that promote local social values and provide a stable economic environment.
- Solicit the local community: the chamber, local elected officials industries, and recreation associations, to participate in your studies of any impacts that will affect the community due to any site specific projects implemented via the Forest Plan before approving the projects.
- Elevate the importance of recreation in the GA. Increase local USFS staff and require more interaction with the local community: the chamber, local elected officials industries, and recreation associations.
- Develop and publish plans for advancing recreational activities for the GA that will meet the current demand trends.
- Research and design regional solution to enhance multiple use trail systems that connect regional communities. Thus enhancing the social and economic stability of the communities.
- Develop and use the best scientific information available to deliver technical and community assistance, and to support ecological, economic and social sustainability.
- Support actions that further greater sustainable community economic diversity and resilience, and vitality for the Priest Lake area communities.
- The Priest Lake GA should provide commodity resources in an environmentally sustainable and acceptable manner to contribute to the social and economic sustainability and diversity of local communities. Provision of these resources must take into account the needs and long-term conservation of the underlying ecosystem.
- The Priest Lake GA should provide non-commodity opportunities in an environmentally sustainable and socially acceptable manner to contribute to community sustainability and vitality, its cultural integrity, and community cohesion.
- The basis and methods of calculation of the National Forest Service lands payment to counties should be reevaluated on a regular interval. In terms of the Priest Lake GA, the payment system should reflect current and future projected, diversified usage of the area.
- Prior to Forest Plan Revision being done, Revision Team needs to do a social and economic study of the Priest GA (all GA's) before proceeding with broad, programmatic decisions in the Forest Plan (not county-wide as in the AMS and Social Assessment) when looking at a county-wide assessment (Bonner), Priest Lake gets washed out.
- As part of this study, need to determine how much tax payers are contributing to subsidizing local economies (roads and facilities)
- When team is looking at this comment of developing this study, they need to go to local communities in the development of this study.
- Logging, mining, and recreation have supported our school system, this needs to continue and improve.
- Site-specific decisions will consider how the individual activities affect Priest Lake (social and economics) on a local scale, not on a county scale.
- All individuals and organizations in the GA should have an opportunity to participate in social and economic assessments.

- Develop utilization of community capacity and infrastructure to the extent that is practical to accomplish ecosystem health objectives.
- Distinguish between year around vs. seasonal part-time residents in their contributions to the local economy and decision making (weight of input)
- Consider that people mover here because of recreational and social reasons and this supports economics of the community.
- Design and implement restoration activities to promote participation and community economic development.
- Contribute to diversification of natural resource related jobs and businesses (i.e. logging, mining, etc.)
- Increase timber outputs to 80 mmbf.
- All property owners who pay taxes should have equal input to decision making.
- Payment in lieu of taxes, to the school districts, needs to be re-evaluated.

The next topic was Wildlife. A brief explanation was given and Jenny Taylor explained Management Indicator Species. The group then did a brainstorming session on this topic and following are the results:

- Consider making the caribou, grizzly bear and lynx recovery areas a National Wildlife Refuge or Park or Biodiversity Reserve as the Forest Service has a very poor track record for managing habitat and recreational activities to allow caribou to recover. REMEMBER, the Selkirks is the only area in the continental US with mountain caribou population.
- Have a special management area designation making caribou, lynx and grizzly bear recovery a priority, eliminating snowmobile and at dispersed use, restoring biological and physical relationships that allowed caribou to thrive in the recent past. Eliminate the vast majority of roads in the recovery area. Restore natural fire regimes.
- Set a STANDARD not a goal, that once the population of caribou reaches carrying capacity to maintain the population at those levels. Carrying capacity is higher than the population goal for recovering the species.
- Logging should be not be permitted in the caribou recovery area.
- Establish a second caribou population outside of the Selkirk Mountains.
- The USFS had not provided its citizens involved in the review process with enough information about wildlife distribution and abundance to make any kind of informed comments. Maps of management areas such as those displayed at the meetings are not maps of wildlife distribution and abundance.
- Consider that WUI activities may result in an adverse affect to threatened and endangered species and the public will not be able to appeal these activities.
- Consider making decision makers in the Forest Service personally and professionally liable for decisions that violate the law and result in taking of endangered species.
- Take every opportunity to acquire IDL and private timber lands in the Selkirk Ecosystem with special emphasis for those in T&E habitat.
- Increase aerial monitoring of snowmobile use in caribou habitat until snowmobiles can be legally excluded, this can be funded by laying off Foresters and Technicians. This money can also be used for satellite - based collars for augmented caribou.
- Consider that comments from IDFG may not be in the best interests wildlife but of license holders.
- Consider taking additional steps to encourage common loon nesting success.
- -Consider coordinating the wildlife portion of the revision with the wildlife portion of the ongoing subbasin assessments for the Columbia River basin.
- Reduce total road density in the Experimental Forest to allow TES species to recolonize the area when the recovered populations expand and begin to disperse out of the recovery areas.

