

**Nez Perce–Clearwater National Forests
Forest Plan Assessment**

11.0 Infrastructure

June 2014

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11.0 Infrastructure

Existing relevant information regarding management of infrastructure can be described under three main areas: transportation (roads and trails); facilities (buildings and support systems); recreation facilities (including special use authorizations).

11.1 TRANSPORTATION

11.1.1 Existing Information

The following laws, policies, databases, and documents provide transportation (roads and trails) information and management direction:

- National roads policy (36 CFR 212)
- Forest Service manuals 7700 and 7710
- Road inventories (Natural Resource Management System, Infrastructure Travel Routes [INFRA])
- Newsome Creek ecosystem assessment at the watershed scale (Forest Service 2002)
- Slate Creek ecosystem analysis at the watershed scale (Forest Service 2000)
- Subbasin planning unit assessments (see section 2.3)
- Steelhead biological assessment (see section 1.2)

11.1.1.1 Current Condition

Approximately 7,800 miles of National Forest System (NFS) roads exist on the Nez Perce–Clearwater National Forests (Forests) (Table 11-1). Efforts to maintain these roads follow established road management objectives and are described by Maintenance Levels 1–5. Maintenance Level 1 is custodial maintenance and corresponds to roadways not generally maintained for vehicle travel. Maintenance Level 2 is maintained for passage by high clearance vehicles; while Maintenance Levels 3 through 5 are maintained for passenger vehicles at increasing levels of comfort and speeds. Maintenance Level 5 roads are typically paved.

Table 11-1. Miles of road by assigned maintenance level

Maintenance Level	Nez Perce	Clearwater	Total
1	2,026	1,244	3,270
2	863	1,710	2,573
3	788	848	1,636
4	0	159	159
5	33	123	156

Since the 1990s, Approximately 1,000 miles of NFS roads have been decommissioned (600 miles on the Clearwater National Forest and 400 miles on the Nez Perce National Forest); these miles do not include a quantified amount of unauthorized roads and linear events, such as skid trails and firelines.

Several easements needed to gain access rights to NFS lands remain. Notable among these includes NFS Road 241 near Riggins, which provides primary access to lands between

Kessler Creek and Cow Creek drainages as well as the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area.

Several existing forest plan standards related to roads that are dated, ambiguous, or otherwise in need of deletion, updates, or revisions exist. New planning regulations emphasize improving the transportation system with clearly articulated “desired condition” statements and fewer Forest Plan standards.

11.1.1.2 Trends and Drivers

Since the mid-1990s construction of new National Forest System roads has been minimal. Virtually all of the road decommissioning occurred during this same time period. These changes were made because of decisions intended to address watershed concerns related to road system effects.

It is becoming increasingly common for current management projects to have limited access to lands that previously received road decommissioning. This trend will limit all management activities not generating enough revenue to reestablish road access.

11.1.2 Resource-Specific Information

11.1.2.1 Relevant External Transportation

National Forest System roads are tributary to the State and County road networks. State primary road systems include U.S. Highways 95 and 12 while state secondary road systems include Idaho State Highways 3, 6, 8, and 14. In addition, numerous county roads provide access to National Forest System lands. Where these routes cross proclaimed National Forest System lands, they are managed in accordance with established easements.

11.1.2.2 Minimum Road System

The National Travel Management Rule (issued 2005) identifies the need for a minimum road system. This requirement is codified in the Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 212.5). It states, “The minimum road system is the road system determined to be needed to meet resource and other management objectives adopted in the relevant land and resource management plan (36 CFR part 219), to meet applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, to reflect long-term funding expectations, to ensure that the identified system minimizes adverse environmental impacts associated with road construction, reconstruction, decommissioning, and maintenance.”

Much of the analysis required to identify the minimum road system has been accomplished through a series of plans, assessments, and analyses as summarized.

A Forest-scale roads analysis was completed by the Clearwater National Forest in 2002 and by the Nez Perce National Forest in 2005. The following were principal results of these analyses:

- Road maintenance funding is not adequate to maintain and sign roads to standard.
- Road access may not be adequate for future management needs.
- Management of the Forest Service road system can impact cultural and traditional uses (e.g., plant gathering and access to traditional and cultural sites) and American Indian treaty rights.
- Some roads are causing adverse impacts.

- Existing roads may be needed for future management activities not currently planned.

Subbasin planning assessments were conducted in the mid-1990s in response to Endangered Species Act listings of anadromous fisheries stocks. These assessments accomplished the following:

- Provided initial draft of roads that may be considered in excess to long-term transportation needs
- Identified some roads as important to providing “back country access”

Area transportation plans began development in the 1980s and continued through the 1990s. These plans provide a conceptual depiction of the road network necessary to access the identified land base for timber harvest. In general, these plans demonstrate that road densities ranging from 3 to 5 miles of road per section are necessary to access 50%–70% of the land base. This density reflects utilizing the full range of available harvest systems, including aerial systems.

Watershed analysis has also been conducted at the scale of the 5th hydrologic unit code (HUC) on various watersheds, including Newsome Creek and Slate Creek. Some of these assessments developed road management themes—one being the “ephemeral road system”. In this scenario, access would be developed to treat vegetation in accordance with disturbance regimes, and then a portion of that access would be removed following treatment.

Road densities of 1 to 3 miles per section, representing the main access routes, would be retained. Tertiary local roads would be removed through road decommissioning.

11.1.2.3 Transportation Sustainability

Forest-scale roads analysis documented that funding for road maintenance is a concern. An annual need of approximately \$6,100,000 was identified as being necessary to maintain Maintenance Level 3 through 5 roads along with major Maintenance Level 2 routes. Appropriated funding for road maintenance was approximately 20% or less at the time of this analysis. This level did not address maintenance needs for the remainder of the Maintenance Level 2 and Maintenance Level 1 roads. Appropriated road funds have since declined by 50% over the last 3 years, which will profoundly affect road access to National Forest System lands.

