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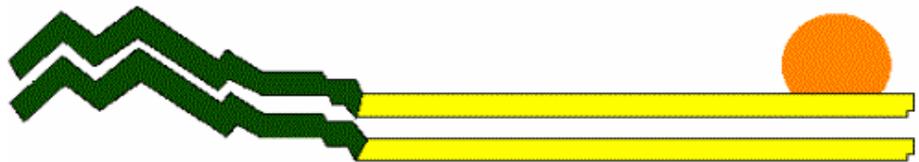
Rocky
Mountain
Region



Pike and San Isabel National Forests and Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands

Annual Monitoring Report for Fiscal Year 2005

September 14, 2006



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1.0. Introduction

The Pike and San Isabel National Forests (Forests) and the Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands (Grasslands) (collectively referred to as the PSICC) include 2.8 million acres of public lands. These four units are located in central and southeastern Colorado and in southwestern Kansas. Management of the PSICC is very complex because it spans a variety of ecosystems, social, and economic settings, and must be integrated with the needs of two state governments and 17 counties.

The PSICC Land and Resource Management Plan (Plan) focuses on resource needs and the desires of the diverse publics being served. Predicted rates of accomplishment corresponded with the needs identified in 1984, the time the Plan was written. As is apparent in many of the following sections, implementation has not kept pace with predicted rates.

2.0. Physical Components

2.1. Soil and Water Resources

The soils and water resources program provides the technical information necessary to ensure these resources are sustainable as identified in the National Forest Management Act (NFMA). Management decisions made to implement actions under the Plan are done so by considering soils and water resources data and other technical information.

Program monitoring is divided into three major functions:

- 1) Soils inventory
- 2) Soil and watershed improvement
- 3) Soil and water quality

2.1.1. Soils inventory

Conducting soils inventories is a prerequisite to land management planning and implementation. Collecting baseline data is a fundamental requirement supporting resource management mandates identified in NFMA. Modern soils inventories use an integrated approach to describe and map biotic and abiotic features: geology, landforms, climate, vegetation, and soils. Soil surveys in eight major areas¹ on the PSICC have been conducted in cooperation with other Federal and State agencies. Each survey area differs in the quality of mapping, available interpretations, and status. Two areas (Pike National Forest - eastern portion, and Morton County) have current published surveys. The mapping, draft manuscripts, and interpretations have been completed for the remaining survey areas.

¹ Pike National Forest, Eastern Part; Wet Mountains and Spanish Peaks; Northern San Isabel and Western Pike National Forests; Sangre de Cristo; Morton County, Baca County, Otero County and Las Animas County.

2.1.2. Soil and watershed improvement program

The future use of Federal lands depends on the protection and maintenance of soils and water resources. Improving watershed conditions is important for maintaining long-term ecosystem health at local and landscape levels. The program goals are to identify watershed condition (see section 2.1.3. Watershed Assessments), prescribe and implement land treatments, and in some cases to modify management to:

- Protect life and property.
- Protect and improve water quality consistent with the Clean Water Act.
- Reduce or minimize erosion and sediment damage.
- Improve species habitat.
- Increase long-term soil productivity.
- Ensure long-term health and sustainability of watersheds given the variety of demands on the land.

Plan direction includes improving 440 treated or 1,200 affected acres per year. Figure 1 shows treated acres from 1985 to 2005. The PSICC has implemented over 400 soil and water improvement projects since Plan implementation, totaling more than 35,000 acres of treated or improved lands, excluding areas rehabilitated following wildfire (see 2.1.4. Burned Area Rehabilitation).

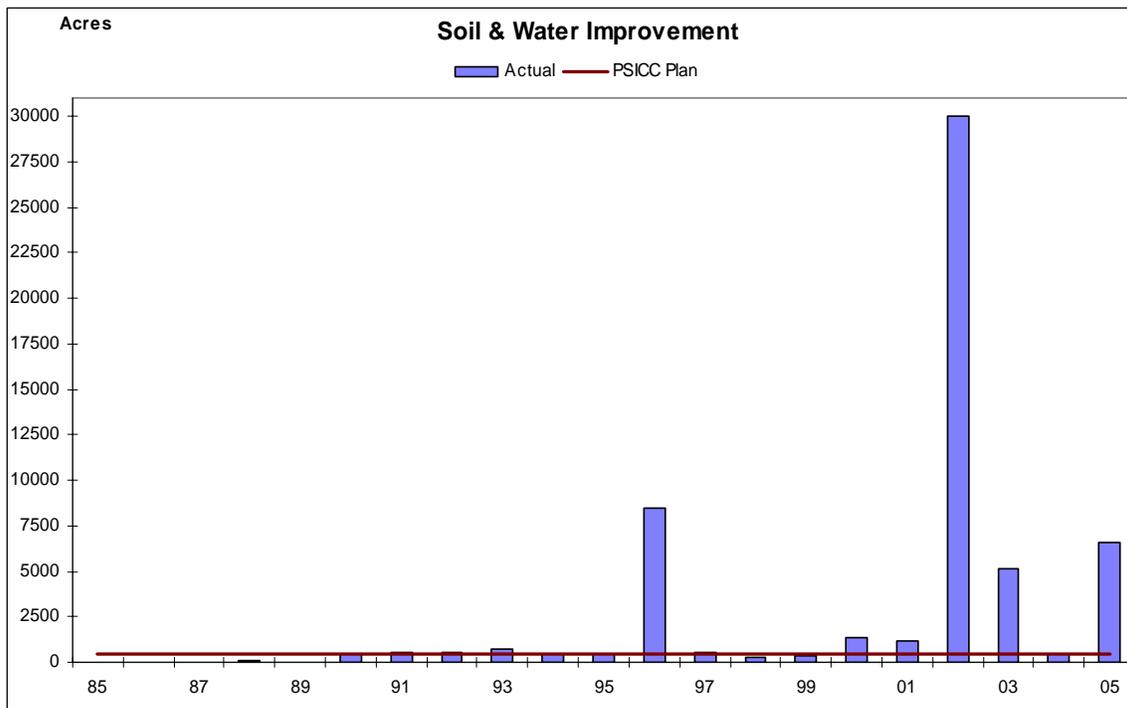


Figure 1. Soil and Water improvement

Over the last 17 years, soil and watershed improvement projects have focused on watersheds and stream systems that exceed federal and state water quality thresholds and

standards for sedimentation. Although the PSICC is making progress in restoring degraded watersheds, much work remains to be done.

2.1.3. Watershed assessments

Watershed assessments are developed so that we can be more responsive to watershed improvement needs and landscape health issues across the PSICC. Watershed assessments allow identification of status, trend and interrelationships of and between resource conditions. This work sets the stage for determining and prioritizing watershed improvement projects and other management opportunities giving consideration to desired future conditions and cumulative effects. On the San Isabel, the Wet Mountain assessment on San Carlos Ranger District and the Tennessee-Arkansas assessment on Leadville Ranger District are completed.

2.1.4. Burned area rehabilitation

Since 1996, eight wildfires have been approved for Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) funding (Buffalo Creek, Big Turkey, Hi Meadow, Snaking, Schoonover, Hayman, Steeler, and Mason Gulch). This has been in addition to the projected Plan level of watershed improvement projects. More than 34,000 acres have been rehabilitated using techniques that include scarification, revegetation and seeding, overland flow reduction, and sediment transport reduction treatments using straw wattles, log erosion barriers and directional felling. The Hayman Fire (137,000 acres) and the Buffalo Creek Fire (12,000 acres) were the two largest burns in recent years. Major flood events accelerating erosion have occurred within the perimeters of these fires. Runoff from these flood events caused increased sediment levels to drainages within and downstream of the burn areas, contributing to watershed degradation. The watersheds affected either have been (Buffalo Creek) or will be (Hayman) monitored for two to five years to determine if additional treatments are needed to further reduce potential losses in downstream water quality.

2.1.5. Soil and water quality monitoring

Monitoring soils and water quality provides information about the effects of management decisions and subsequent actions involving soils and water. State and Federal regulations, Plan Standards and Guidelines, and the Inland West Watershed Assessment (completed in 1998) give long-term objectives and monitoring guidelines used to measure changes in soils and watersheds. Intensive sediment and flow data have been collected on three streams to determine sediment-flow relationships within three hydrographic regions on the PSICC. The first round of monitoring of the 60+ 1998 Colorado Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) listed streams is completed, and their were several streams listed on the 2006 M&E list. Work is ongoing on the 1998 303d listed streams on the PSICC. A TMDL for the Upper South Platte River was prepared in FY02; the TMDL for Trout Creek is pending (scheduled for completion during FY06-07). All monitoring data is entered into the corporate soils and water databases maintained by the PSICC.

2.1.6. Soil quality standards

The PSICC uses the soil quality standards established for the U.S.D.A. Forest Service Region 2. These provide threshold values to document major reductions in soil productivity potential. These values act as early warning signs to indicate when further alteration of soil properties would extensively change or impair soil productivity. Past soils monitoring tied to project implementation has involved visual assessments of contract provisions and project mitigation designed to reduce the degradation of soils and water resources. These projects include or involve timber and salvage sales, roads, trails and facility construction and maintenance, and recreation-related activities. More detailed and quantitative soils monitoring is being conducted. Specifically, soil compaction related to livestock grazing and erosion related to BAER treatments and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use is monitored. In the future, both qualitative project monitoring and more detailed studies of specific management uses and issues on the PSICC will be conducted.

2.2. Water Rights

A goal of the PSICC is to maintain current water rights, to protect and maintain channel stability and capacity on streams, and to accomplish any proposed increase in water use or resource activity. This includes reviewing the monthly water court resumes in Water Division 1 (South Platte Basin) and Water Division 2 (Arkansas Basin) and filing Statements of Opposition to any of the filings that may potentially harm the rights held by the Forest Service. The review also enables the PSICC to learn of individuals seeking water rights on the Forests or Grasslands that may not hold a special-use permit for the use. Rather than filing a Statement of Opposition, the PSICC would send a letter to the applicant informing them of the special-use permitting procedures.

In 2005, the PSICC continued to work on augmentation requirements for Lake Isabel and Manitou Lake. The State of Colorado is requiring the PSICC to augment for water lost due to evaporation on both lakes. Engineering firms have been hired, their recommendations have been reviewed, and a plan of action is being put in place.

The PSICC is also currently working on getting long-term special-use permits issued for North Fork, Boss and O'Haver reservoirs on the Salida District.

In 2005, a great amount of work was done to follow-up on the Water Division 1 case. Most of the rights in this case were never decreed, so work was done to verify that the uses originally filed for are still current. A list was created and sent to the Department of Justice to be filed with the Water Division 1 Court. We anticipate that it will not be filed until early in FY07.

In 1979, the PSICC filed for reserved rights in Water Division 2 (Case No. 79CW176). This case is coming to closure with final negotiations still in progress. The PSICC is in the process of evaluating which water rights were ultimately decreed by the court, and which ones were removed from the case. We will then begin to assess the current status of the rights that were removed.

2.3. Air Resources

In response to requirements in the Clean Air Act, in 1994 the PSICC initiated a long-term monitoring program to develop baseline data for evaluating air quality-related values in Wilderness Areas. High-elevation lake chemistry is being monitored annually at various locations in the Mount Evans and Sangre de Cristo Wilderness Areas. Those data collected will be used for evaluating current relationships between air quality and wilderness values, and for reviewing any proposed projects involving major air emissions that may affect the PSICC's airsheds. Several years of data are needed to derive solid conclusions. All prescribed fires are managed to comply with Federal and State Air Quality regulations.

Acid deposition is also being measured through a network of precipitation chemistry monitoring sites administered under the National Atmospheric Deposition Program/National Trends Network (NADP/NTN). In Colorado, there are 18 monitoring stations distributed across the state. One station is at the Manitou Experimental Forest headquarters on the Pike's Peak District.

In 1994, with the end of the first round of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in Morton County there was speculation that a significant number of acres currently in the CPR program would be broken out and put back into ranch production. As a result, two PM₁₀ air quality-monitoring sites were installed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment – one on the Grassland and one in Richfield, Kansas.

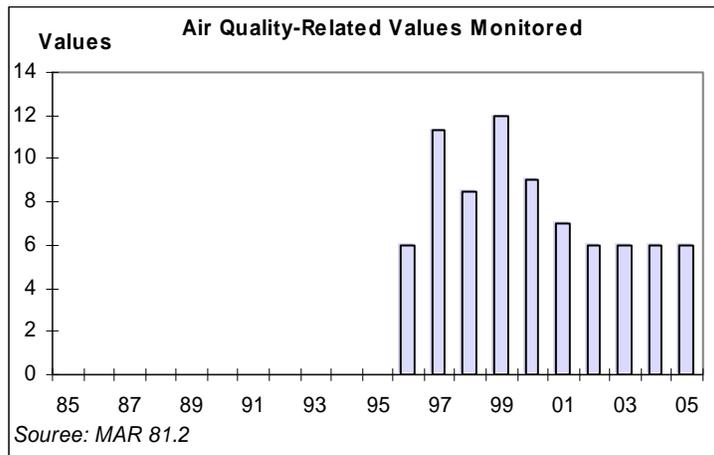


Figure 2. Air quality-related values

In 1998, when the Kansas Department of Health and Environment decided not to maintain either of these two sites, the Forest Service and the Morton County Conservation District continued their maintenance and equipment operation. All readings, with the exception of once at the Richfield site, have been in compliance with State standards. In 1990, corporate hog farms were being established in Morton County. The odor from the establishment of hog farms became an air quality issue in Morton County and the surrounding counties.

