



FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT



Update

DECEMBER 2000 Volume 1, No. 2

We're Listening!

This is the second issue of the Forest Plan Amendment Update Newsletter. The scoping letter for Phase I went out in October for your comments. Three open houses were held; one each in Rapid City, Sundance, and Custer. We have received over 460 written responses in email, postcards and letters.

Topics identified in written responses include: errors in the scoping document, perception of single species management, not enough time to comment, and effects of the Jasper Fire.

Many of you sent your comments directly to the Content Analysis Enterprise Team (CAET) in Salt Lake, Utah. Some of you sent comments addressed to the Forest Supervisor John Twiss. John read your comments and then they were forwarded on to CAET. CAET is a branch of the Forest Service that specializes in analyzing comments and issues for projects and plans. When their part is done, all of their analysis and your letters are returned to the Forest. The Forest's specialists then respond to the issues based on your comments.

Second Comment Period Added

This newsletter contains updated and corrected information that will further your understanding of Phase I of the Amendment.

With the additional information in this newsletter we will take additional comments. Your comments would be most useful if received by January 10, 2001.

Send your comments to CAET at:
USFS, c/o Black Hills National Forest
PO Box 221090
Salt Lake, UT 84122

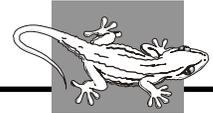
The Environmental Assessment for Phase I is still on schedule to be completed by mid February. 

The Website

Documents relating to the Black Hills Forest Plan Amendment continue to be available on the Internet. Currently there are more than a dozen documents relating to Phase I on the website. The location of the website is: www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills. Click on [forest information](#) under "Reading Room." Then go to [Black Hills National Forest Planning](#). Information on Phase I is found under [Amendment](#).

Individuals and groups that have traditionally received this type of information in the mail will continue to be on the mailing list. Anyone wishing to be added to or deleted from the list can do so by contacting Peggy Woodward at 605-673-9263. 

Questions & Answers



Many of you have asked for clarification of the information in the scoping documents or as part of your comments. These are some of the questions we heard and thought would be of interest along with our response to them. Additional Questions and Answers can be found on the website.

Q Why is the Jasper Fire not addressed in Phase I? The fire impacted a significant area.

A The Jasper Fire occurred after the Phase I efforts were underway. The Forest identified a need to analyze the 83,500 acres effected by the Jasper Fire and management appropriate for that area given the changed conditions. The *Jasper Rapid Assessment Team Report* and the *Jasper Fire Value Recovery Draft Environmental Impact Statement* are complete and available on the Black Hills National Forest website. The direction in the EIS is tiered to the Forest Plan. Projects and decisions in the Jasper Fire area will meet Forest Plan direction and will be consistent with the decision made on the Phase I amendment.

The Jasper Fire affected the future available harvestable volume in a portion of the Forest. Information for the Phase I alternatives display an estimate of the amount of timber that may be available for harvest with the standards and guidelines for that alternative. The Phase I amendment is not changing the Allowable Sale Quantity. Review of the Allowable Sale Quantity is an issue to be addressed in Phase II of the Forest Plan Amendment process.

Q The appeal decision determined there was not adequate protection for several wildlife species. Why does Alternative 3 weaken the Interim Direction?

A The scientists interviewed were provided existing condition information and management direction from the Revised Forest Plan and the Interim Direction. The scientist or expert had an opportunity to provide information that demonstrated better protection for species viability. Alternative 3 was developed to incorporate the additional recommendations to increase probability of maintaining species viability and diversity.

Q With the Jasper Fire, have you considered all the effects on goshawks, since many goshawks were known to have been in this area?

A In the Jasper Fire Rapid Assessment document it is noted that ten active or historic nest stands existed in the fire area. Only one of the stands was unaffected by the fire. Although the surrounding area was burned, this nest stand is still suitable goshawk nesting habitat. Seven of the stands were completely burned by the fire and will not be suitable nesting habitat again for many years.

