Shoshone National Forest

Revision Topics
Need for Change

Prepared by the Shoshone National Forest plan revision team

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Revision Topics—Need for Change

Preface

The purpose of this report is to document the topics that will be addressed in the revision of the Shoshone National Forest's 1986 Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). This report will be shared with the public in October 2005 and may be adjusted based upon public input received at that time.

The forest plan revision process is based on need for change—we keep the things in the current Forest Plan that are working and change the things that are not working. This report is a follow-up to the *Need for Change Evaluation* (*Evaluation*) that was completed in September 2005. The *Evaluation* documents the evaluation of approximately 320 comments that we received from the public and Forest Service employees on what needed to be changed or addressed in the revised forest plan. The comments were placed in one of four categories that described how the comments would be addressed as the revised forest plan is developed.

The *Evaluation* was shared with the public at meetings in September and was available from the Forest's Web site. We asked the public to identify 1) which of the need for change items in the *Evaluation* should be revision topics and the focus of our public participation efforts and 2) additional revision topics that were not in the *Evaluation*. Additional public comment was requested in the Notice of Initiation to revise the Forest Plan, which was published in the Federal Register on September 20, 2005.

After considering the input, we selected a list of revision topics that will be targeted in our public participation processes during plan revision. The selection of a limited list of topics is necessary in order to be most efficient in completing the revision with the resources we have and within the time limits that exist.

Need for change items and issues not identified as revision topics will be updated in the revised forest plan. Existing Forest Plan direction for those items will be updated with the latest scientific information and with consideration of today's conditions. The public will have the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the updated direction.

Revision topics

In the *Evaluation*, these topics were identified as Preliminary Need for Change questions. Management direction for these topics will be addressed through forest plan revision, with new direction reflected in desired conditions, objectives, guidelines, designations for suitable uses, designations of special areas, or in the monitoring program.

The selection of these revision topics was based upon both the need for change in the existing Forest Plan and the strong public interest in the development of direction for these topics. These topics were the ones identified repeatedly in the public meetings held across the Forest, and were identified by the Government Cooperators' Work Group and by Forest Service employees. The topics have been adjusted based upon public comment, with several of the original topics combined into a single topic. There was strong public sentiment that similar items should be addressed and displayed together. Additionally, the questions to be answered have been expanded and refined in order to provide a better understanding of what each topic is about.

The six revision topics in this document represent ten questions from the *Evaluation*. The questions under each topic will be the key aspects to address as we develop plan direction.

Recreation uses and opportunities

In addition to recreation uses, this topic includes issues related to roaded access and special use permits for recreation activities.

- What types of recreation opportunities should be provided on the Forest and in what areas can those opportunities occur?
- What areas of the Forest should be accessible by a motorized road/trail system for recreation, resource access, and administrative use?

- What recreation opportunities can be provided under special use permits and in what areas can those permits operate? In areas where commercial uses are allowed, what allocation should there be between public and commercial uses?
- What mix of recreation activities should be provided on the same infrastructure? This question deals primarily with the mix of motorized and nonmotorized uses in the winter and summer, but also includes the mix of horse use and mountain bike use on the same trail system.
- Should the Forest continue the current policy of no net gain of roads?

Current regulations allow motorized travel on designated roads and trails only. That regulation is not being reconsidered in the revision process. Specific road/trail closures and road/trail development are decided at the ranger district level and will not be addressed through forest plan revision.

Special areas and designations

This topic includes issues related to roadless area management and new designations for wilderness, research natural areas, and special interest areas. This topic also addresses Wild and Scenic River eligibility.

- What types of activities should be acceptable in inventoried roadless areas? Different areas can have different mixes of uses. This includes consideration for management of the Dunoir Special Management Unit and the High Lakes Wilderness Study Area.
- What inventoried roadless areas, if any, should be recommended for wilderness designation?
- What areas, if any, should be recommended for research natural area designation?
- What areas, if any, should be recommended for special interest area designation?
- Which rivers on the Forest are eligible for recommendation as Wild and Scenic Rivers? No recommendations will be made as part of this forest plan revision, but eligible rivers will be managed to maintain their potential.