2.4. Mineral Resources

2.4.1. Energy Minerals

Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands support the majority of the oil and gas leasing, exploration, development, and production activities on the PSICC. However, there has been renewed leasing interest along the Front Range of the Pike National Forest and in the Spanish Peaks area of the San Isabel National Forest. The Pikes Peak District now has areas under lease along the Rampart Range northwest of Colorado Springs and has a complete Application for Permit to Drill (APD) from Dyad Corporation. The South Park District has a request for an area southeast of the town of Jefferson, Colorado be put up for leasing. The San Carlos District has requests from industry to put an area southwest of the town of La Veta, Colorado, and another southeast of the town of Cuchara, Colorado, up for leasing. Extensive seismic and other geophysical and geochemical exploration has taken place over the years in the Rampart Range and Wet Mountains.

2.4.2. Locatable Minerals

The South Park District of the Pike National Forest supports the majority of mining and exploration activities; some locatable mining also takes place in the Leadville and Salida Districts of the San Isabel National Forest. The majority of the small commercial operations mine amazonite and smokey quartz crystals, with some gold placer mining taking place on the Leadville District. No major or moderate exploration, development, or production operations have taken place. Recreational mining activities such as panning, dredging, and rock hounding are on a slight increase. Over the past couple of years efforts (including criminal litigation in two cases) have been taken to bring several unauthorized operations on the South Park District into compliance with regulation and policy. These efforts have been successful in that the operators currently have approved plans of operations in place.

3.0. Biological Components

3.1. Wildlife, Fisheries, and Rare Plant Resources

3.1.1. Accomplishments of interagency objectives

PSICC personnel meet regularly with the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), and various other partners regarding wildlife objectives and opportunities for projects that will help achieve shared objectives. Topics have focused on lesser prairie chickens, big game, and trout with the state agencies, grazing management with the BLM, and Threatened & Endangered (T&E) species with the USFWS. CDOW's Habitat Partnership Program (HPP) includes representatives from CDOW, the Forest Service, BLM, private landowners, and hunters with the aim of addressing big game animal damage issues on private lands intermixed with state and federal ownerships. There are also two Antelope Conflict Resolution committees in southeastern Colorado, where state grazing allotments and the Comanche National Grassland coexist with private agricultural interests. The PSICC has established partnerships with state universities and species advocacy groups such as Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the National Wild Turkey Federation for research and habitat enhancement projects.

3.1.2. Threatened and endangered species

Emphasis continues to focus on completing inventories to establish baseline species population and distribution information. The T&E habitat improvement has primarily involved work necessary to support the reintroduction of the greenback cutthroat trout and improve Pawnee montane skipper (butterfly) habitat. Prescribed burning and noxious weed treatments have been used extensively to restore ecosystem structure and composition for both Forest and Grassland sensitive species (such as mountain plover, black-tailed prairie dog, lesser prairie chicken, northern goshawk, etc.). Partnerships are a critical part of achieving these accomplishments. Because of the importance of TES species, the goals of the WFRP 5-Year Action Plan are focused on maintaining and enhancing the various habitats required to support these species, with increased emphasis on protecting biological diversity. Figure 3 shows program accomplishments in the number of TES habitat acres improved from 1996 through 2005.

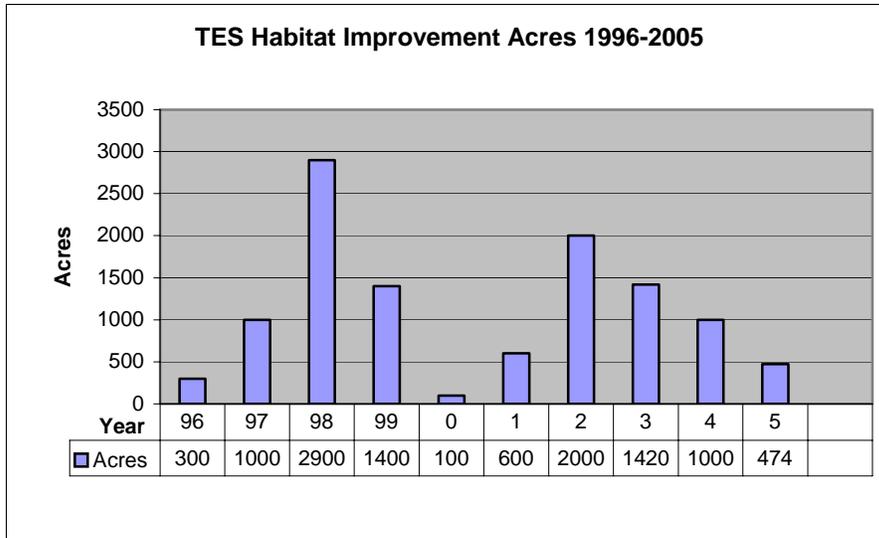


Figure 3. Acres of TES wildlife habitat improvement on the PSICC

3.1.3. Management indicator species

A decision notice for a Forest Plan Amendment was published August 8, 2005, modifying the current management indicator species (MIS) list. This review indicated the need to reduce the 1984 MIS list with related Forest and Grassland major management activities in associated ecotypes (called management indicator groups).

The completed MIS Amendment Decision Notice and EA are on file at the PSICC Supervisor's Office in Pueblo, Colorado, and available on the PSICC Web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/psicc/projects/>.

3.1.3.a. Retained MIS Species

Under the 2005 National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule, the Region 2 sensitive species (Regional Forester's Sensitive Species) list is no longer utilized for Forest Service managed lands. The 2005 Planning Rule and associated planning directives call for management for species-of-concern (SOC) and species-of-interest (SOI) was begun.

Pike & San Isabel National Forests

1. Abert's squirrel
2. Brook trout
3. Greenback cutthroat trout
4. Rocky Mountain elk

Comanche National Grassland

1. Black-tailed prairie dog
2. Bullock's oriole
3. Lesser prairie chicken
4. Long-billed curlew

Cimarron National Grassland

1. Black-tailed prairie dog
2. Bullock’s oriole
3. Lesser prairie chicken

Abert’s Squirrel

Abert’s squirrel is ecologically dependent on ponderosa pine with open understory for both nesting sites and food and therefore generally limited to open montane forests. Target feed trees represent less than 10% of the trees in stands populated by Abert’s squirrel along the Front Range. Tree chemistry also affects nest-site selection. On the PSICC, surveys show approximately 92% of nests were in a tree group with 75% having three or more interlocking canopy trees. Population dynamics are poorly known. Population estimates range from 12 to 30 animals per km² in the Black Forest of El Paso County, Colorado, and from 82 to 114 km², near Boulder, Colorado. Spring population counts tend to be lowest. In 2004, protocol development and field-testing was done in conjunction with Colorado State University (CSU) and the San Juan National Forest. In 2005, baseline surveys were conducted on approximately 4,000 acres of potential Abert’s squirrel habitat. The Mason Gulch wildfire on the San Carlos District burned about 5,000 acres of potential habitat.

Black-Tailed Prairie Dog

The black-tailed prairie dog is considered an important species in temperate grassland ecosystems, because they:

- 1) directly impact vegetation height and composition (herbivory)
- 2) provide physical structures (burrows) used by other prairie species; and
- 3) are an important prey source for many native raptors and mammalian predators.

Sylvatic plague is a disease that affects a wide range of rodent species and was introduced to North America from Asia early in the 1900s. Plague has been identified as a primary threat to black-tailed prairie dog. Table 1 shows results from surveys 1999-2005.

Table 1. Black-tailed prairie dog survey results for Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands. Percent annual change (change in colony area of colonies mapped in consecutive years) of total colonies’ acreages.

Study site	Colony area (ha)	% Annual change	# Colonies (# new)	# Inactive colonies	# Old colonies	# Historic colonies	Plague present
Cimarron							
1999	687	NA	51(NA)	NA	NA	NA	YES*
2001	1068	+44%	55(4)	NA	NA	NA	NO
2002	1344	+26%	55(0)	0	0	5	NO
2003	1622	+21%	60(8)	1	0	5	YES*

Study site	Colony area (ha)	% Annual change	# Colonies (# new)	# Inactive colonies	# Old colonies	# Historic colonies	Plague present
2004	2280	+41%	55(2)	1	0	5	NO
2005	2342	+3%	53(5)	5	0	5	YES
Comanche							
1999	799	NA	83(NA)	NA	NA	NA	NO
2001	1757	+87%	102(19)	NA	NA	NA	NO
2002	2497	+42%	113(11)	0	0	45	NO
2003	2680	+6%	118(7)	0	2	42	NO
2004	4810	+79%	137(14)	2	2	40	NO
2005	6323	+30%	157(19)	2	3	37	YES

*Colony die-off was isolated and did not spread to other colonies; plague was confirmed in 1999 but not in 2003.

(Table 1 results are from 2005 Annual Report: A summary of black-tailed prairie dog abundance and occurrence of sylvatic plague, by Jack Cully and Tammi Johnson. Kansas State University, March 2006.)

Brook Trout

In 2005, the PSICC expanded its brook trout sampling beyond the Trout Creek watershed, where the only long-term data existed for this species on the PSICC. Brook trout populations on the Pike and San Isabel tend to be located below the greenback cutthroat trout recovery areas.

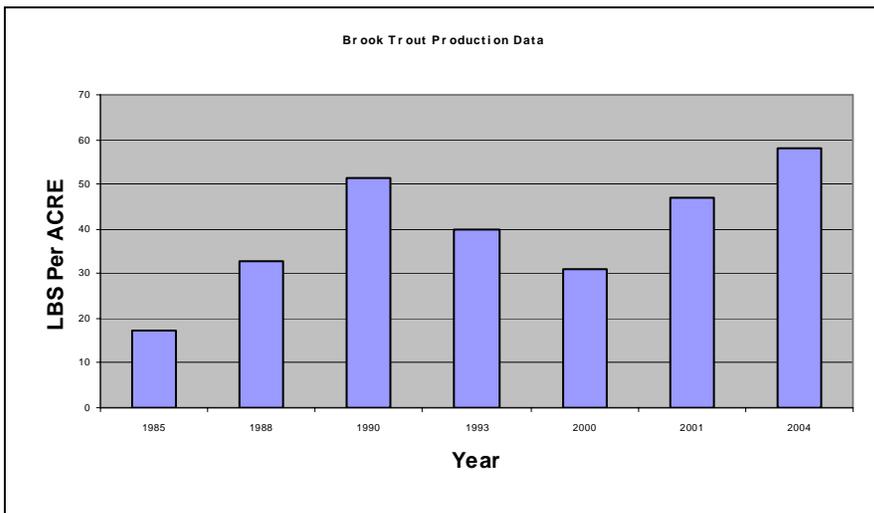


Figure 4. Brook trout productivity on selected PSICC streams

Greenback Cutthroat Trout

Existing greenback cutthroat trout populations are restricted to small, remote high elevation streams and lakes where populations often have been protected by fish movement barriers. Approximately 18 stable populations are located in the South Platte drainage, and three stable populations are located within the Arkansas drainage (USFWS 2005). In addition to the three historic populations on the Pike and San Isabel, seven populations have been restored. At this time, two of the Pike and San Isabel populations are considered stable, four potentially stable, and three unstable.

N.Taylor Creek: Installation of a migration barrier 2 miles below a natural barrier that protects a known pure population of threatened greenback trout. With subsequent re-stocking of greenback cutthroat trout in the reclaimed 2 miles below the natural barrier.

Organizations FWS Partners Total

Organizations	FWS	Partners	Total	
CDOW, USFS, TU	\$23,000	\$24,000	\$57,000	This project will protect a pure population of greenback cutthroat trout and enhance the population by adding an additional 2 miles of stream for renovation and re-stocking with greenbacks. This effort aids in the overall greenback cutthroat trout recovery to allow further movement towards delisting.

The reintroduction and recovery of greenback cutthroat trout is the PSICC’s top fishery priority.

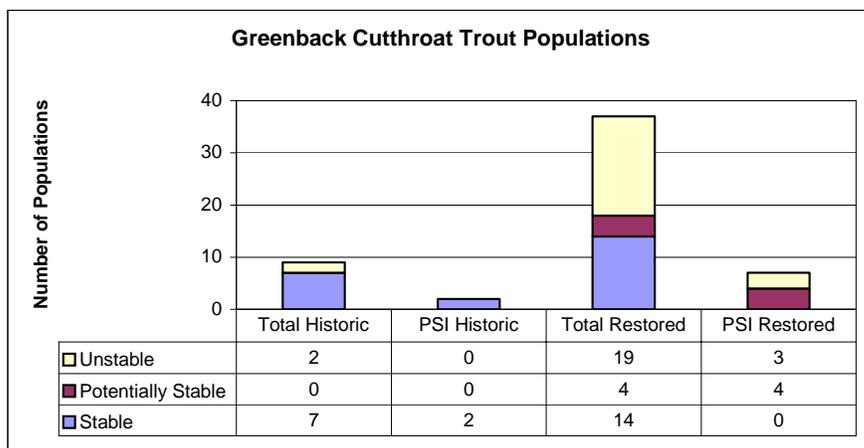


Figure 5. Greenback cutthroat trout populations

Greenback cutthroat trout are federally listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. They have been extirpated from most of their native range through competition with non-native brook and brown trout. Land use practices such as mining, timber clear-cutting, grazing, urban development and other anthropogenic impacts that have contributed to their decline. A few remnant populations of pure greenback cutthroat trout have been recently discovered above natural migration barriers on the San Isabel National Forest, and brood stock from these remnant populations were collected for use in hatchery propagation programs. The Forest has been actively involved, along with state, municipal and environmental organizations, in reestablishing stable populations of greenback cutthroat trout, as specified in the Greenback Cutthroat Trout Recovery Plan.