To date, no clear resolution has been reached to address the gap in funding road maintenance.

11.1.3 Information Needs

A need exists to collect and file all area transportation plans and Nez Perce–Clearwater National Forests road analyses.

11.2 FACILITIES—NON RECREATION

11.2.1 Existing Information

The following laws and documents provide facilities (buildings and support systems) information and management direction:

- Forest Service northern region historic structure assessment and historic preservation plan January 2009 (see section 13.0)
- Facilities energy and water conservation and utilities management (DR-5500-001)
- Energy Policy Act 2005

11.2.2 *Informing the Assessment*

11.2.2.1 *Current Condition*

The Forest Service manages more than 506 buildings—an infrastructure sized to serve a mid-1980s workforce of approximately 600 employees. While downsizing and restructuring have resulted in a workforce of approximately 260 Forest employees and 40 virtual employees (a 50% percent reduction in workforce), a comparable reduction in buildings or administrative sites has not occurred.

11.2.2.2 *Trends and Drivers*

Declining budgets and workforce require administrative infrastructure reductions as well; however, the building boom in the Forest Service during the 1960s means more buildings are potential Heritage Structures, making disposal more difficult. Along with the trend to reduce workforce, the need for remote site housing facilities is increasing as fewer people try to cover larger areas.

The Forest Service is also trying to reduce its carbon footprint by making buildings more efficient and sustainable. According to the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the federal government is to reduce utility and operations costs 2% annually, from 2006 to 2015. Any new buildings are to be designed to 30% below ASHRAE Standard or International Energy Conservation Code and/or LEED Silver standards.

11.2.3 *Resource-Specific Information*

11.2.3.1 *Relevant External Infrastructure*

Forest Service buildings and utilities are governed by International Building Codes, the Architectural Barriers Act (Accessibility), State water protection regulations, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and various energy regulations. In addition, State and local codes may be applicable to the operation of Forest Service buildings.

11.2.4 *Information Needs*

Information concerning the existing condition and historic status of Forest Service buildings is needed, especially for those building that became or will become 50 years old between 2009 and 2020. Existing facility master plans need to be updated to address desired future conditions and to determine maintenance objectives according to regional guidelines. INFRA needs to be updated and fire maps must match fire management plans. Finally, the Forest Service needs to develop carbon footprint data for its facilities.

A need also exists to collect and file the Forests facilities master plans, strategic facilities master plans, and regional strategic facility management plans.

11.3 FACILITIES—RECREATION

11.3.1 Existing Information

The following databases and documents provide recreation facilities (special use authorizations) information and management direction:

- Recreation sites inventory (INFRA)
- Dispersed site inventory
- National visitor use monitoring
- Recreation facilities analysis

11.3.2 Informing the Assessment

11.3.2.1 Current Condition

The Nez Perce–Clearwater National Forests have approximately 212 recreation facilities (Table 11-2). Approximately 90% of the developed recreation facilities on the Clearwater National Forest and 80% on the Nez Perce National Forest meet national standards. To meet these standards the Facility Condition Index (FCI) of a facility must be greater than 90%. FCI is the current value of the resource divided by the current deferred maintenance. Sites with improvements designed for user convenience are listed as development level 3–5.

Many minor recreation sites are identified as dispersed sites. These dispersed sites are generally improved for resource protection rather than user convenience. Many of these sites have been improved, but much of the maintenance identified has been deferred. These sites have a development level of 0–2.

Table 11-2. Number of recreation facilities by site type

TYPE	Clearwater National Forest		Nez Perce National Forest		Nez Perce–Clearwater Total Reservation System	Total
	Number of Facilities	Facilities with Fees	Number of Facilities	Facilities with Fees		
Campground	24	18	31	11	6	55
Camping Area (Level 2 Facility)	33	—	20	—	—	53
Group Campground	1	—	2	—	1	3
Visitor Centers	2	—	1	—	—	3
Picnic Day Use Site	6	—	6	—	1	12
Pavilion	2	—	1	—	2	3
Cabin/Lookout	12	8	4	3	12	16
Boat Launch	—	—	3	—	—	3
River Access/Boating Site	3	—	2	3 ^a	—	5
Trailheads	20	—	20	—	—	40
Interpretive Sites	6	—	6	—	—	12
Fishing Sites	1	—	2	—	—	3
Snow Park/ Snow Play	—	—	4	—	—	4
Total	110	26	102	17	22	212

^aFee at boating site is for floating permit on main Salmon River.

11.3.2.2 Trends and Drivers

The Forest Service receives annual funding to maintain recreation facilities. This funding has fluctuated over the years, but funding appears to be declining. In addition to a yearly allocation for facilities maintenance, the Forest Service competes for capital improvement funding to improve and/or develop recreation facilities.

11.3.2.3 Social and Economic Sustainability

Most visitors to the Forests enjoy some type of recreation facility. The majority of visitors come to camp, picnic, hike, or visit an interpretive facility. All of these activities involve the use of recreation infrastructure. Visitors who participate in these activities generally visit adjacent communities and, therefore, contribute to the economy in various ways.

11.3.3 Information Needs

- Final recreation facilities analysis
- Final National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) data
- Spatial data for developed and dispersed sites

Literature Cited

- USDA Forest Service. 2000. Slate Creek ecosystem analysis at the watershed scale. Grangeville, ID: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Nez Perce National Forest.
- USDA Forest Service. 2002. Newsome Creek ecosystem assessment at the watershed scale. Grangeville, ID: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Nez Perce National Forest.