Vegetation management

This topic includes issues related to fire and fuels, timber products, forest health, rangelands, and wildlife habitat. There is some overlap between the wildlife habitat portion of vegetation management and the wildlife topic.

- What mix of timber products should be provided from suitable timber lands?
- What areas of the Forest should have timber harvest as an acceptable use?
- How should fire and fuels be managed in wilderness, backcountry areas, front county areas, and the wildland urban interface?
- How should vegetation be managed to address forest health and the impacts from insect infestations in wilderness, backcountry areas, front county areas, and the wildland urban interface?
- How should desired habitat types that are limited in distribution be managed on the Forest? This includes vegetation types like aspen, willow, whitebark pine, and fens.
- What are the desired conditions for major habitat types on the Forest? This includes vegetation types like spruce/fir, Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, limber pine, sagebrush, and grasslands. This also refers to conditions ranging from mature (late successional) to young (early successional).

Wildlife habitat management

This topic includes issues related to specific habitat needs of wildlife and what wildlife species should be highlighted in the plan. There is still some overlap between the wildlife habitat portion of this topic and the vegetation management topic. They are separated because of the unique considerations that need to be addressed when addressing some wildlife species.

- What management direction should apply to big game winter ranges for elk, deer, moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats?
- What management direction should apply to wildlife corridors, including migration routes and dispersal corridors?

- What management direction should apply for maintaining secure habitat for wildlife species? Secure habitat refers to areas were disturbances from human activities are limited. The concept is most often referenced in relationship to big game species, but it also applies to grizzly bears and other wildlife species.
- What wildlife species will require some management focus in the forest plan for social or economic reasons, e.g., elk, brown trout, and non-game birds? This question does not cover those species that will be identified in the plan based upon ecological considerations as defined in the planning handbook. There may be some overlap between the two groups.
- What management direction should apply for management of streams and lakes for native fish and aquatic life?

Questions are not included for the habitat management direction provided under the conservation agreements for grizzly bears and Canada lynx. There is little discretion in the application of that direction, so direction relative to habitat management for those species will be updated in the revised plan.

Minerals[1]

This topic includes issues related to oil and gas exploration and development as well as other mineral development. The basis for existing direction on this topic will be the Shoshone Oil and Gas Leasing Final Environmental Impact Statement (1992) and Record of Decision (1995).

- What areas of the Forest should have leasable, locatable, or salable minerals as an acceptable use?
- Where should the existing sets of stipulations be applied, where leasable minerals are an acceptable use[2]?

The modification of lease stipulations will not be addressed during revision. Stipulation categories from the Shoshone's Oil and Gas Leasing Final Environmental Impact Statement (1992) and Record of Decision (1995) will apply to the revised plan. The focus of the revision discussion will be on where activities can occur, using the current decision as a starting point for the discussion. If there are changes to where oil and gas activities can occur, the stipulations will be considered during a subsequent environmental analysis as required to change the availability decision.

Commercial livestock grazing

Two aspects of commercial livestock grazing will be addressed in the revised forest plan. The first—what areas of the Forest should be available for commercial livestock grazing—will be treated as a revision topic. The second—how grazing will be managed on areas where it is allowed—will be addressed as an update topic, that is, direction in the current Forest Plan will be updated, with public review of the updated direction.

- On what areas of the Forest should commercial livestock grazing, for the primary purpose of livestock production, be an acceptable use?
- On what areas of the Forest should livestock grazing be used for the primary purpose of vegetation and/or habitat management?

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[1]Locatable minerals are hard rock minerals, such as gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, etc. Leasable minerals include coal, oil and gas, phosphates, and geothermal resources. Salable minerals are common variety rocks, such as sand, stone, gravel, pumice, etc.

[2] Surface occupancy stipulations include 1) standard stipulations – operations are conducted to minimize adverse impacts to resources. Can include moving operations up to 200 meters or timing restrictions up to 60 days, 2) controlled surface use stipulations – operations may have to be moved up to ½ mile to protect resources, 3) timing limitations stipulations – operations are restricted during certain seasons longer than 60 days (used to protect wildlife ranges), and 4)no surface occupancy stipulations – no surface operations are allowed. Lease would require access through directional drilling from outside of the designated area.

Potential need for change items that are not included as revision topics

A few topics that were initially considered as revision topics have not been included in the topics list. This section discusses those topics and how they are being handled.