Lesser Prairie Chicken

Results from lek surveys on the Comanche show a downward trend in the lesser prairie chicken population during 1989 - 2005. Assuming a 1:1 sex ratio, the total lesser prairie chicken population estimate was highest in 1988 with 348 birds and the lowest in 2005 with 64 birds.

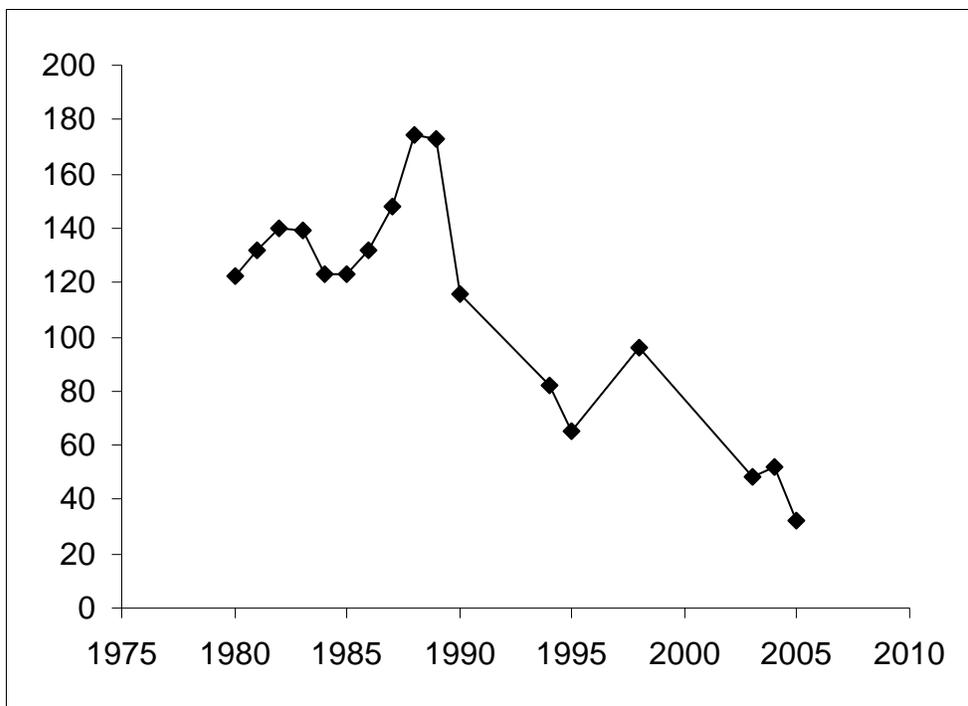


Figure 6. Total number of male lesser prairie chickens counted via lek censuses on the Comanche during 1980 – 2005.

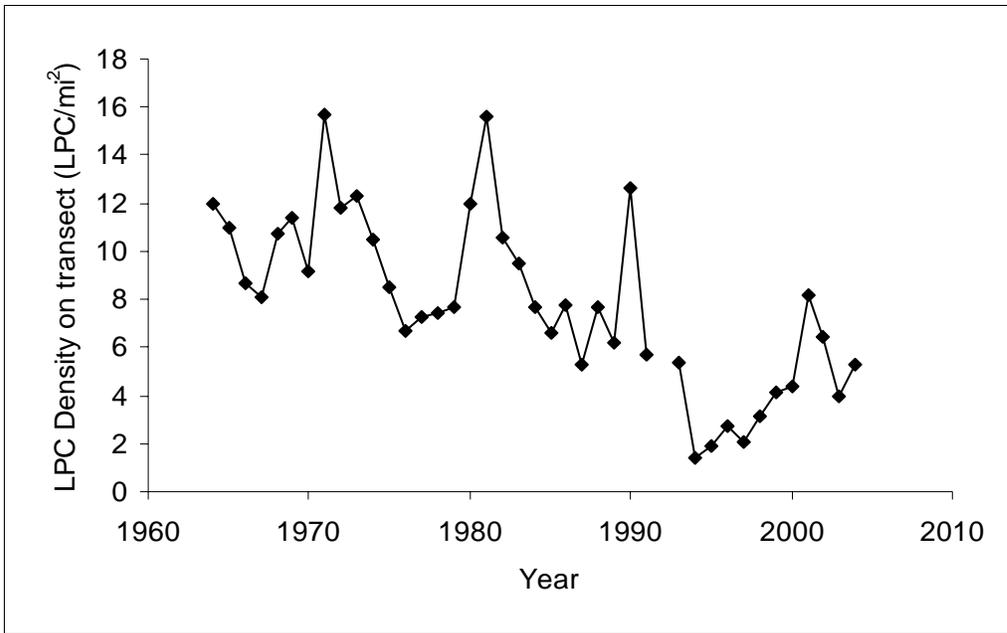


Figure 7. Total number of male LPCs counted via lek censuses on the Cimarron during 1964 – 2004.

The number of lesser prairie chicken counted along this transect can fluctuate considerably from year to year, likely in response to climatic variation, but the long-term trend has been a declining number of lesser prairie chicken during the period from 1964 – 1994, following by an increasing number of birds counted during 1994 – 2004. Numbers counted in recent years (2000 – 2004, average of 5.7 birds/square mile) are still lower than numbers counted in the 1960’s (1964 – 1970, average of 10.2 birds/square mile) and the 1970’s (1971 – 1980, average of 10.0 birds/square mile).

During 1995 – 1999, more intensive surveys of the lesser prairie chicken population on the Cimarron were conducted by Lawrence and Ruth Smith from Elkhart, Kansas, under contract with the Cimarron. They conducted a complete census of leks each spring from 1995 – 1999 by intensively searching along and listening from all roads on the Grassland south of the Cimarron River (lek census method). The Forest Service and KDWP staff repeated this survey in 2005.

Table 2. Population estimates of lesser prairie chicken on the Cimarron during 1995-1999 and 2005, based on the lek-census method.

	Birds Flushed	Estimated # of males	Estimated total # LPC	Total acres surveyed	Square miles surveyed	Total pop. est.: Birds per mi ²
1995	142	135	270	61,638	96.3	2.80
1996	129	123	245	61,638	96.3	2.54

	Birds Flushed	Estimated # of males	Estimated total # LPC	Total acres surveyed	Square miles surveyed	Total pop. est.: Birds per mi ²
1997	91	86	173	61,638	96.3	1.80
1998	138	131	262	61,638	96.3	2.72
1999	149	142	283	61,638	96.3	2.94
2005	131	124	249	61,638	96.3	2.58

Mountain Plover

One of the desired outcomes in grasslands management is to manage for mountain plover, which requires annual disturbance from heavy grazing by herbivores (like prairie dogs, livestock and wild ungulates), prescribed fire and wildfire.

In 2004 & 2005, prescribed fire was used to create desirable breeding and migration habitat for mountain plover. During the migration season, at least one plover was observed on each of the prescribed burn areas conducted in 2005 (Table 3). Breeding plovers (a total of 12 breeding adults observed and 9 nests found) were only observed in the Dry Creek burn. In 2005, breeding plovers were also observed in the three prescribed burn areas conducted in 2004.

Table 3. Numbers of plovers observed on prescribed burns in 2005 on the Comanche.

Allotment	Acres Surveyed	Habitat	Migration Surveys (3/30/05 - 4/12/05) # of Plovers Observed	Nesting Surveys (4/20 - 4/21/04) # of Plovers Observed
Dry Creek	640	Prescribed Burn	42	12
Sunset	320	Prescribed Burn	18	0
Gramma Grass	480	Prescribed Burn	1	0
Total	1440		61	12

The Dry Creek allotment was also burned in 1999 for mountain plover habitat improvement. Comparison of plover numbers on the burn in 1999 (numbers reported by Giesen 1999) and 2005 (Table 4).

Table 4. Plover densities during migration on prescribed burns in the Dry Creek allotment in 1999 and 2005 on the Comanche Carrizo Unit.

Year	Acres burned and surveyed	Plovers observed: Migration	Plovers observed: Breeding	Plover Nests Documented
1999	640	107	33	33
2005	640	42	12	9

Rocky Mountain Elk

Elk was originally selected as a MIS because of the public’s interest for in elk for hunting and viewing. This species has specific habitat management guidelines in the 1984 Pike and San Isabel National Forests, Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands Land and Resource Management Plan (1984 Plan). The CDOW annually monitors elk at the Game Management Unit (GMU) scale to assess population trend changes. Other local factors such as human disturbance (recreation), roads, hazard fuel reduction, fire suppression and forest/range management can directly influence local elk numbers on the PSICC. The Plan provides some specific treatment guidance in big game Diversity Units that is unique from other habitat prescriptions.

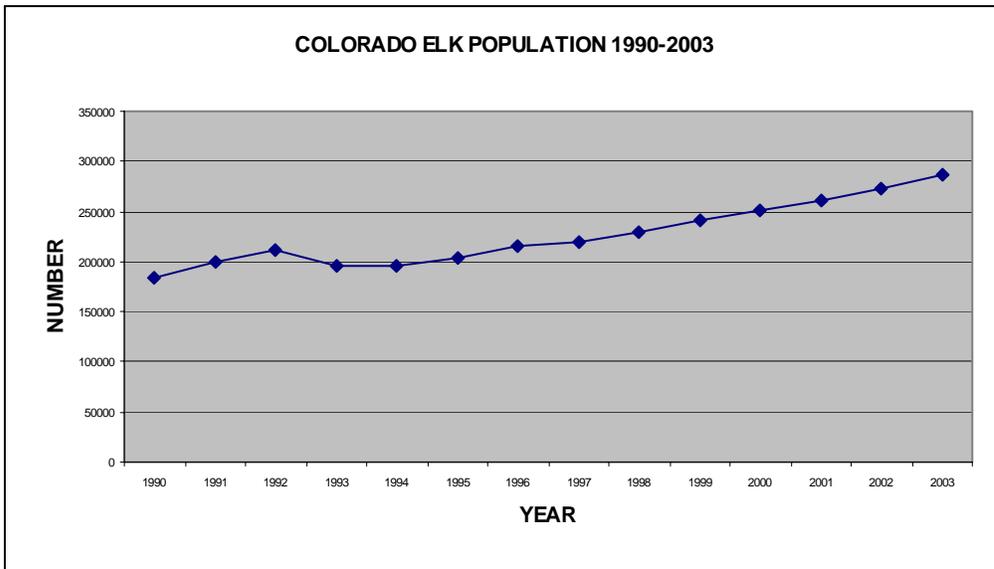


Figure 8. 2003 Post-hunt Colorado elk population (January 2004)

3.1.4. Habitat modification and improvement

Terrestrial Habitat Modification and Improvement on the PSICC

The annual number of wildlife habitat improvement acres and structures has remained relatively stable. Additional resources from partnership grants have increased the effectiveness of biotic inventories and habitat assessment capabilities. However, because the way improvements are tracked and funds allocated have changed several times over the last few years, direct comparisons between years is unwieldy. Figure 9 and Figure 10 illustrate the approximate accomplishments in habitat improvement from 1996 to 2005.

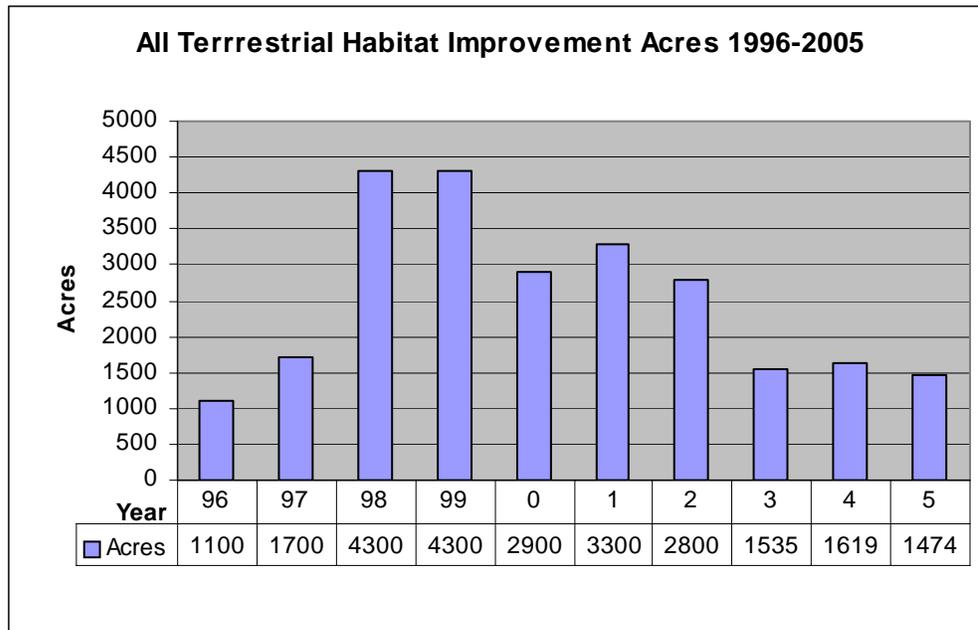


Figure 9. Acres of terrestrial wildlife (all) habitat improvement on the PSICC

New information from research and monitoring will support better project designs and focus of resources. External partners are now a critical source of funding for projects and their implementation. More partnership funding is available than PSICC funds can match and make use of with current program funding and personnel levels.

