

Chapter 2

Public Issues and Management Concerns

The scoping process identified the following public issues, management concerns, and resource opportunities, collectively called issues. The issues represent important reasons for considering change in current management direction, and are the basis for this Plan and the alternatives considered in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Chapter 1 and Appendix A of the EIS discuss the scoping process and facets of the issues. The resolution of issues by the Plan (the Preferred Alternative from the EIS) is summarized below.

Cultural Resources

What direction will be provided for the inventory, management, and interpretation of cultural resources?

Forest Standards and Guidelines provide minimum direction for the inventory, management, and interpretation of cultural resources. Significant and unevaluated sites are protected through project redesign and avoidance. Inventories are conducted on a project basis, and the Forest inventory is completed by 2050.

Interpretation consists of signing one site annually for two decades. Two sites per year are nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Fifty backlog sites are evaluated each year to determine NRHP significance.

Native American consultation continues on a project basis.

Diversity

How will management provide for diversity of plant and animal communities so that diversity is at least as great as that which presently exists?

Standards and Guidelines and management prescriptions ensure that diversity of plant and animal communities will be achieved by providing a threshold level of vegetation types and seral stages found within the Forest. These measures also ensure that viable populations of all fish, wildlife, and plant species will be maintained.

Energy

How will Forest management contribute to the federal policy of achieving national energy self-sufficiency?

Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines encourage development of new energy sources while stressing energy efficiency in all alternatives for facilities, vehicles, and equipment.

Facilities

How and where will the transportation and communication system be managed and maintained?

Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines require developing and managing transportation and communication systems to help meet other resource direction and objectives, and to protect against resource damage. The Plan specifies average road miles (36.5 miles) and trail mileage (9.7 miles) to be constructed and reconstructed annually. It also requires maintaining 3,167 miles of Forest roads.

Fire Management

How will fire be managed to protect and improve Forest resources?

Forest Standards and Guidelines give general direction on cost-effective fire suppression, prevention, detection, and fuel management, including prescribed burning. Direction for each management area includes fire suppression strategy, acceptable acres burned, and guidance on fuel loading and required fuel treatment.

Cost-effective fire suppression requires use of the closest forces which includes detection and suppression forces, incident management teams, and dispatch centers.

Firewood

How and where will firewood be managed?

Forest Standards and Guidelines provides direction for firewood management. The Plan anticipates a harvest of approximately 26,500 cords of firewood per year. Preference is given to personal use over commercial and industrial use.

Juniper is the preferred firewood species. Estimates of 10-year growth rates show that 18,760 cords of western juniper could be removed annually if all areas were accessible for harvest and cutters selected trees with diameters of six inches or greater.

Firewood supply also depends on the limbs and cull logs associated with timber harvesting. Approximately 26,500 cords of firewood is available due to timber harvest activity.

Lands

What will be the priorities for adjustments in land ownership to meet public demand and to support resource management goals and administrative needs?

Forest Standards and Guidelines give direction for landowner coordination: land adjustment, rights-of-way, withdrawals, special use permits (including small hydroelectric projects), utility developments for power-related activities, and unauthorized occupancies. A land adjustment plan lists specific opportunities for ownership adjustment. The intent of the land adjustment program is to consolidate ownerships, facilitate management, and minimize conflicts with adjacent land users.

Minerals

How will mineral areas be managed?

About 85% of the Forest is open to mineral exploration and development, except for the South Warner Wilderness, Devil's Garden Research Natural Area, Geologic Special Interest Areas, and certain administrative sites. Approximately 89,000 acres are closed to mineral exploration and development. Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines and management prescriptions restrict mineral exploration and development on an additional 158,000 acres to protect land

and resources from unacceptable environmental effects.

Pests

How will damage from forest pests be controlled?

Forest pests are identified in EIS Chapter 3. Forest Standards and Guidelines direct use of integrated pest management to reduce unacceptable pest impacts.

Under what conditions will pesticides be used?

Selection of specific methods are made at the project level, based on site-specific analysis of relative effectiveness, environmental effects, and costs.

Range

What will be the level of range use and development?

The Forest Plan estimates that the level of livestock grazing will be 118,800 AUMs annually for the 1st decade. A low level of nonstructural improvements (on about 150 acres per year) and a moderate level of structural improvements are made. Forest Standards and Guidelines and management prescriptions specify livestock management measures and protect other resources. Management area direction outlines management strategies for each allotment.

Recreation

What recreation opportunities will be provided?

Forest Standards and Guidelines and management prescriptions provide a variety of recreation opportunities. Management area direction outlines recreation instructions for specific units of land.

Developed Recreation – Existing opportunities are maintained and new opportunities are provided where demand is especially high. Interpretive services are expanded.

Dispersed Recreation – Existing OHV opportunities are maintained. Over 60% of the Forest is open to OHVs. The OHV Plan is updated after the Forest Plan is approved.

The trail system is improved and expanded. Approximately 9.7 miles of new trails are con-

structed or reconstructed annually in the 1st decade to provide a variety of opportunities. About 317,000 acres are managed for semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM) recreation experience, and 219,800 acres for semi-primitive motorized recreation experience.

Wilderness—No Wilderness additions are made; but many SPNM areas are managed to maintain those environments in semi-primitive condition for future generations. A portion of the South Warner Wilderness has a primitive emphasis. Management efforts disperse campers from popular sites to maintain uncrowded conditions. Trails are maintained, and challenging opportunities for hiking complement the area.

