

**APPENDIX E
MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
AND
OPPORTUNITIES**

APPENDIX E - SUMMARY OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT DIRECTION and MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Forest Plan Goals and Objectives

Forest Plan Goals/Objectives (BHNF LRMP Phase II Amendment, Ch. I), desired conditions and associated management opportunities provide the primary focus and direction supporting the purpose and need for action in the Slate Castle Project Area. The FP goals are listed in order of emphasis priority. Consequently, Goals 10 and 7 are considered the primary project drivers in terms of providing Forest Plan direction and guidance to support the purpose and need and the development of a responsive proposed action. This is not intended to diminish the importance of other goals and related objectives, standards and guidelines listed below or those not listed but contained in the Forest Plan. They are also important in terms of providing management guidance. And to the extent they can be achieved, are co-benefits derived from management actions developed and proposed.

Goal 10—Establish and maintain a mosaic of vegetative conditions to reduce the occurrences of stand-replacing fire and insect-and-disease events, and to facilitate insect-and-disease management and firefighting capability adjacent to at-risk communities, sensitive resources, and non-federal land and generally across the forest.

Desired conditions.

- Fire...events are a natural part of the Black Hills ecosystem...
- Forest vegetation can be managed to reduce the extent and intensity of these events...
- Ideally fire...events are not stand replacing events...
- ...the Forest will establish and maintain a mosaic of vegetative conditions to reduce the extent and intensity of stand-replacing fire...and facilitate...fire-fighting capability adjacent to at-risk communities, sensitive resources, non-federal land and generally across the forest.
- Overall, the forest will be managed so that disturbances...are less likely to obstruct expected uses, values, commodities...ecosystem components.
- The susceptibility of vegetation to stand-replacing fire and outbreaks of insect and disease pests will be reduced through vegetation management practices...that promote vigorous, productive, resilient and diverse ecosystems.
- ...susceptibility to stand-replacing, high-intensity wildfire...will be reduced through a proactive approach to fire and fuels management...while maintaining the forest as a biologically diverse and sustainable ecosystem.

Objective 10-01. Manage for 50 to 75 percent moderate-to-low fire hazard in the wildland-urban interface and reduce fire hazard within proximity of structures... Manage the remainder of the Forest for 50 percent moderate-to-low fire hazard...

- *Opportunity--Existing fire hazard on NFS lands in the project area is estimated at 27% moderate-to-low (73% high). It is desirable to treat vegetation and fuels to modify this fire hazard situation and move toward or meet this objective. There is opportunity and need to reduce fire hazard in these areas because of the current high levels of fire hazard in the project zone.*

Objective 10-04. Reduce or otherwise treat fuels commensurate with risks (fire occurrence), hazard (fuel flammability), and land and resource values common to the area, using the criteria in Forest-wide Guideline 4110.

Objective 10-05. Manage wildfires using the appropriate response based management area emphasis, existing values, risk of ignition, and fuel hazards within a given area.

- *Opportunity--Reducing existing and created fuels to a reasonable and manageable level can facilitate effective response to wildfire.*

Objective 10-06. Develop fuel management and protection strategies for intermixed land ownerships in partnership with private, state, and other federal agencies.

- *Opportunity--Decades of fire suppression and not thinning/reducing fuels aggressively enough has increased the potential for large wildfires. There is a need to reduce this potential to protect public and private lands/improvements, visual quality, timber and forest ecosystem values, and wildlife (including sensitive species) habitat in the area.*
- *Opportunity -- Coordinate with the State and County based on goals established by the Pennington County CWPP.*

Objective 10-07. Where outbreaks of mountain pine beetle could present risks to management objectives for ponderosa pine, reduce acreage of ponderosa pine stands that are in medium or high risk for infestation.

- *Opportunity –Vegetative treatments focused on reducing mountain pine beetle infestations to lower the risk/hazard in the project area.*

Objective 10-08. Using analyses of insect-and-disease occurrences prioritize suppression strategies to meet management objectives and minimize value loss of tree vegetation affected by outbreaks of insect-and-disease pests.

Goal 7—Emphasize cooperation with individuals, organizations and other agencies while coordinating planning and project implementation.

Desired conditions.

- ...planning and project implementation should include open sharing of information, local involvement, identification of shared needs, and commitment to action.
- The methods or approaches to this collaboration will vary...
- ...managers will be knowledgeable and sensitive to American Indian cultural issues...
- Protection of lands and resources necessary to American Indian beliefs and identity...[facilitated through] consultation with tribal governments...and other knowledgeable American Indian people.

Objective 701. Continue to cooperate with interested parties and organizations in the development of plans and projects.

- *Opportunity--Engaging interested individuals and groups has potential to generate a broad base of support and/or a well informed public regarding project plan/design and project actions proposed and taken.*

Objective 702. Encourage cost sharing as part of cooperative efforts.

Objective 703. Seek partnerships with other service providers – federal, state, county, local and private sector – to define complementary roles that best meet customer needs.