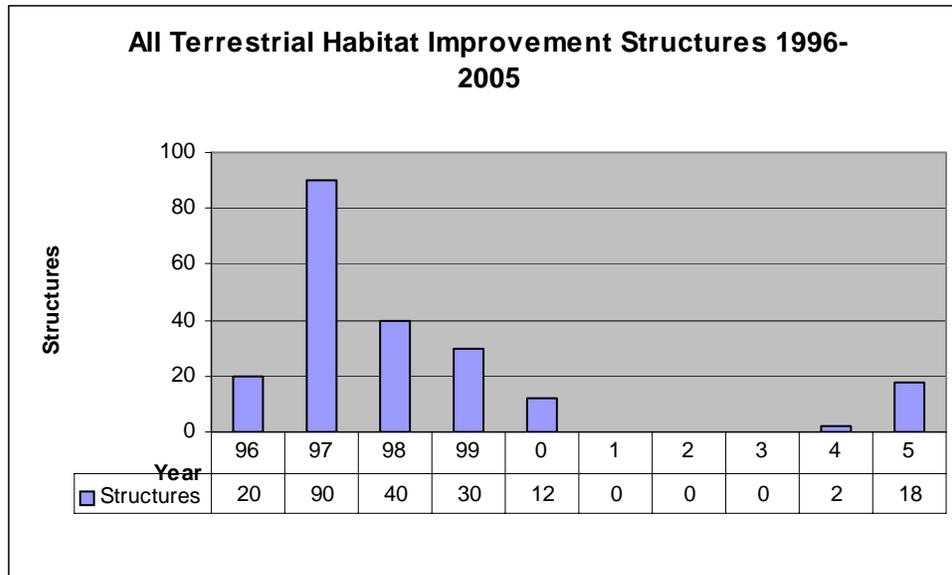


Figure 10. Wildlife habitat improvement structures on the PSICC

3.2. Habitat Diversity: Forested Vegetation

3.2.1. Wildlife habitat diversity

Analyses made during the development of the Plan compared existing tree species age-class diversity on Forest Service lands with a theoretical mix that would support desirable native wildlife species.

The conclusion drawn in 1984 was that an imbalance of the major forest cover types existed, and that relatively young forest stands and old growth were under-represented. Consequently, one goal of the Plan was to focus forest management in over-represented structural stages and produce a landscape with a more balanced mix of habitat characteristics.

However, forest structure vegetation management has been focused on hazardous fuel reductions, especially in urban interface areas. Wildfires have been the primary cause of changes to forest structure types during the past decade.

3.3. Habitat Diversity: Grasslands Vegetation

The Grasslands are in the Great Plains Physiographic Province. High winds, common in spring and early summer, combined with plowing and overgrazing contributed to the soil erosion in the 1930s Dust Bowl period. These winds are still a threat today, particularly when accompanied by drought, high temperatures, and the absence of cover vegetation.

3.3.1. Cimarron National Grassland ecosystems

Spanning 108,175 acres in southwestern Kansas, the Cimarron is characterized by a riparian and two prairie ecosystems.

Riparian

The most productive, yet smallest of the three ecosystems (10%) is found within the Cimarron River watershed on deep, well-drained soils. Over the past 100 years, riparian areas in this watershed have been altered by agricultural practices, oil and gas operations, and urban development. These activities have impacted the soils, hydrology, and vegetation found within the watershed. Although this ecosystem is the most productive of the three, the spread of tamarisk (salt-cedar), a non-native invasive plant species, puts the riparian corridors at risk.

Sandsage Prairie

The largest (60%) and least productive ecosystem on the Cimarron. Today, the very sandy and highly erosive soils of the sandsage prairie can support minimal perennial species. This absence of plant cover is attributed to prolonged periods of drought compounded by the effects of the Dust Bowl period. Sandsage eradication projects conducted in the early 1980s further affected the soil stability and native plant communities of this ecosystem.

Shortgrass Prairie

The second largest (30%) and second most productive ecosystem on the Cimarron. Shortgrass prairie supports a mix of warm and cool season perennial grasses.

3.3.2. Comanche National Grassland ecosystems

Located in southeast Colorado and covering nearly 443,750 acres, the Comanche lies between the Central and Southern Great Plains. Moving from north to south, the Comanche is characterized by rolling loamy plains of shortgrass prairie supporting a vegetation community dominated by blue grama-buffalo grass. Piñon-juniper woodlands edge the plains, as the topography changes to canyons and tablelands. Further south, sandy and deep sandy soils support short- and mid-grass prairie vegetation where sandsage-bluestem and bluestem-blue grama dominate. Woody species in riparian areas and trees are important sites for providing structural diversity and nesting habitat for birds. For this unit, the number of acres, by seral stages, in both the loamy plains and sandy/deep sandy plains habitats are represented in Tables 5 and 6 and Figures 11 and 12.

3.4. Riparian and Aquatic Assessments

3.4.1. Habitat trends

Aquatic and riparian resources were described in the final environmental impact statement for the 1984 Plan. In 1997 and 2002, riparian area inventories and condition assessments of 6th level watersheds on the PSICC were conducted. From these data, watersheds were categorized into three condition classes. Table 5 summarizes the percentages of each of these classifications on the PSICC in both 1997 and 2002.

Table 5. Watershed acres (%) by condition class in 1997 and 2002

Unit	Class I (%) Pristine		Class II (%) Moderately impacted		Class III (%) Severely degraded	
	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002
	Pike National Forest	2	2	51	36	47
San Isabel National Forest	5	5	66	66	29	29
Cimarron National Grassland	0	0	60	60	40	40
Comanche National Grassland	0	0	87	87	13	13

The results of this work indicate a wide range of watershed and riparian conditions on the PSICC. The majority of watersheds are rated as Class II – moderately impacted, indicating that anthropogenic activities have altered the lands managed by the PSICC in the past and present.

The Pike National Forest contains a high percentage of Class III watersheds. This is due to historic and current levels of elevated erosion and sedimentation. Much of the Pike is made up of highly erodible and poorly developed granitic soil, which can contribute large amounts of sediment into stream systems along the Front Range. Although erosion occurs naturally, the presence and use of roads and trails, road maintenance activities, off-road uses, streamflow modifications (such as mining), and recent large wildfires have increased erosion rates and elevated sediment deposition into downstream watersheds.

Although almost one third of the San Isabel National Forest falls into Class III; most of these watersheds have been heavily affected by historic mining activities and, to a lesser extent, by current management activities. The toxic effluent from mine audits has been addressed, but technology is still limited for their successful treatment.

The Grasslands have been significantly affected by historic agricultural activities, and pristine watersheds no longer exist. Most watersheds on the Grasslands fall into Class II; the percentages of Class III watersheds vary between the Cimarron and the Comanche. The Grasslands' surface water flows are significantly altered by municipal and agricultural developments. Upstream dewatering and agricultural runoff have seriously

reduced water quality and quantity in the Cimarron River and its tributaries. Stream systems with headwaters originating on or adjacent to the Grasslands show evidence of excess sedimentation caused from increased erosion from disturbance by cattle and vegetation conversion from perennial native to perennial nonnative and agricultural annual species. Figure 11 shows how management of riparian conditions across the PSICC is meeting the objectives in the 1984 Plan.

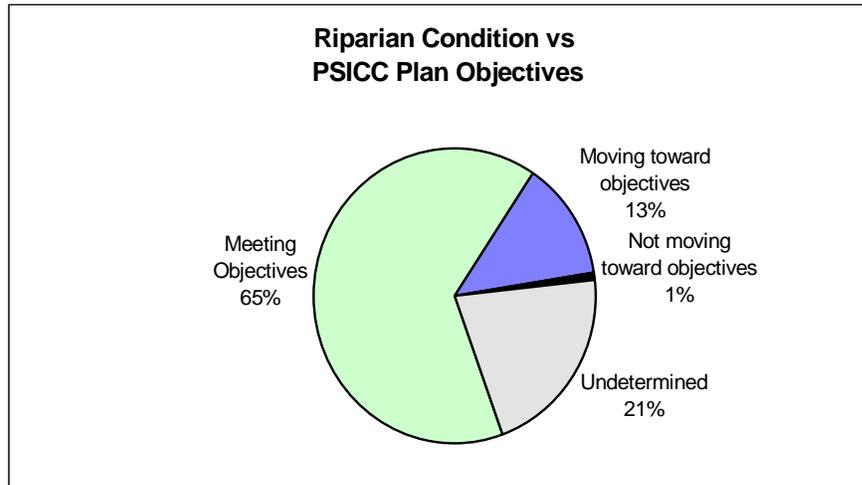


Figure 11. Riparian condition and PSICC Plan objectives

3.4.2. Aquatic habitat modification and enhancement on the PSICC

Impacts to riparian and aquatic ecosystems are derived from a number of human-related activities, with sedimentation from erosion causing the most extensive amount of impact to riparian areas. Because sedimentation can change stream channel physiology, increased water temperatures, reduction in aquatic habitat and other indirect effects, in-stream channel and riparian re-establishment projects have focused on restoring the physical processes needed to sustain habitat for aquatic and riparian-dependent species.

Most human-induced erosion is related to ground-disturbing activities, such as road and trail use, construction and maintenance, livestock grazing, mining, and timber harvest. Other direct or indirect consequences from human-related activities that currently effect aquatic and riparian ecosystems include removal of and/or invasive riparian vegetation with associated increases in water temperatures, mining effluent releases, and stream flow modifications (reduced flows). Recent adaptations of traditional habitat improvement methods have led to an increase in the effectiveness of stream enhancement projects. More emphasis is placed on treating root causes of dysfunction (disturbance and structural stability) than the symptoms (total pools, sedimentation).

Figure 12 and Figure 13 show the aquatic habitat accomplishments from 1985 through 2003. In 1996, accomplishment reporting for streams changed from “number of structures” to “miles improved.” This change is most evident in Figure 13, which shows

habitat improvement structures per mile. While it seems that the numbers of structures/acres treated have decreased, the actual numbers of improvements has remained stable for over a decade.

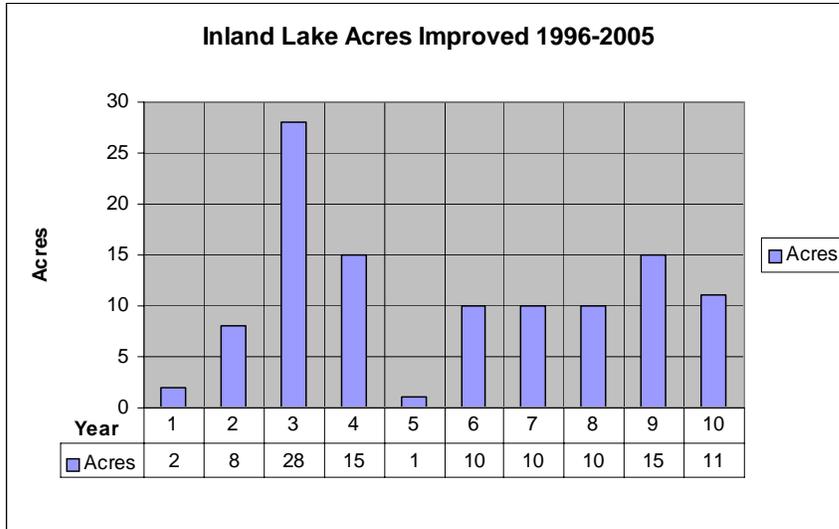


Figure 12. Acres of lake habitat improved on the PSICC.

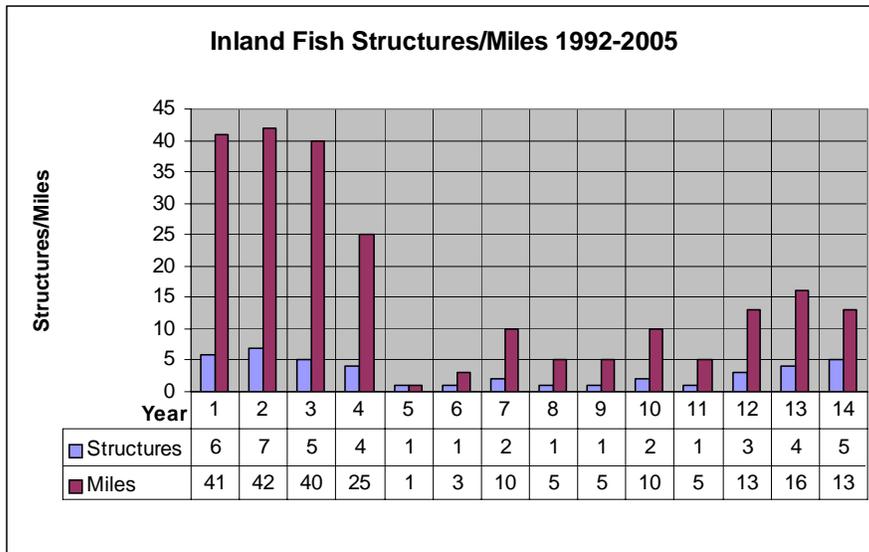


Figure 13. Stream habitat improvement structures and miles on the PSICC.

