

ITEM 14-1
Emerging Issues

ACTIVITY, PRACTICE OR EFFECT TO BE MEASURED	REPORTING PERIOD	VARIABILITY (+/-) WHICH WOULD INDICATE FURTHER EVALUATION
Track emerging issues or changing social values	Annual	If issues fall within scope of interest levels 1 & 2 of Information and Involvement Plan

There were no new emerging issues in FY 1999. The review of last year's action items are discussed in this section.

Soil and Water/Fisheries Habitat: In response to the bull trout listing, the Forest completed two Forest-wide assessments in 1998. Fifty-nine percent of the watersheds had high road densities, 58% had more than 40 stream crossings, and 50% had a road within 300 feet of the channel for more than 30% of its length. Aquatic condition on the Forest was inferred to have an "unacceptably high risk" compared to its proper functioning condition.

Recommendation: The Forest needs to continue to monitor long-term impacts from roads and identify specific roads and road segments which produce the greatest impacts. These issues need to be addressed as top priorities in EMA analyses. NEPA planning needs to identify restoration opportunities associated with these road segments for future fisheries and watershed restoration projects. Through working with our publics, the Forest needs to prioritize and find acceptable strategies to achieve aquatic restoration goals.

Action Item: The Forest Supervisor will establish a Watershed Restoration Team for the to identify criteria for establishing the priority watershed restoration needs, and a process to integrate funding opportunities to maximize restoration accomplishments. Team will make recommendation to Forest Leadership team on restoration priorities.

Review of last year's Action Item: A team comprised of the Planning Program Officer, a fish biologist, a hydrologist, and an engineer was established in FY 1999. This team has developed draft guidance on prioritizing and conducting road decommissioning projects. Restoration projects are reviewed and prioritized by the team.

Ecosystem Management: An ecosystem management monitoring item (3-EM) was added to the monitoring report in 1993. However, annual monitoring has not adequately addressed these questions.

Recommendation: With the reduction in formal Forest Plan timber sale monitoring trips, it would be useful for this monitoring item to conduct reviews of selected Ecosystem Management Area Assessments that follow National Forest Management Act procedures. These could be conducted by interdisciplinary teams on an annual basis to document how well the items are being addressed.

Action Item: Include NFMA/Ecosystem Management Area review as part of the annual monitoring trips for those projects reviewed. The monitoring forms will be revised to better address ecosystem management and NFMA planning in our Forest Plan monitoring trips.

Review of last year's Action Item: The forest plan monitoring forms were revised and used as a test in FY 1999. Based on feedback, additional changes will be made prior to FY 2000 monitoring trips.

FIRE-KILLED DEAD: The reduction of early-post-fire habitat (through fire suppression and removal of burned trees in "salvage" sales) has caused biologists to become concerned about some of the potentially "fire-dependent" species, especially the black-backed woodpecker. This species is a sensitive species in Region One.

Under NFMA, the Forest Service is charged with maintaining viable populations of all native species. We currently lack (1) quantitative information on the reduction in fire-killed forested habitat, (2) information on the dependency of black-backed woodpeckers on fire (as opposed to other insect-infested forest), and (3) data on the species' reproduction in various habitats. **In the absence of this information, Biologists on the Lolo NF are finding it difficult to conclude that salvage of burned forest will not contribute to a downward trend in the species.**

Recommendations: Biologists and researchers should analyze the status and habitat of the black-backed woodpecker, including the following: Refine information on historic levels of stand-replacing fire in black-backed woodpecker habitat; use information on fire in the recent past to estimate the amount of habitat available for the species in recent years; and gather information on past records of black-backed woodpeckers to look for range reductions.

Action Items: Forest Biologist and Silviculturist will analyze and estimate the habitat available on the forest using information on fire in the recent past and planned prescribed fires. Based on this assessment, a recommendation will be made to the Forest Supervisor on acres of recent fire killed dead that will be available for timber salvage.

Encourage R1 Directors for Forest Management, Fire, and Wildlife to address this issue at the regional scale and estimate the amount of habitat available for the species region-wide based on recent fire history.

Review of last year's Action Items: There were no large wildfires in 1999. Since there were no proposed fire killed dead salvage sales in 1999, this analysis was not necessary.

SNOWMOBILES IN HIGH ELEVATION: **Recently, improvements in technology have allowed these machines to travel in deep snow at high elevation and to enter breeding habitat for some animals that are sensitive to disturbance.**

Wolverines den in cirque basins that are popular as "play areas" for snowmobiles. Though information on wolverines is limited because of their rarity and habitation of remote areas, available information indicates that denning occurs in undisturbed areas and that they move young to a new den following even low intensity disturbance.

Grizzly bears den at high elevation. Again, little information is available because of the species' selection of remote areas. Black bears have left dens in mid-winter and have even abandoned cubs when disturbed. During the South Fork study, bears remained in dens when snowmobiles used an area about 1.2 miles away. However, nothing is known about the reaction of grizzly bears to closer disturbance. Bears remaining in the den may be harmed by increases in metabolic rate and rousing, which would consume fat stores. Since bear cubs are born in early winter, and nurse through the denning period, physiological stress or alterations in behavior may reduce reproduction.

Recommendation: Prior to Forest Plan revision, maps of wolverine and grizzly denning habitat should be prepared. These should be confirmed by surveying (winter flights to locate wolverine tracks and breeding dens and late spring flights to located grizzly den sites.) Data on the location and intensity of snowmobile use should be collected.

Review of last year’s Action Items: A flight was conducted on the Seeley Lake Ranger District in 1999. Three grizzly bear denning sites were identified. Three flights were completed to determine locations and intensity of snowmobile use in the Stateline area and the Seeley Lake Ranger District. Additional flights are planned for FY 2000.

**ITEM 14-2
Land Allocation Errors**

ACTIVITY, PRACTICE OR EFFECT TO BE MEASURED	REPORTING PERIOD	VARIABILITY WHICH WOULD INITIATE FURTHER EVALUATION
Correct errors in original land allocations; evaluate effect of plan changes on all MA's.	Annual	Changes impacting projected targets.

Evaluation: This monitoring item alerts the forest supervisor to the number of changes to the database. When a sufficient number have been made, the outputs generated by the FORPLAN II model may no longer be valid.

The Lolo NF implemented a standardized system for documenting and evaluating proposed changes to the Forest Plan database. The system works reasonably well. Project interdisciplinary teams review Forest Plan land allocations early in the project development process. Errors or mis-allocations identified and field verified are submitted to the forest supervisor for evaluation and approval. The Lolo NF incorporated the approved management area corrections during 1987-1999 into the Forest Plan through amendments #4, #5a, #6, #7, #8, #13, #15, #17, #20, #22, #23, #24, and #25. In 1999, Amendment #25 adjusted the management area (MA) designation on a 53-acre parcel along the northern portion of the Sawmill Cyr project area from unsuitable (MA 27) to suitable (MA 22). These management areas changes will not have a detectable effect on Forest Plan outputs.