Alternative 3 proposes to manage for goshawk habitat across the landscape of the Black Hills National Forest over time. Alternative 2 provides additional protection for existing goshawk nest sites.

Q Social and Economic impacts were omitted from the scoping document.

A Social and economic effects will be included in the Environmental Assessment to be prepared for the Phase I amendment.

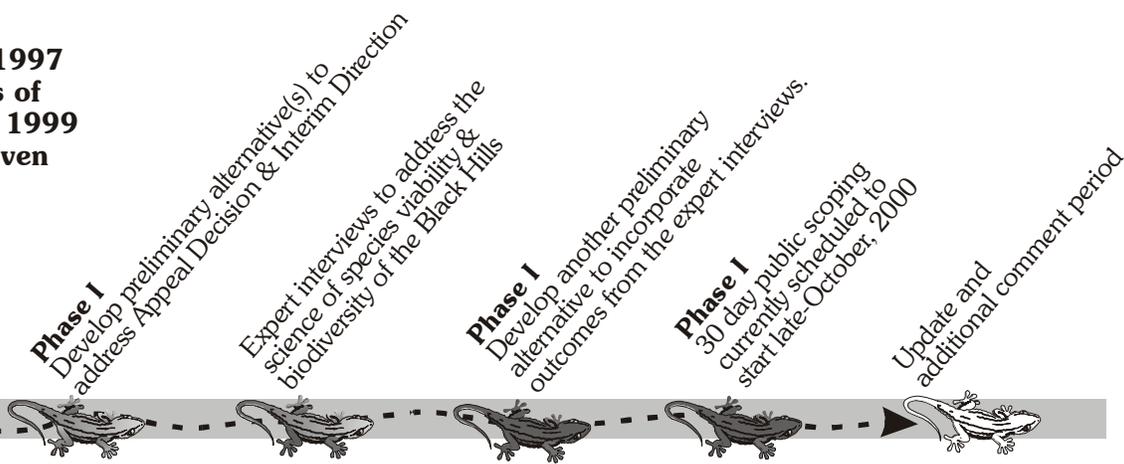
Q What information is available regarding the Phase I amendment?

A The scoping package included the information available at the time of mailing. During open houses additional information was made available to the public.

THE PROCESS

- ✓ Revised Forest Plan 1997
- ✓ Decision on Appeals of Forest Plan October 1999
- ✓ Interim Direction Given

✓ Phase I Starts



Effects Update

Two levels of analysis were conducted to determine relative changes and effects anticipated from the Phase I amendment. The scoping document released in October displayed results from four specific projects. Anticipated effects comparing alternatives in the scoping document are correct for those projects analyzed. However, one major error discovered regarding timber harvest volumes has been corrected. A landscape level analysis was completed and is shown in the table below. Note that there are different results from this analysis for the Alternatives than what was stated in the scoping document.

The first level, presented in the scoping document, was the Project Sample Group; four project areas were analyzed in detail to determine how the Phase I preliminary alternatives would impact management activities. Project areas selected had characteristics that were anticipated to be affected (*e.g.* spruce cover type, known goshawk nests). This analysis was conducted to determine relative changes from the preliminary alternatives. Comments received indicated the Project Sample Group information was confusing, not representative of the Forest, and that information across a wider area would have been more beneficial.

The second level of analysis, presented in *Table 1* below, was conducted at a landscape level. The landscape level analysis included watersheds covering the five-year timber program plan. *Table 1* displays anticipated effects for the Phase I amendment by preliminary alternative in comparison to the effects disclosed in the Revised Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Stand treatments for Alternatives 1 and 2 were derived from the Paradox disaggregating scripts developed for the 1997 Revised Forest Plan. Stand treatments for Alternative 3 were developed based on recommendations found in *Management Recommendations for the Northern Goshawk in the Southwestern United States, General Technical Report RM-217* (Reynolds, *et. al*, 1992), adjusted for conditions present on the Black Hills National Forest. Some items in the Phase I amendment will affect other areas of the Forest (*e.g.* application of standards and guidelines for powerline right-of-ways); these effects have been estimated based on a review of Forest activities.