3.4.3. Monitoring of Other Species

Besides annual projects improving habitats, adding structures, removing noxious weeds and reintroductions, the wildlife, fish, and rare plant program also monitors (with numerous cooperators) as many species and plants as time and resources allow. These surveys are used to protect species and their habitats, as well as provide specific information for proactive habitat improvement projects in future years.

In conjunction with CDOW, KDWP, Colorado State University (CSU), (Indiana State University (ISU), Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) and other individuals and groups:

1. Sensitive and rare plant surveys were conducted on the Comanche district (ISU), and on all districts as part of project planning (new sites found);
2. Breeding bird survey routes (RMBO);
3. Species surveys, including black swift, northern goshawk, Mexican spotted owl, boreal toad, Pawnee montane skipper, willow ptarmigan;
4. Stream fish & habitat surveys.

Program and project surveys covered hundreds of thousands of acres across PSICC.

3.5. Range Condition and Use

Drought conditions continued across portions of the PSICC again in the 2003 grazing season. Though they were perhaps not as extreme as they had been in 2002, they were nonetheless important in terms of the use made on the National Grasslands and Forest allotments. Nearly all of the livestock producers that took partial or total non-use in the 2002 grazing season again took partial or total non-use in 2003. This was due to uncertainties in continued forage availability and also fairly high cattle prices for those needing to replace cattle numbers sold off in the preceding years. In many situations, the start of the 2003 grazing season was delayed in an effort to rebuild some perennial grass vigor before the plants were subjected to grazing pressure. In some areas, mid- to late-season precipitation began to abate the drought conditions.

Although Actual Use figures are not available at this time, they are expected to be similar or perhaps slightly less than they were in 2002.

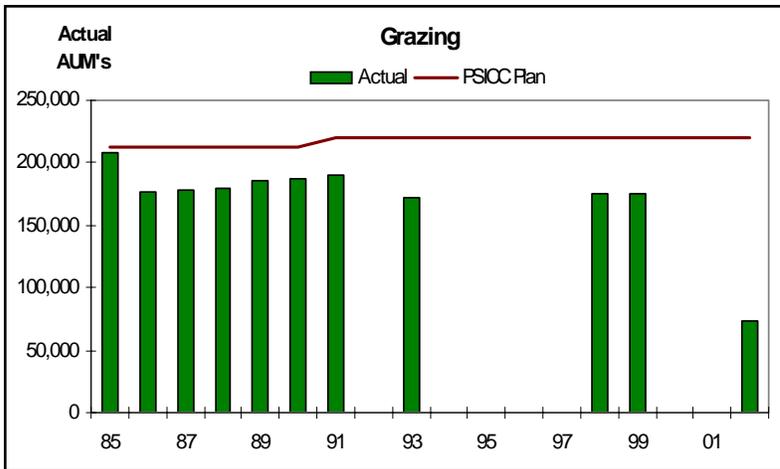


Figure 14. Grazing by AUMs

Perhaps because of the drought, the two Forests experienced an increase in unauthorized use from non-permittees. This unauthorized use occurred both outside of the “normal” grazing season (winter months) and during the summer months. When this was discovered, action was taken immediately to have the cattle removed. In several cases, due to repeat occurrences, a Violation Notice was issued and the individual was required to appear in court before a Magistrate.

Annual monitoring indicates that range conditions across the PSICC are generally meeting or moving toward Plan objectives, as shown in Figure 15.

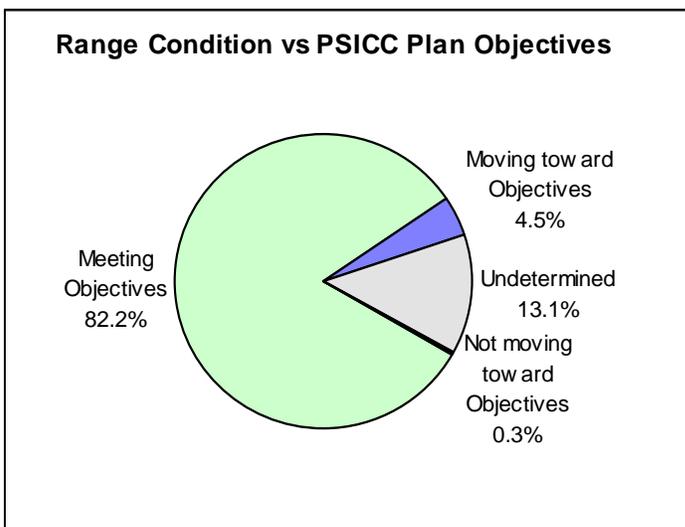


Figure 15. Range condition and PSICC Plan objectives

3.5.1. Allotment management planning

Progress continued on completing an environmental assessment (EA) for an additional seven allotments on the Pikes Peak District. However, the drought conditions changed the emphasis from completing this document in 2003 to administering the use that was occurring on the stocked allotments. The EA is almost complete and a Decision Record is expected to be signed before the start of the 2004 grazing season.

Work has begun to draft an EA for all except one of the remaining allotments on the Pike National Forest. Completion of this draft document is expected by late September 2004, with the Decision Record to be signed in 2005. The remaining allotment on the Pike will be included in the EA for the group of allotments on the Salida and Leadville Districts within the next two or three years. This is because of its close proximity to and management considerations with some of those allotments.

3.5.2. Acres administered to standard

The District and Forest Rangeland Management personnel gave added emphasis to administering the grazing use that occurred on the PSICC in 2003. When needed, changes in management were implemented to correct a situation before it resulted in resource problems. At the end of the 2003 grazing season, over 900,400 acres were reported to have been "administered to standard" according requirements in the Plan and any corresponding Allotment Management Plans. This is important in terms of the drought conditions which occurred during this time.

3.6. Forest Condition and Use

The Plan established an allowable sale quantity of 37 million board-feet (mmbf) per year, with the intent that timber offer targets would gradually approach that level as more acres were put under management. In 1984, approximately 1,065,220 acres were considered tentatively suitable for commercial timber harvest. Much of the timber sold was used for fuel wood. In addition, the economics of harvesting timber on PSICC were such that, once the below-cost issue began affecting policy, funding for the commercial timber program was curtailed to a level well below Plan projections. By FY94, the timber program had declined to historically low levels, with most of the volume harvested still being sold for fuel wood. The timber volume offered since the Plan has been implemented is shown in Figure 16.

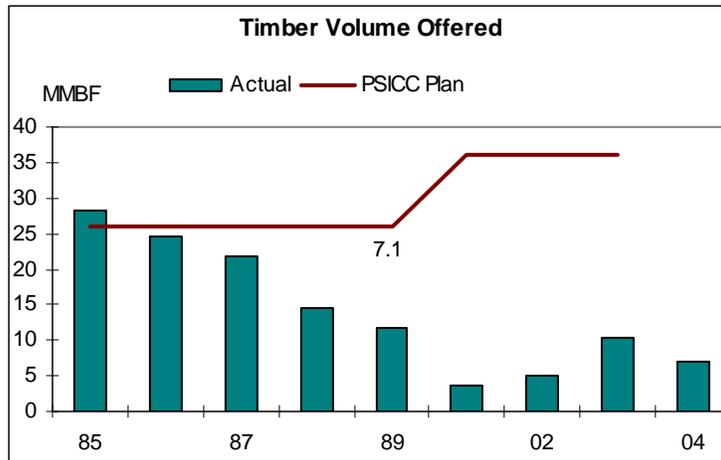


Figure 16. Timber volume offered

As shown in Figure 17, the treatment rate of forested acres by all types of projects designed to modify forested vegetation, has not kept pace with predictions. The Timber Harvest History table in Appendix A shows acres harvested and cutting method on the PSICC since 1987. The net effect is that the situation as described in the 1984 Plan has not substantially changed, except that most of the trees are about 22 years older.

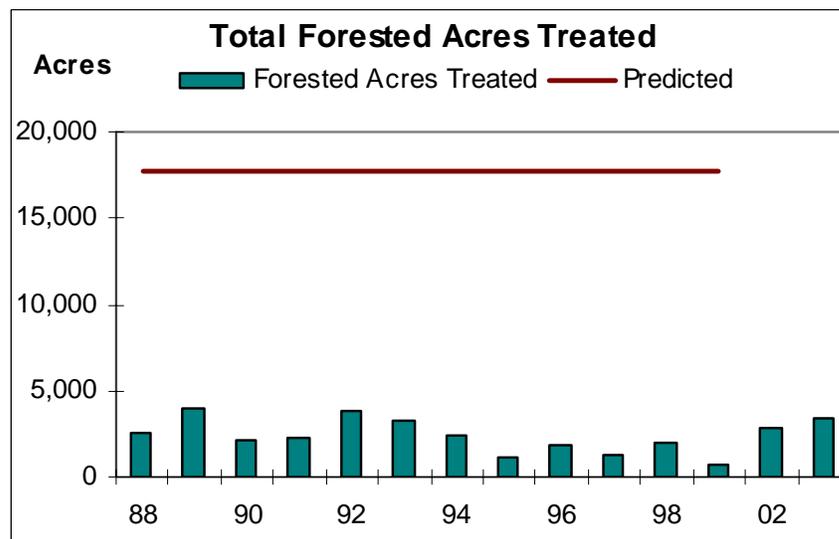


Figure 17. Total number of forested acres treated

Forest management on the PSICC has not kept pace with the growth rate of the trees. This unmanaged growth, coupled with recent drought conditions has accelerated insect and disease infestations, and has produced an ominous fuels build-up. A situation of increasing severity exists, particularly along the Front Range, where the Buffalo Creek, Hi Meadow, Hayman, and Mason Gulch fires occurred. Steps are being taken to:

1. Build a new and active forest management program.

2. Seek possible markets for the types of smaller-sized wood products whose removal would best benefit forest health.
 3. Use timber sales as a tool to achieve natural resource management goals.
- This is discussed further in the Fuel Treatment section of this report.

3.6.1. Reforestation and timber stand improvement activities

These activities have been variable over time, as is shown in Figure 18 and Figure 19. Funds for these activities are obtained primarily from timber sale revenues.

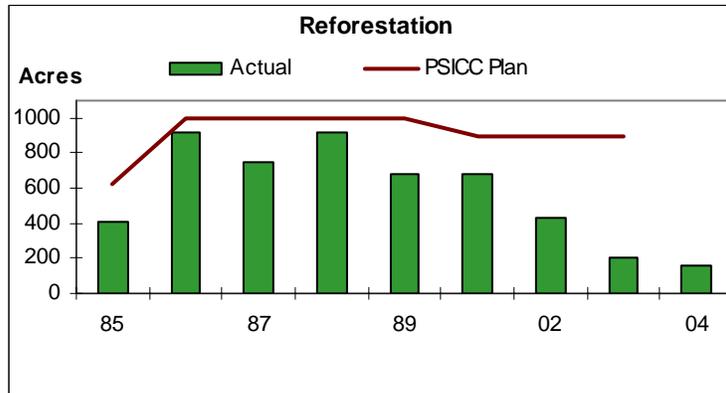


Figure 18. Acres of reforestation: Actual and PSICC Plan

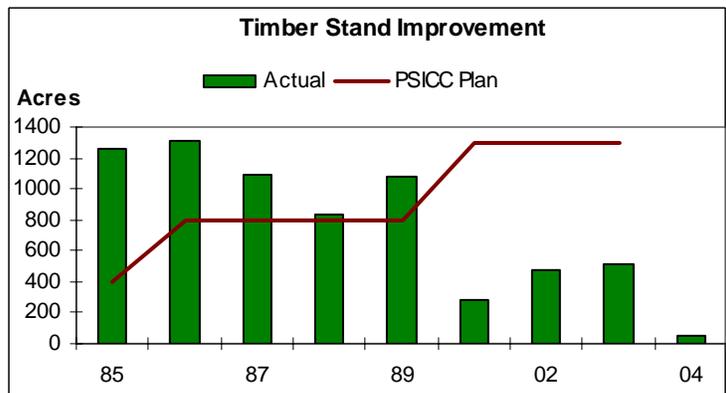


Figure 19. Acres of timber stand improvement: Actual and PSICC Plan

The reforestation increases, beginning in FY96, are due to the restoration efforts after the 1996 Buffalo Creek Fire and the large fires of 2002, including the Hayman Fire that burned more than 150,000 acres. These events created a tremendous reforestation need on the Pike. Where the burning severity was moderate or high, the natural seed source has been lost for thousands of acres. To have a functioning ponderosa pine ecosystem in the future, seedlings need to be planted. We started reforestation efforts on the Hayman Burn by planting 100 acres in 2004, and then 920 acres in 2005. As funding is received

for cone collection, greenhouse expenses, and planting contracts, reforestation will continue in areas of the large burns.