Socio-Economic

How will the effects of management be considered in relation to community stability?

The primary factors used to assess effects on community stability are changes in Forest policy that affect social groups' value systems or change local income and employment. Any significant change is considered an adverse impact on stability if major conflicts occur and local residents are unable to mutually resolve them. The Forest Plan strives to maintain community stability. Chapter 4 of the EIS gives the economic and social effects of each alternative, including the Preferred Alternative.

Timber

What amounts, methods, and locations of timber harvest and other silvicultural activities will be practiced?

Timber management objectives, management area direction, and the Ten-Year Timber Sale Plan (Appendix C) describe the amount, method, location, and timing of timber harvests. A total of 519,000 acres are suitable for timber production. Annual harvest averages 45.5 million board feet (MMBF), which includes 4.5 MMBF from the Visual Retention, Riparian, and <20 Cu. Ft. Lands Prescriptions. Even-aged management is the dominant silvicultural system, while uneven-aged management is emphasized on 17,000 acres. Reforestation averages 3,400 acres per year and timber stand improvement (precommercial thinning and re-

lease) is applied to an average of 5,400 acres per year. Lands allocated to even-aged management have rotation lengths from 70 to 150 years with an average of 100 years.

Of the total suitable land base, 27% is capable of producing less than 20 cubic feet of wood per year. Timber production from this land is nominal. Highway scenic areas represent 6% of the suitable land base and are managed on an equivalent of a 250-year rotation.

Forest Standards and Guidelines and management prescriptions provide direction for protecting soil and water, visual, wildlife, and other resources. Management prescriptions also describe the conditions for applying timber harvesting to specific areas.

Visual Resource

How will the visual resource be managed to protect the scenic quality of the Forest?

The Plan assigns visual quality objectives (VQOs) to the Forest, as mapped on the accompanying Adopted Visual Quality Objective Map, and requires that management activities meet them. Management prescriptions give guidelines for achieving each VQO. Specific acreage allocation of visual prescriptions are found in management area direction.

Major travel corridors, riparian areas, recreation sites, special scenic areas, and areas with wilderness characteristics are managed to meet the VQO of retention or partial retention. This means that management activities result in a natural-appearing landscape or remain visually subordinate. Opportunities to enhance visual quality are identified during project planning. During these activities, Standards and Guidelines apply.

Long-term effects of various activities are considered during the planning phase of those projects. Areas assigned to the Timber-Visuals prescription are planned for the entire rotation cycle so that timber and visual resource values can be considered.

In most cases, the visual quality of areas adversely impacted in the past recover naturally if they are undisturbed. Other areas (abandoned roads, borrow pits, etc.) require rehabilitation.

A Forest Visual Rehabilitation Plan is prepared after approval of the Forest Plan.

Water and Soil

How will watersheds be managed to maintain or enhance water quantity, water quality, and soil productivity?

Water quality improves by applying Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines and completing 260 acres per year of watershed improvements in the 1st decade. Improvements continue past the 1st decade to eventually restore degraded watersheds and riparian areas in 40 years. By then, 100% of the water runoff will meet State water quality objectives.

No significant changes in water quantity occur as the potential for increases through vegetative manipulation is minor. Available increases are assessed and optimized where appropriate use can be made, and environmental damage will not result.

Forest Standards and Guidelines prohibit irreversible loss of soil productivity and require restoration of degraded soil areas. Management area direction (Chapter 4) requires protective measures in specific problem areas. Forest Standards and Guidelines and management area direction also call for opportunities to enhance soil productivity and assess new opportunities.

Wetlands and Riparian Areas

What will be the management direction for wetland and riparian habitats?

The goal of this Plan is to develop all suitable wetlands as waterfowl nesting habitat by the end of the 2nd decade. This goal is dependent on funding levels. Livestock grazing continues in seasonal flooded wetlands, with nesting islands or areas protected by fencing. In permanent wetlands, livestock may be excluded when values can be gained for waterfowl or nongame wildlife.

All riparian areas are protected through Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines and the Riparian Prescription.

Wildlife and Fish

Where, what kind, and how much habitat will be provided for fish and wildlife species?

Population goals for fish and wildlife include meeting recovery targets for endangered species; increasing or maintaining deer and pronghorn populations at State Plan levels; improving waterfowl production on 4,400 acres of wetlands; increasing trout and bass production by 3,000 pounds; and, providing for viable populations of all species.

Deer and pronghorn forage needs are met by making forage available to meet Deer Herd and Pronghorn Plan goals. Browse and other forage requirements are maintained at acceptable levels during reforestation on 50% of the clearcut acres in the 1st decade. Habitat needs for all species are provided at the project and program levels through Standards and Guidelines and prescriptions.

A monitoring program is initiated which combines current Forest and CDFG surveys with new monitoring programs to better assess the status of fish and wildlife populations and habitat. Existing wildlife policy has been augmented during development of this Plan and is incorporated throughout these documents to insure compliance.

Direct fish habitat improvement occurs at the rate of 15 miles of streams and 100 acres of reservoirs and lakes per decade. Stream improvements are tied, where possible, to watershed improvement projects to achieve maximum benefits. Improvements are based on priority needs and cost effectiveness.

Snags are managed to meet a minimum of 1.5 snags per acre on all commercial forest lands. In eastside pine, where snag densities levels are lowest, snags are created as acres are treated to achieve minimum snag densities by the 7th decade.