Invasive plants

There was a high degree of concern for the potential impacts of invasive plants, but only a moderate amount of concern that the topic requires public discussion to develop the management direction. In discussions with the public there was general acceptance that management direction updated in the revised plan. The biggest concern was that the item should not be overlooked. Based upon the similarity of the concerns and the potential solutions to those concerns, it is possible that updated plan direction can be developed without a high degree of public participation. In order to make the most efficient use of the time available, the planning team will use direction from the existing Forest Plan and update it with the latest scientific information and with consideration of today's conditions. This information will then be shared with the public to solicit feedback on ways to improve that direction.

Water quantity management

There was little public concern for this topic. Based on the limited concern and the information we have on the science involved with increasing water quantity, it is likely that a decision on this management direction can be made easily. The planning team will prepare documentation on the latest science involved with increasing water quantity from forested lands, and use that documentation to determine how existing Forest Plan direction will be updated. This information will then be shared with the public to solicit feedback on ways to improve that direction.

Highway corridor management

This issue is dropped from further consideration at this time. It received only a small amount of public concern. Existing management direction for scenery along highway corridors from the existing Forest Plan will be updated and included in the revised plan.

Potential revision topics that were identified by the public at the September meetings

A few other revision topics were identified by the public for consideration. Some items were addressed by only one person; those items are being addressed by updating existing Forest Plan direction. Three items were mentioned by a number of individuals and highlighted during the group exercises at the public meetings. This section describes how those items are being addressed.

How county and local land use plans are addressed in the revised plan

A number of people identified this and similar topics as potential revision topics. Similar ideas commonly referred to multiple use, federal and state statutes, or a particular local land use plan. Many felt that local land use plans should be incorporated into the revised forest plan.

To address this issue, the planning team, in cooperation with the local government cooperators, will identify direction from existing land use plans that applies to the selected revision topics. Any potential inconsistency between proposed plan direction and local land use plans will be identified. The responsible official and the local representative will attempt to address inconsistencies between the forest plan and the local land use plan. If the inconsistency cannot be addressed, the responsible official will document the decision, the rationale, and any steps taken to minimize the inconsistency. The Government Cooperators' Work Group will be a key group to identify and address the compatibility of the revised plan with local land use plans.

Increase emphasis on enforcement of regulations

This issue was most frequently identified in relationship to motorized recreation, but it was by no means tied to only that issue. As was documented in the *Evaluation*, the ability of the Forest Service to enforce regulations is most directly tied to funding levels and the number of employees—areas that forest plan direction has little direct control over. For this reason, enforcement of regulations was not included as a revision topic. The planning team will make a concerted effort to identify areas of plan direction where this concern can be addressed in whatever limited way.

Budget/fiscal responsibility

This area was identified in relation to the Forest's ability to implement forest plan direction. Forest plans have little direct control over the Forest's budget, so the budget was not included as a revision topic. The planning team will address this issue during the development of plan direction by adhering to the principal that plan direction should consider what is possible under the most likely future funding levels.

Updating existing Forest Plan direction

The six revision topics do not cover all of the direction that will be included in the revised forest plan. To address other direction, the planning team will update direction from the existing Forest Plan, using the latest scientific information and considering today's conditions. The public will have the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the updated direction. This update will include topics that were identified as update topics in the *Evaluation*, among others. The following is a list of the items from the *Evaluation*.

Activity mitigation	Air quality
Clarks Fork Wild River	Water quality
Watershed management	Heritage resources
Infrastructure management	Land exchange, acquisition, and disposal
Laws and regulations	Developing public access to National Forest System lands
Reclamation	Rangeland and livestock grazing management
Recreation residences	Riparian management
Scenery management	Wilderness management

Revision planning and process

As addressed in the *Evaluation*, a number of items will be addressed in other ways. Though not tied specifically to plan direction, they do relate to concerns that need to be considered during the development of plan direction and the final decision on that direction. These items relate to how we conduct the process and what we consider rather than to specific plan direction. Some of these are listed below.

- Consider impacts to the economies and culture of local communities
- Improve monitoring
- Use best science
- Cooperate with state and local governments and other national forests
- Decision considerations