3.7. Fuels Treatment

A history of fire suppression, land use practices (such as widespread burning and logging in the late 1800s, heavy livestock grazing the late 1800s and early 1900s, and tree planting in the early 1900s) and climatic variation has, over the last century, altered fire regimes and associated fuel loading, landscape composition, structure, and function across the Forest. As a result, the number, size, and severity of wildland fires have departed significantly from those of historical conditions – sometimes with catastrophic consequences. These negative effects of certain land-use practices on land health and sustainability have been recognized in recent years.

Recent examples of increasing wildland fire size and uncharacteristic severity in Colorado include the 2000 fire season in the Pike San Isabel in which over 24,000 acres burned and 59 structures were destroyed. The 2002, Hayman fire in Colorado burned approximately 137,760 acres and cost nearly \$44.2 million to suppress. To date, the Hayman fire is the largest wildland fire in the state of Colorado.

Over the past year the PSICC has integrated two strategies into the hazardous fuels program. The first is the Front Range Fuels Treatment Strategy which emphasizes the need to identify, prioritize, and rapidly implement hazardous fuels treatment projects within Colorado's Front Range. This strategy focuses on a large-scale rapid assessment of the hazardous fuel conditions along the Front Range, enabling the identification of 300,000 acres on the Pike alone where treatment needs are of the greatest concern. The second is the reintroduction of Integrated Resource Management with a heavy emphasis on overall vegetation management to improve forest health, reduce wildfire risks to communities and the environment, and correct problems associated with long-term disruptions of natural fire cycles that have increased the risk of severe wildland fires to fire prone and fire dependent ecosystems (the PSICC treated 16,611 acres in 2003). This second strategy addresses the need to accelerate management of:

- 1) Hazardous fuel loadings.
- 2) Increasing insect infestation problems.
- 3) Reducing wildland fire impacts.
- 4) Protecting and restoring high value watersheds and wildlife habitats.
- 5) Enhancing ecosystem sustainability and the sustainability of communities in high hazard priority areas within the PSICC.

The current fire risk and beetle infestations on the PSICC are linked by a common factor of overly dense forests which resulted from 100 years of fire suppression and the prolific growth of ponderosa pine and mixed conifer stands. Cycles of drought exacerbate the stress on overcrowded tree stands. An estimated 900,000 acres on the PSICC are overcrowded with dense stands of ponderosa pine, mixed conifer trees, and decadent growth from grass and shrub species. Along with a growing mix of homes situated within forested areas and the many high priority areas and communities at risk adjacent to or within the PSICC, we are faced with the dilemma of how to choose treatment areas

and communities to work with. Although many communities and counties have demonstrated their support for fuels treatment, some have not yet done so or are at different stages of developing fire and fuels management plans and strategies. Meeting the objectives of the two strategies mentioned above and also of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, the National Fire Plan, the Healthy Forest Initiative, and the 10 Year Comprehensive Strategy, requires a coordinated effort across landscapes to restore and maintain the health of fire prone ecosystems. Currently, 500,000 acres of high priority treatments areas have been identified throughout the PSICC.

3.7.1. Outlook for the Future

The key to the PSICC's success will be extensive collaboration with the public and local, county, state, and other federal agencies to support specific treatment areas and types, along with the application of Wyden Amendment authorities and the Good Neighbor Policy to conduct fuels treatment work across boundaries. In five years the 500,000 acres of high priority to treatment areas is projected to increase to 575,000 acres, an estimate based on the rate of tree growth and increased insect infestation and disease. If the PSICC continues to accelerate treatment work by increasing the Hazardous Fuels and Vegetation Management Program, about 36% of these priority acres will be treated after five years, and 70% after ten years. Treating hazardous fuels and insect and disease infestations will help reduce the impacts of wildfires on communities and restore health to fire adapted ecosystems. Programs that focus on restoration of fire prone and fire dependent ecosystems and better integration of vegetation management, forest health, wildlife, range, watershed, and other available dollars will be more aggressively explored.

4.0. Social Components

4.1. Recreation

The PSICC provides wilderness, scenic byways, wild and scenic rivers, campgrounds, picnic areas, motorized trails, fishing, National Scenic and Historic Trails, cabin rentals, a Christmas tree program and many other activities for its visitors. From the depths of Picket Wire Canyon to the summit of Mount Elbert the PSICC offers something for everyone.

Recreation visitor use data collection and reporting in the Forest Service has undergone dramatic changes since our original Plan was approved in 1984. At that time data was reported using the Recreation Information Management (RIM) system, which contained detailed estimates of use on each Ranger District or smaller composite area. Use was measured in 12-hour visitor days. In 1987, RIM was abandoned and was replaced with the National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) system in 2001. NVUM was designed as a statistically valid sample of visitor use at the level of a National Forest, but it uses visits as the basic measurement rather than visitor days. Samples or interviews are repeated every five years. On the PSICC NVUM was conducted in 2001 and was conducted again in 2006, using approximately 300 sample sites. Each National Forest is on a five year schedule. NVUM will be the standard monitoring protocol used to better understand the public's use of, value of and satisfaction with National Forest System recreation opportunities. Some correlations can be made between older visitor use (reported in visitor days) and NVUM visits, although many aspects of the older and newer data are not directly comparable. A complete copy of the FY01 NVUM report is available for review; the 2006 report will be finished in the fall of 2006.

The PSICC has one of the heaviest recreation workloads in Region 2. Much of that can be attributed to its location near the Denver-Colorado Springs-Pueblo metropolitan areas, and I-70 corridor are some of the fastest growing population centers in the U.S. Visitor use on the Forest for FY01 is estimated at 4.0 million visits, placing the PSICC in the top 10 recreation forests in the nation. The top ten include the Mt. Hood near Portland, Oregon; Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie near Seattle; Wasatch-Cache near Salt Lake City; the Cleveland near San Diego; and the Angeles and San Bernardino near Los Angeles. 20 shows combinations of visitor uses categories derived from 1996 data.

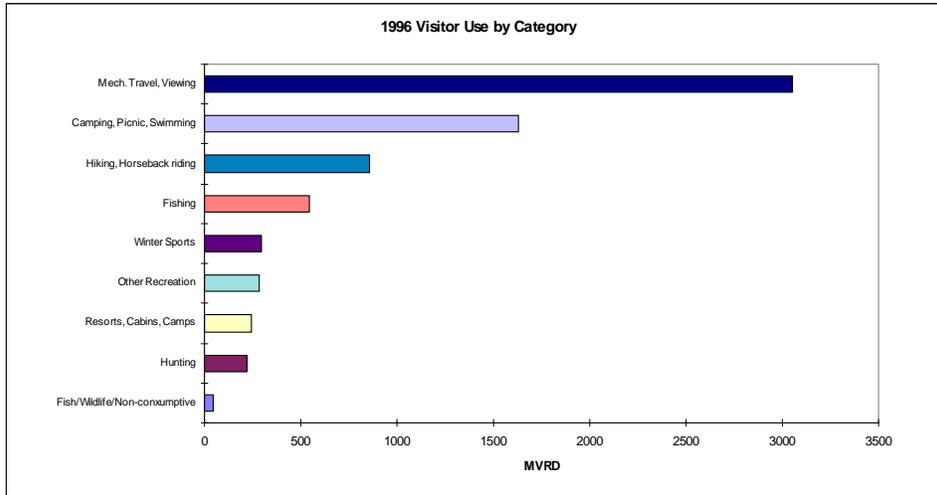


Figure 20. PSICC visitor use by category, 1996

Table 6 lists activity types and the percent participation compiled from the FY01 NVUM report. From the FY01 data, the top five recreation activities were; viewing natural features, relaxing, viewing wildlife, driving for pleasure, and hiking/walking. It is interesting to note that viewing natural features, driving for pleasure, and hiking and walking (mechanized travel, viewing, and hiking) still rank as the highest among those activities offered to forest visitors. The FY01 report also shows increased participation in the activities of wildlife viewing, nature study, and gathering natural products (Fish/Wildlife/Non-consumptive visitor use).

Table 6. PSICC activity participation by primary activity (from FY01 NVUM report)

Activity	Percent particip.	Activity	Percent particip.
Camping in developed sites (family or group)	8.6	Off-highway vehicle travel (4-wheelers, dirt bikes, etc.)	18.0
Primitive camping	4.8	Driving for pleasure on roads	46.1
Backpacking, camping in unroaded areas	2.6	Snowmobile travel	0
Resorts, cabins & other accommodations on FS managed lands (private or FS run)	10.1	Motorized water travel (boats, ski sleds, etc.)	0.2
Picnicking and family day gatherings in developed sites (family or group)	16.9	Other motorized land/air activities (plane, other)	0.7
Viewing wildlife, birds, fish, etc., on NFS lands	58.1	Hiking or walking	43.9

Activity	Percent particip.	Activity	Percent particip.
Viewing natural features such as scenery, flowers, etc., on NFS lands	69.6	Horseback riding	1.6
Visiting historic and prehistoric sites/area	9.3	Bicycling, including mountain bikes	3.1
Visiting a nature center, nature trail or visitor information services	16.1	Non-motorized water travel (canoe, raft, etc.)	1.4
Nature study	5.3	Downhill skiing or snowboarding	5.4
General/other – relaxing, hanging out, escaping noise and heat, etc.	57.2	Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing	0.9
Fishing – all types	11.1	Other non-motorized activities (swimming, games and sports)	9.7
Hunting – all types	2.4	Gathering mushrooms, berries, firewood, or other natural products	4.3

4.1.1. Developed recreation

Many recreation visits occur at developed facilities, particularly campgrounds, and day use areas (see Figure 21). These facilities are for the Forest Service by concessionaires. The PSICC has used concessionaires since 1993. Two different companies manage over 100 fee sites on our six mountain Districts. In 2005 they generated \$1.16 million in revenue. This resulted in fees to the government of approximately \$75,000 to be used on deferred maintenance projects. These permits will be advertised and re-issued in 2008. An increase in developed site capacity beginning in FY97 (see Figure 21) is due primarily to the addition of developed trailhead parking areas. A small amount of capacity was lost during 2002 because of safety-related site closures (some fire-related), dredging a lake, and construction (approximately 60,000 reduction). Annually there are small closures as a result of construction projects in our developed facilities.

The PSICC also offers four cabins for overnight rental. These cabins are available through the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. One cabin is available year-round while the other three are available from May through November. This program generates about \$22,000 revenue annually which is used to make additional cabins available. In 2007, two additional sites will be available for use, Crescent Mining Camp and Dawson Cabin. Each of these sites provides visitors with a unique experience and a glimpse to the past.

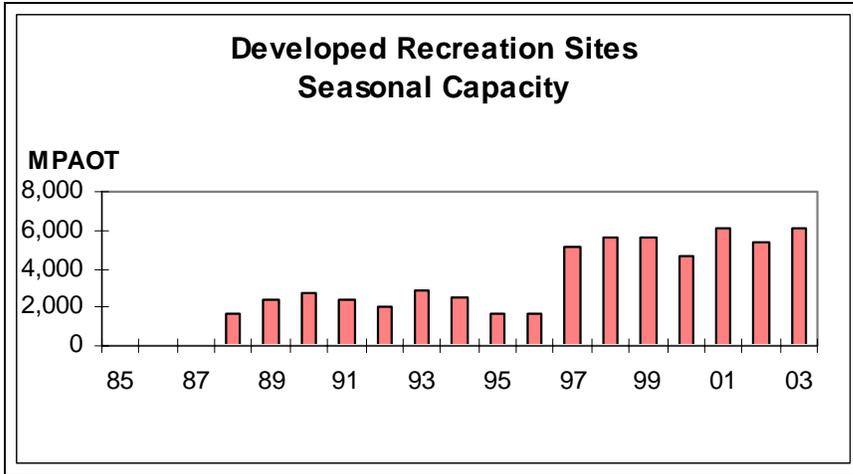


Figure 21. Developed recreation sites’ seasonal capacity

The 2001 NVUM report polled recreation visitors about the types of constructed facilities and special designated areas they used during their visits. This data is listed in Table 7. The five most-used types of facilities and were: roads, non-motorized trails, scenic byways, picnic areas, and Wilderness.

Table 7. Percentage use of facilities and specially designated areas on PSICC (from FY01 NVUM report)

Facility/Area Type	Percent indicating use (FS visits)	Facility/Area Type	Percent indicating use (FS visits)
Boat launch	0.5	Interpretive site	3.7
Designated off-road vehicle area	7.2	Lodges/resorts on NFS land	2.1
Designated snow play area	0.7	Motorized developed trails	2.9
Designated snowmobile area	0.7	Nordic ski area	0.7
Designated wilderness	8.4	Organization camp	1.2
Developed campground	5.7	Other forest roads	24.0
Developed fishing site/dock	2.6	Picnic area	11.3
Downhill ski area	5.4	Recreation residences	1.1
Fire lookouts/cabins Forest Service-owned	0.0	Scenic byway	19.6
Forest Service office or other info site	1.2	Swimming area	0.6
Hiking, biking or horseback trails	23.7	Visitor center, museum	3.2

Recreation Facilities Backlog

The PSICC has a strong recreation component in its overall program. It is also urban in character because more than four million people live within commuting distance. This Forest is most heavily used on weekends as a result of our proximity to the Front Range population. Many of the developed campgrounds, which were built in the 1960s, are deteriorating. Operation and maintenance dollars have not kept pace with this deterioration, creating an increasing backlog of needed work. The agency has a target of reducing backlog maintenance by 25% per year for the next four years.