- *Opportunity--Coordination with adjacent landowners and other responsible agencies or groups provides increased opportunity to partner and possibly cost-share in vegetation treatment and fuel reduction actions adjacent to and/or across mutual boundaries. Engaging interested individuals and the public provides for a broad-based, well supported or informed public regarding project plan/design and project actions taken.*

Objective 704. Consult with tribal governments, traditional practitioners, and other knowledgeable individuals to identify important areas of American Indian religious significance.

- *Opportunity—Utilization of the ongoing BHNF consultation process provides mutually beneficial information exchange, cooperative and open relations, and maintains trust and credibility between the agency and tribal representatives.*

Goal 2—Provide for a variety of life through management of biologically diverse ecosystems.

Desired Conditions

- The Black Hills is blessed with a diverse array of plants and animals.
- Historically the Black Hills was subjected to...storm events...benefiting early seral constituents...associated with these habitats.
- During the past century...ecosystem components dependent upon disturbance have declined.
- However...successional elements...will be essential for diversity...
- Management...will be necessary to conserve diversity while still meeting societal expectations.
- Hardwood communities will...vary from uniform heights...to a wide range of heights and ages elsewhere.
- Pine encroachment into meadows will continue. However, harvest and/or fire...will restore some historic meadows.
- Game species will be abundant...through habitat and population management.

Objective 201. Manage for a minimum of 92,000 acres of aspen (double current aspen acres)... The highest priority for hardwood restoration is where conifers (e.g., spruce and pine) have out-competed aspen adjacent to riparian systems that once supported beaver... (see FP, I-7).

- *Opportunity—Increase/maintain 2,172 acres of hardwood communities by reducing pine competition within these stands. In addition opportunities exist to enhance and expand hardwood inclusions by opening canopies and removing conifers.*

Objective 205. Manage for 122,000 acres of prairie grassland and 3,600 acres of meadow during the life of the Plan. Restored acres will not be considered suitable for timber production.

- *Opportunity—Increase the acres interior grassland communities by removing pine encroachment (2,780 acres). Also to enhance isolated grasslands by opening canopies and prescribed burning.*

Objective 221. Conserve or enhance habitat for R2 sensitive species and species of local concern (SOLC).

- *Opportunity—Forest objective for pine structural stages, provide habitat components and vegetative diversity.*

Objective 234. Create or maintain a moderate-to-low crown-fire hazard adjacent to occurrences of R2 sensitive and species of local concern...where long-term persistence is at risk from a single high-intensity fire.

- *Opportunity--Existing fire hazard on NFS lands in the project area is estimated at 27% moderate-to-low (73% high). It is desirable to treat vegetation and fuels to modify this fire hazard situation and move toward or meet this objective. There is opportunity and need to reduce fire hazard in these areas because of the current high levels of fire hazard in the project area.*

Objective 238. ...objectives for management indicator species (MIS) ...(see FP, I-II for list of MIS objectives).

- *Opportunity—Vegetative treatments would increase Aspen communities (2,172 acres) and increase the number of acres of stands with a very large tree size rating.*

Goal 3—Provide for sustained commodity uses in an environmentally acceptable manner.

Desired conditions

- The Forest Service is committed to multiple-use management while being sensitive to the environmental effects when commodities are produced.
- Ecosystem management can be more cost-effective when commercial benefits can result.
- ...the Black Hills National Forest will be managed...at the regional, landscape or watershed scale or as appropriate.
- Timber harvest...will occur...in a manner compatible with other Forest uses.
- The Forest System Roads will be maintained to facilitate both commodity...as well as administration and protection.

Objective 302. Maintain rangelands in satisfactory range condition.

- *Opportunity –Utilize prescribed broadcast burning to increase grasses and forbs.*

Objective 304. On lands not identified as suitable and available for timber harvest, timber volume may be offered as a by-product of other vegetation management objectives. This volume would be offered in addition to the ASQ.

Objective 307. Provide Christmas trees and fuelwood for commercial or personal use in areas where compatible with other resource objectives.

Other Forest Plan Direction

It is recognized that other Forest Plan goals and numerous associated objectives, standards and guidelines not highlighted above also provide guidance and are achieved to varying degrees as a function of project implementation and effect. Of notable importance are the Goals listed below:

Goal 1—Protect basic soil, air, water and cave resources.

Goal 4—Provide for scenic quality, a range of recreational opportunities, and protection of heritage resources in response to the needs of the Black Hills National Forest visitors and local communities.

Management Area 5.1—Resource Production Emphasis.

Desired conditions.

- The forest is largely a mosaic of tree groups of different ages and heights.
- Fuel treatment emphasis is on maintaining forest health and the protection of management investments...
- Ponderosa pine...white spruce, aspen and other hardwoods...occur. Natural and created openings and meadows...[exist].
- Tree groups of different ages, sizes and heights... A variety of forest structures is apparent...
- ...managed to produce forest products...

Goal 5.1-201. Manage tree stands to emphasize timber products, forage production, and water yield.