Table 1 - Landscape Level Comparison Table for Phase I Amendment Preliminary Alternatives

+ indicates more, - indicates less than Alternative 1

Item	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Soils	No change	- acres potential impact	+ acres potential impact
Groundwater Recharge and Water Yield and Streamflow Regimes	No change	No overall change	No overall change
Flooding and Floodplains	No change	No change	No change
Water Quality	No change	- acres impact	+ acres impact
Heritage Resources; Paleontology	No change	- potential impact	+ potential impact
Biological Elements of the Environment:			
Biological Diversity	No change	+ structural diversity	+ structural diversity
Vegetative composition and structure:			
Forested Ecosystems	No change	+ large diameter trees	+ large diameter trees
Rangeland	No change	Slight forage increase	Slight forage increase
Noxious Weeds	No change	- potential spread	+ potential spread
Natural Disturbance Processes:			
Fire	No change	+ high hazard acres	- high hazard acres
Insects and Diseases	No change	+ slight potential risk	+/- potential risk ¹
Special Ecosystem Components:			
Snags and Down Woody Material	No change	+ available	+ available
Riparian Areas and Wetlands	No change	- acres impact	- acres impact
Botanical Areas	No change	+ protection	+ protection
Fauna:			
Fisheries	No change	+ benefit	+ benefit

¹Depends on range of harvest and treatment types

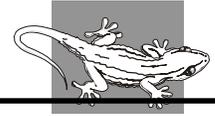
Effects Update (cont.)

Item	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species:			
T&E Species	No change	No change	No change
Sensitive Species	No change	+ protection	+ protection
Specific species/groups			
Plants	No change	+ protection	+ protection
Bats	No change	+ protection	++ protection
Northern Goshawk	No change	+ protection	++ protection
American marten	No change	+ protection	+ protection
Snails	No change	No change	No change
Occupation and use of the Forest			
Recreation	No change	Site specific limitations for new uses	Site specific limitations for new uses
Travel Opportunities	No change	Slight potential for increased road restrictions	Slight potential for increased road restrictions
Scenic Resources	No change	No overall change	No overall change
Production of Natural Resources			
Locatable & Leasable Minerals	No change	No change	No change
Timber Production - Treatments			
Commercial Thin	No change	+ acres	++ acres
Products Other than Logs	No change	+ acres	++ acres
Precommercial Thin	No change	+ acres	++ acres
Overstory Removal	No change	- acres	-- acres
Shelterwood Seed Cut	No change	Slight decrease	-- acres
Seed Tree Cut	No change	Slight decrease	-- acres
Group Selection	No change	Slight increase	++ acres
Total Treatment Acre Estimate	No change	Slight decrease	+ acres
Timber Production Volume²	412 MMBF	361 MMBF	301-421 MMBF
Livestock Grazing	No change	Additional protection fencing in allotments and rerouting grazing	Additional protection fencing allotments and rerouting grazing
Roads	No change	Slight decrease in roadwork	Slight increase in roadwork

² Total potential from watersheds covering the timber 5-year program plan. Analysis results determine relative change between alternatives as compared to the FEIS for the 1997 revision of the Forest Plan. Actual volumes and acres harvested will depend on site specific conditions at the project level.



Questions & Answers (cont.)



All of this information is available on the Black Hills website at www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills.

Q Why is the Forest concerned about snags?
There are plenty of snags from insects, fire and storm damage.

A The Forest is concerned about snag size and number of potential snags across the forest. The Forest Plan requires maintaining at least 1.08 snags per acre, with a diameter equal to or greater than 10 inches.

Snag distribution is addressed in the 1997 Revised Forest Plan and also in the October 12, 1999 Forest Plan FEIS appeal decision. The Interim Direction requires 25% of the snags that are chosen for retention represent the largest diameter class available. These snags can be clustered or individual, but must be well distributed within the watershed. The Interim Direction required sufficient number of green trees to leave one tree per acre greater than 20 inches or from the largest diameter class to provide future snags.