In 2007 the PSICC will conduct a Recreation Facility Masterplan. This report will provide direction on closing economically marginal facilities and investing in others. This will also help address the maintenance backlog

Repair and maintenance of the existing infrastructure will be the focus of our capital improvement funds, in lieu of building entirely new facilities. Health, safety and sanitation projects will take priority. Increasingly stringent Colorado state water quality requirements will require an emphasis on upgrading and improving water systems.

4.1.2. Winter sports

In general, downhill skiing use has leveled off nationwide. Use on the PSICC parallels that trend in spite of the front-range population increases and pressure. In 2005 we had 231,000 skier visits. Figure 22 shows that capacity exceeds demand.

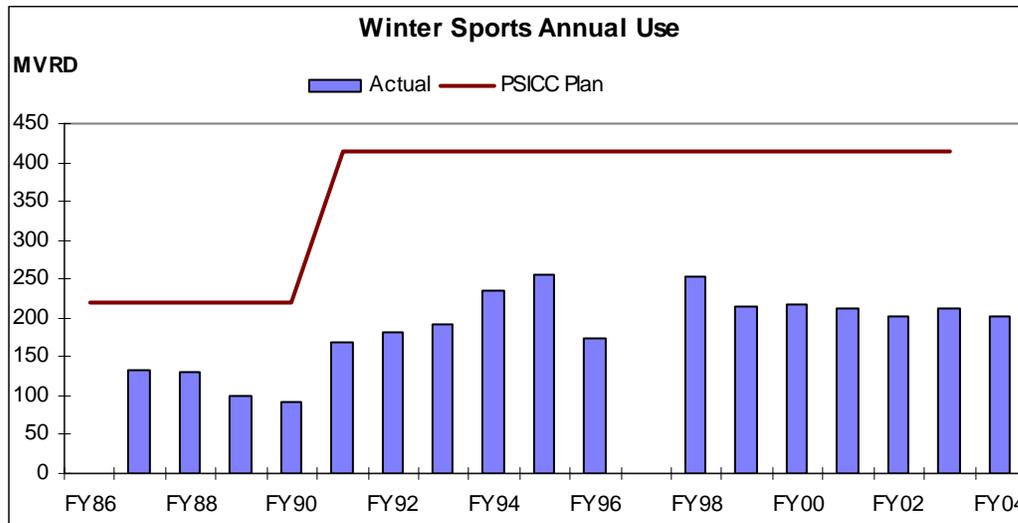


Figure 22. Winter sports annual use on the PSICC

The PSICC has two operating ski areas: Ski Cooper and Monarch Ski and Snowboard. One other area on the San Isabel National Forest, the Cuchara Valley Resort, remains closed.

4.1.4. General Forest Areas: Dispersed recreation

Includes all activities that occur outside of developed facilities. Because of its proximity to the Denver-Colorado Springs-Pueblo metropolitan areas, the PSICC receives a large amount of dispersed recreation use.

Dispersed recreation constitutes the largest share of total recreation use. In recent years, visitor levels have exceeded projections made in the current Plan. The FY01 NVUM report lists many activities that fall into the Dispersed Recreation Use category (refer to Table 7). As mentioned in the introduction to the Recreation section, the top five recreation activities were viewing natural features, relaxing, viewing wildlife, driving for pleasure, and hiking/walking – all of which are considered Dispersed Recreation.

Immediately following Plan approval, the PSICC recognized the importance of implementing the travel management direction in the Plan. In the fall of 2005 the Chief of the Forest Service initiated a new Travel Management Rule, in effect eliminating all off road and trail motorized use. This new rule will be fully implemented by October 2009. The intent of the rule is to mitigate current and future natural resource damage associated with motorized use.

4.1.5. Wilderness recommendations

The PSICC has nine Wilderness areas, which together total 449,000 acres. Several of these areas cross Forest boundaries; the PSICC is the lead manager for three of those. In 2004 the Forest Service identified 10 management actions that would be completed for each Wilderness in the system, over a 10-year period. The PSICC completed Wilderness Education Plans for three areas in 2004 and in 2005 began concentrating on developing management plans for fire and invasive plants.

Lost Creek	Buffalo Peaks	Collegiate Peaks
Sangre de Cristo	Greenhorn	Spanish Peaks
Mount Evans	Holy Cross	Mount Massive

A new Wilderness, Brown's Canyon could be designated as early as this fall. This 20,000 acre Wilderness along the east side of the Arkansas River on the Salida Ranger District includes 12,100 acres of the PSICC.

Routes for climbing peaks over 14,000 feet have become particularly popular and heavily used. The FY01 NVUM report estimated wilderness use at 67,000 visits, with an average stay of 1.6 days per visit (based on a 25.2 hour average length of stay) or approximately 134,000 RVDs.

4.1.7. Interpretation, protections, public outreach, accomplishments

Cultural Resources Compliance Surveys and Inventories and Recorded Sites

Inventories are conducted in areas where ground-disturbing projects are planned; discovered sites are recorded and evaluated. In recent years, major inventories (in terms of total acres surveyed) have occurred on grazing allotments (primarily on the San Isabel National Forest) in support of allotment management planning, and for proposed large fuels reduction and vegetation management projects. To support the Front Range Fuels Reduction Strategy, inventories have focused on the Rampart Range and the tributary drainages of the South Fork of the South Platte River north and west of Cheeseman Reservoir; these areas are southwest of the Denver metropolitan area. In 2005 landscape level inventories were completed or continued in the Buffalo Peaks area south of Fairplay in the Pike National Forest and in the Trout Creek Pass vicinity, San Isabel National Forests. Also in 2005 cultural resource surveys were continued in the burned area of the Hayman Wildfire. Non-project related surveys have continued in areas thought to contain high densities of heritage resources. These multi-year efforts include Picket Wire Canyonlands (a special Management Area with an extremely high density of archaeological sites), the canyons north of the Cimarron River in extreme southeast Colorado, Guanella Pass, and the west fringe of South Park. In FY03 through FY05, the PSICC exceeded compliance inventory targets due to the continuation of large-scale assessments related to National Fire Plan projects.

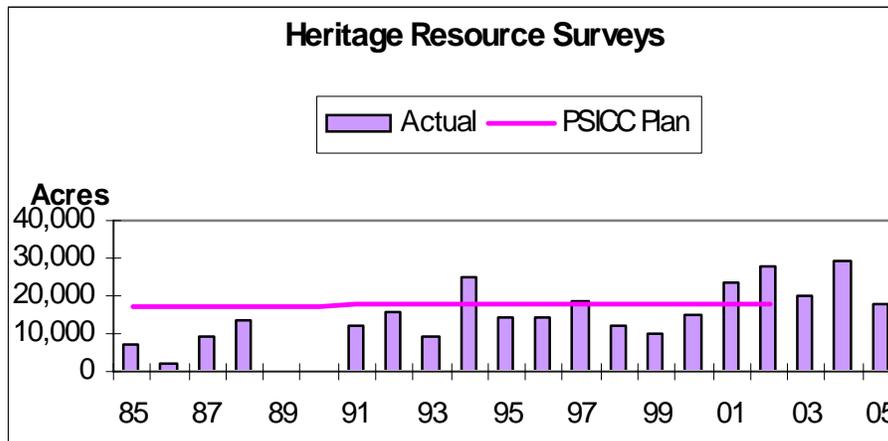


Figure 23. Heritage resource surveys through 2005

4.1.7.1. Interpretation, Protection, Public Outreach and Accomplishments

This part of the program consists of interpreting non-vulnerable heritage sites for the public, protecting important historic resources against natural deterioration and vandalism, and offering public opportunities to participate in heritage resource management.

Interpretive efforts on the Grasslands have focused on the Santa Fe Trail and the Picket Wire Canyonlands. For the Forests, the focus has been on historic mining regions, railroad and homestead sites, primarily in the Chalk Creek and Twin Lakes areas, and on historic recreation developments in the Squirrel Creek area west of Pueblo. Also, a program to develop interpretive media at historic rental cabins (a RecFeeDemo project) was continued.

Protection efforts in FY05 involved areas with known high densities of prehistoric sites including Picket Wire Canyonlands, Pony Park, and the Arkansas Hills. A total of 148 cultural properties were inspected to assess changing conditions. Major historic property repair and restoration projects in 2005 included Rourke Ranch in the Picket Wire Canyonlands, the Crescent Mine Camp, the Interlaken Resort and the Squirrel Creek Campground in the San Isabel National Forest, and the Derby Cabin in the Pike National Forest.

Public outreach included seven Passport In Time (PIT) projects including paleontological excavations and archaeological site survey in the Picket Wire Canyonlands and Little Black Mesa area on the Grasslands, restoration and repair at the Interlaken Resort, Vicksburg Cemetery and Squirrel Creek Campground, San Isabel National Forest and site surveys at Guanella Pass and Salt Creek, Pike National Forest. PIT projects are designed to use volunteers to accomplish work that the PSICC could not do using appropriated funds.

Accomplishments in resources interpreted and protected, and in public outreach opportunities were stable compared to FY04. Work continued in 2005 on the advancement of the PSICC historic rental cabin project (a RecFeeDemo initiative). In preparation for rental, one historic cabin was evaluated for necessary repairs, two cabins were restored for rental, and interpretive media were developed for five cabins. A major restoration project was initiated at the Interlaken Resort, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. To begin the project, several volunteer groups supervised by professional restoration specialists, refurbished the Dexter Cabin the former home of the Resort's owner.

Table 8. Heritage resources accomplishments, 1994 – 2005

Heritage Activity	Fiscal Year											
	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05
Heritage sites interpreted	10	18	10	16	40	12	24	14	9	10	10	12
Public participation projects	0	12	0	6	9	8	7	7	6	7	8	8

Heritage Activity	Fiscal Year											
	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05
Number of properties (cumulative)	1,276	2,158	2,343	2,741	2,823	3,056	3,406	3,766	4,022	4,284	4,629	5,077
Heritage sites preserved & protected	10	0	45	50	69	156	174	152	144	148	144	148
Heritage sites evaluated	28	475	173	150	240	265	437	360	345	294	376	348
Resource facilitation projects	121	92	67	113	155	158	142	137	142	169	187	215
Inventory/acres surveyed	25,285	14,000	14,600	18,460	12,491	10,246	14,700	23,435	28,000	19,879	28,966	17,631

4.2. Scenic Resources

Scenic quality is being maintained. Activities with the potential to adversely affect the scenic integrity have been carefully designed to minimize those affects. The new Scenery Management System (SMS) will be implemented following the completion of each of the Plan revision efforts for the PSICC. For more information about the revision, see the Web site at http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/psicc/projects/forest_revision/index.shtml.

Direction in the Built Environment Image Guide² (BEIG) is followed to ensure that new buildings, signs, or other human-made features compliment the natural and cultural settings.

4.3. Travel Management

Travel management is a persistent and growing topic of concern for the PSICC. Increasing population pressures and increased sales and use of off-highway vehicles are resulting in greater resource impacts and potential for conflict. Unmanaged recreation has been identified as one of the four major threats to long-term forest health, and off-highway vehicle use constitutes an important component of this threat.

Roads analyses have been conducted in several locations at the watershed and multiple-watershed scales, including the Hayman fire area. In addition, Forest-scale roads analysis was completed on the Grasslands in FY04 as part of the Plan revision effort.

² U.S.D.A., Forest Service. 2001. FS-710. The Built Environment Image Guide for the National Forests and Grasslands. Washington, D.C.

The PSICC continues to identify and correct errors and inaccuracies in its roads and trails data, which is becoming increasingly important for travel analysis and planning work. The release of the final travel management rule (36 CFR parts 212, 251,261, and 295) is further elevating the importance of travel management on a nationwide basis. Travel management planning and implementation will be closely tied to Forest Plan revision, given the direct relationship with, and impacts to, all major resource areas.

Figure 24 shows the total miles of roads identified as system roads that are authorized for public use. This use can vary from full use by the public with motor vehicles to administrative use only by the PSICC and designated permittees. Not included in the chart are Maintenance Level 1 (Intermittent Use) roads that are generally closed to all vehicle traffic for extended periods and which may be re-opened for specific resource needs. With continued shortfalls in maintenance funding, additional miles of road are being rendered unsuitable for use by passenger cars and moved into a high-clearance vehicle standard. This reflects a nationwide trend.