- Provide structure, composition, connectivity, function, and spatial patterns of wildlife habitats (terrestrial & aquatic) that maintain or restore opportunities for species to interact, disperse, and migrate and to reduce adverse impacts associated with habitat fragmentation.
- Whenever T&E habitat is being mapped, public meetings should be held with biologists to give the details of how and why the habitat area was designed.
- Actively manage recovery areas and allow for reduction of non-compatible listed species (i.e. caribou and white-tailed deer)
- Before any species is considered for recovery habitat, take into consideration the adverse affects that species will have on already existing species before the habitat is defined and set aside for management.
- Discourage radio collaring of resident caribou (because of stress).
- Recognize that natural selection is an ongoing process and that wildlife species that once existed in the GA may no longer be viable.
- Decision makers in the Forest Service shall not be held personally or professionally liable for decision.
- Make known the number of existing endangered animals and the target populations for recovery.
- MIS at risk and focal species should be representative of current forest habitat and relevant to future desired conditions.
- Increase winter habitat for big game adjacent to populated areas through heavier canopy or cover (don't log next to human populated areas)
- Maintaining all historic (100 years) and existing wildlife species should be the priority of the Forest Plan.
- Increase spring and fall burning for big game habitat where applicable.
- No more introductions of non-native species.
- Abandon caribou recovery efforts in the Selkirk's (in the Priest GA) in lieu of more suitable habitats (i.e. outside the grizzly bear recovery area).
- Maintain a variety of forest plant compositions to support various species (continue to keep it varied)
- Recognize wildlife habitats on National Forest lands contribute to ecosystem sustainability and biological diversity of the Priest GA. Habitats contribute to supporting populations of wildlife that address people's current and future needs for interests in the many aesthetic, commercial subsistence, recreational, cultural and scientific uses and values of wildlife.
- Create an online database for all documents referenced in the draft and final reports. Also, put a page number in the reference in the footnote on the same page as the reference that is quoted.
- More emphasis on economic impacts on the Priest GA needs to be considered in the T&E species management.
- Manage less in regards to the T&E species. Let nature take its course.
- Examine the ecologic implications of species extinction.
- Reduce US Fish and Wildlife Service to an advisor not the director of wildlife management decisions on the Priest GA.

Camilla Cary will compile all the statements and Jodi will add them to the website. The group will then do sensing on these statements at the next meeting. Additional comments can be sent to ccary@fs.fed.us and jodikramer@fs.fed.us by close of business on Friday, April 09, 2004.

Mark Sprengel requested a definition of the following: sensing, voting and capturing an idea.

Next meeting: April 21, 2004, at 6:00-8:30 P.M. at the Priest Lake Ranger District Cookhouse.

Agenda: Sensing for Social, Economics and Wildlife. Brainstorming – Timber and Vegetation. If time allows, sensing on these topics. **Monday, April 26, 2004** has been set as the date for the final meeting. We will wrap-up “all” Desired Condition statements at this meeting.