- *Opportunity—Treat vegetation for insect, fuels and fire hazard reduction while concurrently providing timber products, forage production, and contributing to increased water yield.*

Objective 5.1-202. While meeting other objectives for this management area, provide variety in stand sizes, shape, crown closure, age structure and interspersion.

- *Opportunity—Vegetation treatments, focused on reducing insect, fire and fuels hazards, can be designed to be fully compatible with the goal of providing variety in the forested setting.*

Objective 5.1-203. Maintain or enhance hardwood shrub communities where biologically feasible, and within management objectives.

- *Opportunity—Vegetation treatments geared to improve hardwoods also contribute to the natural fuel break benefits that hardwoods naturally provide.*

Objective 5.1-204. Manage for the following percentages of structural stages in ponderosa pine across the management area in a variety of sizes and shapes. (Reference structural stage table, LRMP, Phase II Amendment, Page III-59.)

- *See opportunity statement (italics) under Objective 5.1-202 above.*

Guideline 5.1-4101. Utilize appropriate fuel treatment practices, including prescribed fire, to meet management objectives.

- *Opportunity—A full complement of fuel treatment tools can be considered and utilized in accomplishing insect, fuels and fire hazard reduction objectives.*

Management Area 5.4—Big Game Winter Range Emphasis.

Desired conditions.

- The area is managed to provide big game winter range while maintaining healthy plant communities... All activities...are managed so that deer and elk can effectively use the area...
- The full range of management practices occur.
- ...winter habitat is in part maintained by reducing vehicle access...
- Management emphasizes a vegetative mosaic, with natural and created openings and diverse sizes and ages of tree stands. Species diversity is evident, including aspen, bur oak...ponderosa pine and white spruce.
- Timber harvesting and prescribed burning are the primary management tools used to...improve habitat.
- ...the landscape is composed of a variety of forest conditions, including openings, and high and low density stands.

Goal 5.4-201. Manage tree stands for wildlife habitat and vegetative diversity.

- *Opportunity—Treat vegetation for insect, fuels and fire hazard reduction while concurrently benefiting wildlife habitat and vegetative diversity.*

Objective 5.4-206. Manage for the following percentages of structural stages in ponderosa pine across the management area in a variety of sizes and shapes. (Reference structural stage table, LRMP, Phase II Amendment, Page III-79.)

- *Opportunity—Vegetation treatments, focused on reducing insect, fire and fuels hazard, can be designed to be compatible with structural stage objectives.*

Guideline 5.4-4101. Utilize appropriate fuel treatment practices, including prescribed fire, to achieve resource management objectives.

- *Opportunity—A full complement of fuel treatment tools can be considered and utilized in accomplishing wildlife habitat improvement objectives while concurrently contributing to fuel and fire hazard reduction objectives.*

Management Area 2.2 - Research Natural Areas and Management Area 3.7 - Late Successional Landscape

The Slate Castle Project Area contains 38 acres in Management Area 2.2 and 459 acres in Management Area 3.7. Actions proposed in Alternatives B and C will not occur in these two management areas.

Other Direction

Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003, Title I—Hazardous Fuel Reduction on Federal Land

The increase in catastrophic wildfire nation-wide in recent years has led to considerable new and/or revised National level initiatives, policy and law regarding fire and fuels management. Of these,

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003 (H.R. 1904) provides improved statutory processes for hazardous fuel (including insect/disease) reduction projects on National Forest System lands. The Slate Castle Project is an “authorized” hazardous fuel reduction project under Section 102(a)(4) of the HFRA. The area qualifies under section 102(a)(4) because there is an existing mountain pine beetle epidemic occurring within the project area which poses a significant risk to resource values on National Forest and private lands. Reference letter from Mystic District Ranger to the Project ID Team with subject, “Authorized Hazardous Fuel Reduction Projects per HFRA” dated December 15, 2008, and Forest Supervisor letter “Determination of an Insect Epidemic in the Slate Castle Area” dated February 2, 2009, located in SCPA file.

The following is a summary of the processes in HFRA Title I applicable to the SCPA

- Provides expedited environmental analysis of HFRA project
- Provides direction on the existence of an insect or disease epidemic
- Provides administrative review before decision is issued
- Requires collaboration with local individuals, groups, communities, other agencies and tribes in a manner consistent with the “Implementation Plan”
- Requires performance monitoring

A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment—10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan of May 2002

The HFRA provides that authorized hazardous fuel reduction projects such as Slate Castle Project implemented on Federal land in wildland-urban interface areas shall be consistent with the goals and guiding principles of the **10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan**. The four goals of the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy are:

1. Improve Fire Prevention and Suppression
2. Reduce Hazardous Fuels
3. Restore Fire-adapted Ecosystems
4. Promote Community Assistance

The three guiding principles are:

1. Priority setting that emphasizes the protection of communities and other high-priority watersheds at-risk.
2. Collaboration among governments and broadly representative stakeholders.
3. Accountability through performance measures and monitoring for results.