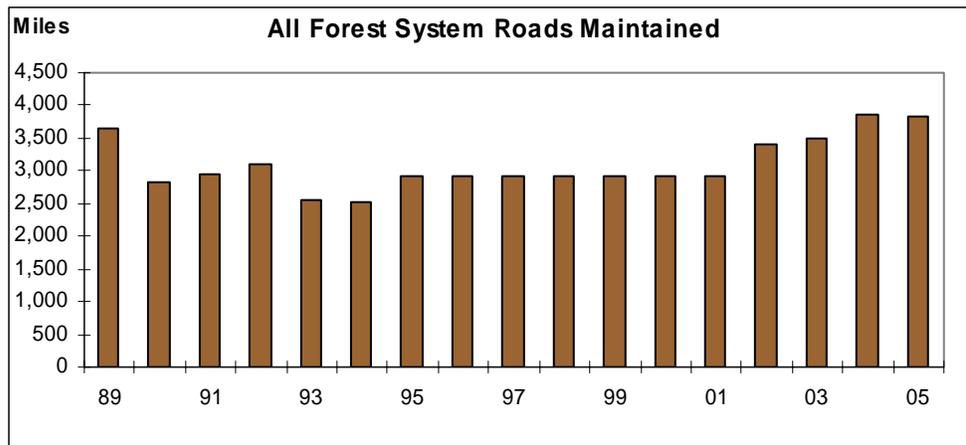


Figure 24. All maintained Forest System roads on the PSICC

The apparent increase in miles in FY02 is because temporary roads that serve oil and gas operations on the Grasslands were added to the system to better reflect actual conditions. Typically, temporary roads are obliterated after a specified short-term use (for example, after vegetation treatment is performed). Many of the oil and gas roads are longer-term, and they are largely available for, and passable to, the general public. Hence, their administrative classification was changed and these miles were added to the system. Additional changes are the result of ongoing corrections to the Forest/Grasslands transportation database, as opposed to changes in actual on-the-ground mileage.

5.0. Economic Components

5.1. Capital Investments

There is no updated information for this section.

5.2. Returns to the U.S.

There is no updated information for this section.

5.3. Payments to Counties

There is no updated information for this section.

5.4. Unit Costs and Efficiency

There is no updated information for this section.

6.0. Amendments to the Land and Resource Management Plan

Existing Amendments

Existing amendments to the Plan are shown in Table 9. For several years following approval of the Plan, it was believed that changes in the timber harvest schedule had to be reflected as amendments. When court decisions clarifying the purposes of Land and Resource Management Plans established that this practice was not required, amendments of this nature were discontinued.

Table 9. Summary of amendments to the Plan

Amend ment No.	Date Approved	Summary
1	09/23/85	Clarified intent of Plan implementation schedules (Appendices A, C & D) prepared as part of annual Forest Plan of Work. Rescinded by Amendment No. 9.
2	07/24/87	Corrected omission and indicated that bridge construction and reconstruction activities under Management Activity L16 – L18 (Local Road Construction and Reconstruction) are included.
3	07/24/87	<i>Revised boundary of the Comanche Lesser Prairie Chicken Habitat Zoological Area (designated a Colorado Natural Area February 13, 1987).</i>
4	7/24/87	Included in the Plan assessment of suitability and capability of Quail Mountain for proposed ski area development. Rescinded October 5, 1987.
5	07/24/87	Incorporated in the Plan, modified stipulations and supplements contained in FSM 2800 5/86 Supplement No. 25 for leases and permits issued on National Forest System lands.
6	07/24/87	Replaced fire management Standards and Guidelines with Regional fire management requirements that had been changed to provide greater flexibility to land managers.
7	07/24/87	Corrected a Plan map error to more accurately reflect Management Area Prescription application and changed acreage totals in the Management Area Summary Table.
8	07/24/87	Corrected information in the Plan – Appendix B; fuelwood products are not a part of the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ).

Amend ment No.	Date Approved	Summary
9	07/24/87	Rescinds Forest Plan Amendment No 1.
10	07/24/87	Assigned Management Area Prescription 1D (Provided for Utility Corridors) for certain lands within the Comanche and changed Management Area Summary Table III-3 to show a change in the acreage of four Management Areas.
11	08/20/87	Replaced Appendix A (Ten-year Timber Sale Schedule) and established a three-year schedule of planned vegetation treatment projects.
12	10/05/87	Replaced Appendix C (Ten-Year Road Construction and Reconstruction Schedule) and established a three-year schedule of planned road construction/reconstruction projects.
13	12/09/88	Recommended establishment of the 373-acre Hoosier Ridge Research Natural Area, South Park District.
14	12/09/88	Assigned Management Area Prescriptions 2B and 4B to 10,290 acres of the Cimarron River corridor on the Cimarron.
15	01/89	Amendment drafted but not finalized.
16	01/03/89	Established three-year Timber Sale and Road Construction/Reconstruction Schedules (revised appendices A & C). (FSM 1920, R2 Supplement No. 8, 03/86 and FSH 1909.12, R2 Supplement No. 1, 08/88).
17	01/03/89	Assigned Management Area Prescription 5B to Babcock Hole, San Isabel (San Carlos District); 9,021 acres.
18	01/03/89	Assigned Management Area Prescription 1D to Methodist Mountain, San Isabel (Salida District); 53 acres.
19	03/02/89	Assigned Management Area Prescription 5B (Emphasis on Big Game Winter Range) in the Dry Union Gulch area, San Isabel (Leadville District) – change from a 7D Management Area Prescription; 5,114 acres.
20	12/06/89	Replaced three-year Timber Sale and Road Construction/Reconstruction Schedules (revised Appendices A & C). (FSM 1920, R2 Supplement No. 8, 03/86 and FSH 1909.12, R2 Supplement No. 1, 08/88).

Amend ment No.	Date Approved	Summary
21	06/11/90	Established Scenic Highway of Legends as a Scenic Byway on the San Carlos District. Incorporated new management direction for Scenic Byways in the Plan.
22	10/04/90	Replaced three-year Timber Sale and Road. Construction/Reconstruction Schedules (revised Appendices A & C).
23	02/12/92	Oil & Gas Leasing – Incorporated decision made 02/92 to consent to oil and gas leasing. Reference Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD).
24	04/09/92	Added Picket Wire Canyonlands per PL 101-501. Also established management area direction.
25	09/21/94	Revised Plan map to establish a utility corridor for the Divide Power Line between Divide and Lake George.
26	03/00	Changes VQO within Ski Cooper permit area to Modification.
27	02/01	Establishes Stanley Canyon expansion to the Northfield Multi-User Communications Site.
28	08/01	Amends suitable timber base and certain standards and guidelines in the area of the Upper south Platte Watershed Protection and Restoration Project.
29	6/02	Amends the Forest Plan to establish the Dick's Peak Communication Site.
30	08/05	Amends the Forest Plan to establish an updated list of Management Indicator Species (MIS)
31	06/04	Amends the Forest Plan to establish a new management area along the South Platte River between Elevenmile Reservoir and Strontia Springs Reservoir, and along the North Fork of the South Platte River from below Bailey to the confluence with the South Platte River.

Identified Need for Changing the Plan through an Amendment or Plan Revision

There are currently two revisions to the 1984 Plan underway; one for the Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands (Grasslands); one for the Pike and San Isabel National Forests (Forests). Both Plans are being prepared under the 2005 Planning Rule. The draft (proposed) Grasslands Plan, although anticipated in September 2005, was released in December 2005. The final Grasslands Plan release is expected late in 2006. The pre-work phase for the revised Forests Plan was initiated in 2005. For more details about the revision, see the Web site at

http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/psicc/projects/forest_revision/index.shtml.

7.0 Summary Evaluation and Conclusions

There is no updated information for this section.

8.0. References

There is no updated information for this section.

The information in this annual monitoring report is based on the PSICC Management Attainment Reports, Final Budget Documents, INFRA (Infrastructure) database, SILVA (silviculture) reports, NVUM (recreation uses), Regional Revenue and 25% Payments to Counties reports, individual program accomplishment reports, and other miscellaneous documents. All referenced documents are available for review at the PSICC Supervisor's Office located at:

Pike & San Isabel National Forests
Cimarron & Comanche National Grasslands
2840 Kachina Drive
Pueblo, CO 81008

Additional copies of this report are available by writing to or visiting the address above, by calling 719-553-1400, or on the Web at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/psicc>.

9.0 List of Preparers

This monitoring report was prepared and reviewed by the following staff specialists on the PSICC.

Keith Anna	Budget and finance
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Brian Cox	Wildlife, fisheries, and rare plants, TES
Dave Crumley	Minerals
Misty DeSalvo	Water Rights
Deb Entwistle	Hydrology and air, soils
Al Kane	Heritage
Larry Klock	Range
Barb Masinton	Land management planning
Aaron Ortega	Fire and fuels
Gary Roper	Timber
Jerry Stevenson	Transportation
Neal Weierbach	Recreation, scenery, wilderness, visual resource management

Appendix A. Timber Harvest History, 1987 through 1998 (Cutting Method and Acres Harvested)

Cover Type & Cutting Method	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	Total Acres
Ponderosa Pine													
Selection	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intermediate cut, sanitation/salvage, commercial thin	170	92	243	243	364	1,312	1,459	1,105	27	0	448	89	2790
Clearcut	11	15	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	53
Preparatory cut (shelterwood)	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26
Seed cut (shelterwood)	83	251	378	428	0	80	113	0	0	0	0	26	1,359
Removal cut (shelterwood)	47	38	176	67	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	628
Aspen													
Clearcut	40	101	81	85	140	69	73	49	13	7	9	0	667
Sanitation/salvage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	9	0	0	37	51
Lodgepole Pine													
Clearcut	57	151	43	38	176	47	156	102	54	0	130	14	993
Seed cut	0	0	0	0	66	107	12	0	0	0	0	0	185
Removal cut	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	16	0	0	29
Commercial thin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	50
Sanitation/salvage	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	8
Engleman Spruce/Fir													
Clearcut	2	64	57	0	150	64	44	0	0	0	0	0	381
Preparatory cut (shelterwood)	0	255	0	54	30	0	27	0	108	0	0	0	474
Seed cut (shelterwood)	0	0	34	0	553	0	175	430	0	0	88	88	1,368
Removal cut (shelterwood)	0	7	0	0	82	0	72	0	0	0	0	23	184
Selection (uneven-aged mgmt)	0	286	164	150	27	152	0	0	0	41	65	7	892
Mixed Conifer (Douglas-fir)													
Intermediate cut, salvage, commercial thin	0	15	1,689	229	47	416	232	232	278	0	208	0	36
Clearcut	0	10	0	0	31	13	4	0	0	0	0	0	58
Preparatory cut (shelterwood)	0	386	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	386
Seed cut (shelterwood)	0	0	0	0	56	389	51	0	0	0	0	0	496
Removal cut (shelterwood)	0	0	59	79	261	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	399
Other Species													
Sanitation salvage, special cut, selection, x-mas trees	0	0	0	0	0	0	93	16	0	0	0	0	119
Total Acres Cut	410	1,697	2,951	1,373	1,983	2,649	2,532	1,939	539	64	948	284	12,076

Appendix A (cont'd). Timber Harvest History, 2000 through 2005 (Cutting Method and Acres Harvested)

Cover Type & Cutting Method	00	01	02	03	04	05	Total Acres
Ponderosa Pine							
Selection	0	0	337	80	0		417
Intermediate cut, sanitation/salvage, commercial thin	0	180	1,429	1,228	3,150	1,410	9,874
Clearcut	0	0	0	0	0		53
Preparatory cut (shelterwood)	0	0	0	0	0		26
Seed cut (shelterwood)	0	0	0	0	0		1,359
Removal cut (shelterwood)	0	0	83	0	0		711
Aspen							
Clearcut	0	0	0	0	0		667
Sanitation/salvage	0	0	21	10	0		82
Lodgepole Pine							
Clearcut	0	0	7	5	0		1,005
Seed cut	0	0	53	0	0		238
Removal cut	0	0	0	0	0		29
Commercial thin	0	0	5	55	0		110
Sanitation/salvage	0	0	220	15	0		243
Engleman Spruce/Fir							
Clearcut	0	0	36	0	0		417
Preparatory cut (shelterwood)	0	0	108	0	0		582
Seed cut (shelterwood)	0	0	0	0	0		1,368
Removal cut (shelterwood)	0	0	0	0	0		184
Selection (uneven-aged mgmt)	0	0	0	0	0		892
Mixed Conifer (Douglas-fir)							
Intermediate cut, salvage, commercial thin	0	0	59	0	0		3,695
Clearcut	0	0	0	0	0		58
Preparatory cut (shelterwood)	0	0	0	0	0		386
Seed cut (shelterwood)	0	0	0	0	0		496
Removal cut (shelterwood)	0	0	0	0	0		399
Other Species							
Sanitation salvage, special cut, selection, x-mas trees	0	10	0	0	0		119
Total Acres Cut	0	190	2,358	1,393	3,150	1,410	

Certification

The PSICC Land and Resource Management Plan, as currently written, is sufficient to guide implementation for the next year. There are several improvements that can be made to the Plan, but they are not required to meet the goals and objectives of the Plan.

Two revisions to the 1984 Plan are currently underway: one for the Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands (Grasslands) and one for the Pike and San Isabel National Forests (Forests). Both Plans are being prepared under the 2005 Planning Rule. The draft (proposed) Grasslands Plan was released in December 2005. The final Grasslands Plan release is expected in late 2006. The pre-work phase for the revised Forests Plan was initiated in 2005. For more details about the revision, see the Web site at http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/psicc/projects/forest_revision/index.shtml.

Robert J. Leaverton /s/
Robert J. Leaverton
Forest Supervisor

9/14/2006
Date