There are localized areas where many snags exist from recent events (insect, fire, storm damage), however these areas are not well distributed throughout the forest, and the sizes of these snags are not necessarily the largest size classes present. Much of the April 2000 storm damaged small diameter trees.

Some cavity dependant species need 2-4 snags per acre, and some need 16 inch and greater diameter snags. The Forest Plan did not demonstrate that these conditions would be maintained over time.

Road closures for snag protection would be considered for areas where demonstrated loss of snags occurs due to firewood cutting. Alternative 3 maintains the direction in the current Forest Order restricting the cutting of standing dead trees.

Q What does species viability mean, and how is it measured?

A A viable population is a population which has adequate numbers and dispersion of reproductive individuals to ensure the continued existence of the species population on the planning area [FSM 1900-91-3, 1905(37)]. Viability is a complex issue and is often assessed by making estimates of probability that a species will persist over time.

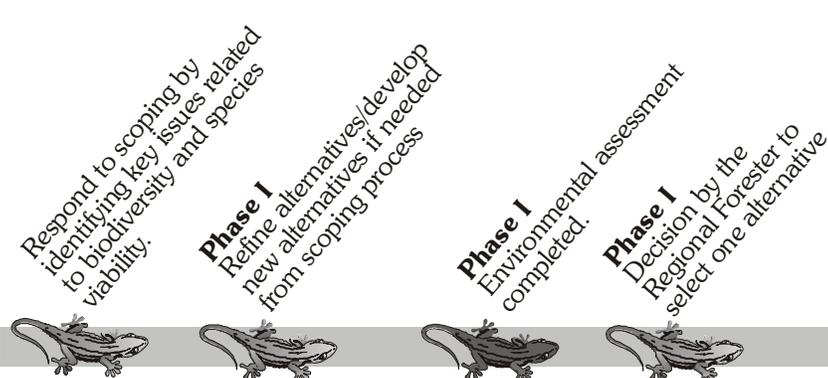
Every species and every population is different, depending upon their life history and habitat needs. Catastrophic events must also be considered when assessing viability.

Species specialists provided information pertaining to species viability during the interview process.

Q Why is the Forest going towards single species management for goshawk?

A The goshawk strategy is multiple-species management. It is a prey based, ecosystem approach that should provide for many species by managing for historical amounts and distribution of various tree sizes and densities across the Forest. Goshawks need mature forests for nesting and a mix of other habitats for foraging. Managing for goshawks means managing for the habitat conditions needed to support its prey, which is managing for habitats needed for a variety of species. This is exactly why the goshawk has been designated as an MIS (management indicator species) on this forest.

(continued on page 6)





Q Why is Phase I a non-significant amendment?

A Significance for Forest Plan amendments is based on the National Forest Management Act definition of significance. Some of the factors considered and found to be non-significant include:

- Land allocations (*e.g.* suitability, management areas, allowable sale quantity over the decade) are not being changed with the Phase I amendment.
- The overall goals identified in the Forest Plan are not being changed.
- The Phase I amendment is anticipated to be in place for a relatively short period of time.
- The Phase I amendment direction will affect management factors in portions of the projects analyzed over the next few years; it is not anticipated to affect the entire Forest.

Q Why is Phase II anticipated to take 2-5 years to complete?

A The Forest plans on completing the Phase II amendment within 3 years. For the science interviews, however, the 5-year program plan was used as a frame of reference of foreseeable actions. To provide consistency between the analysis time period and the time period for completing this phase a range of 2-5 years was used.

The original estimate of 2 years factored in complete funding for all aspects of the Phase II amendment under the old planning regulations. The revised planning regulations (36 CFR 219) were published in the Federal Register on November 9, 2000. The Phase II amendment will need to meet the new requirements under the revised 36 CFR 219 regulations.

Changes in regulations might impact the analysis process and timeframe for Phase II. Regional direction is also in development for items that fall under the Phase II amendment. In addition, future funding levels for the Phase II effort are uncertain.



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