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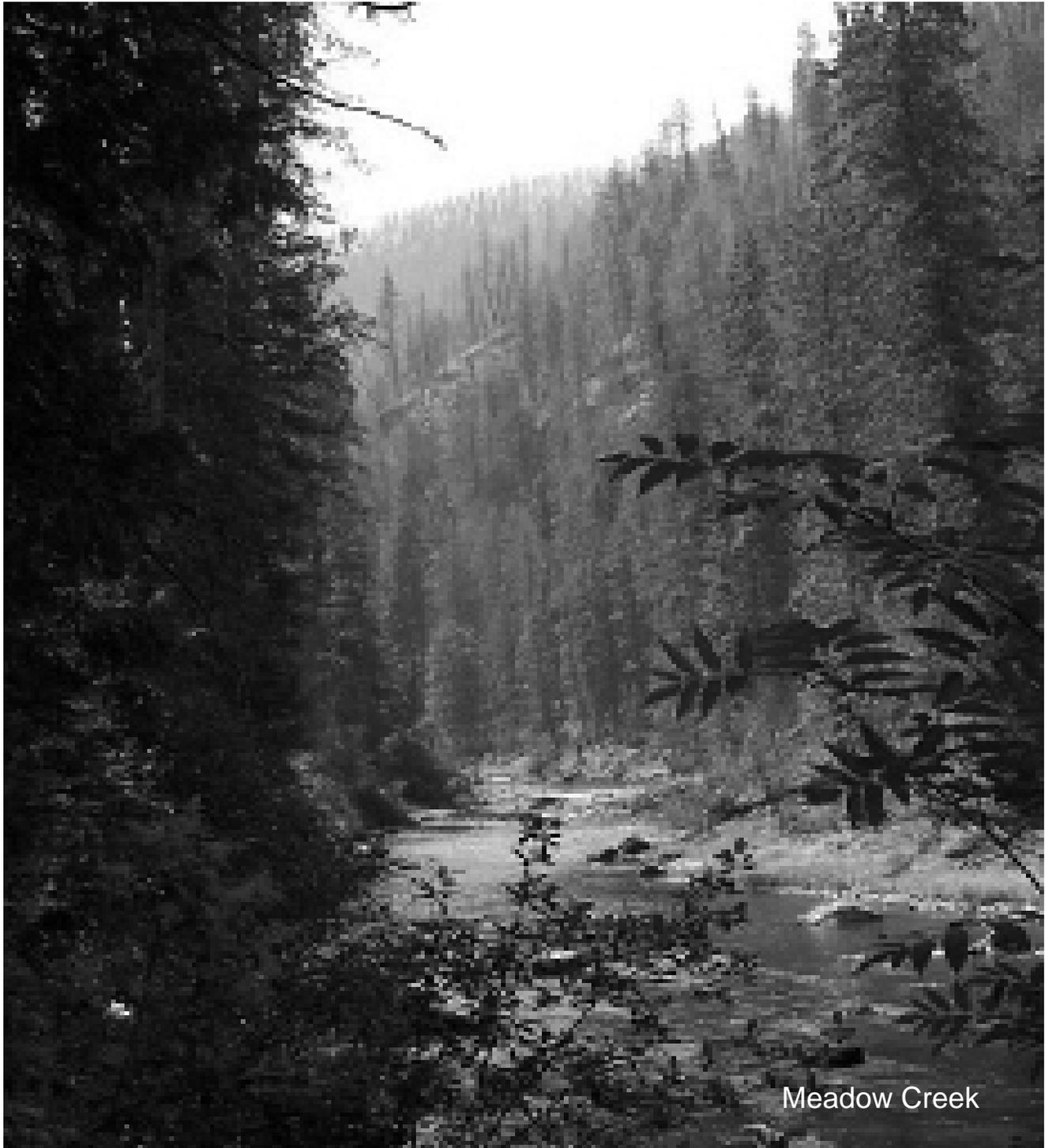
**Forest Service**



Northern Region

March 2007

# User's Guide for the **Nez Perce National Forest Land Management Plan**



Meadow Creek

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# USER'S GUIDE

## *Purpose of the User's Guide*

The Proposed Land Management Plan for the Nez Perce National Forest looks very different than the Forest Plan approved in 1987. To help readers understand the Proposed Plan and make substantive comments, this guide has been developed.

The guide has five main sections:

1. **Plan Overview** – This section describes the purpose and organization of the Proposed Land Management Plan. It also describes the documents that provide additional information regarding development of the Proposed Plan.
2. **National Strategic Goals** – While Forest Plans are developed to address local issues, they also fit into the larger national forest management picture. This section describes national priorities guiding the development of the Plan.
3. **Collaboration** – People have been instrumental in shaping planning documents. The section about collaboration describes how people have been involved.
4. **Preparing Comments Regarding Proposed Plans** – Since this process is different than traditional National Environmental Policy Act processes, individuals may wonder how to structure comments. This section provides suggestions designed to help you make an impact with your comments.
5. **Next Steps** – The process for revising forest plans has changed. This section outlines the steps that follow the release of this Proposed Land Management Plan.

The back page is an optional comment form that can be torn off and mailed or faxed to the revision team.

## *Plan Overview*

The purpose of this Land Management Plan is to provide overall strategic guidance for the sustainable management of the Nez Perce National Forest. This plan sets the overall context for informed decision-making by addressing the social, economic and ecological considerations of the Nez Perce National Forest.

This plan sets the stage for an “adaptive management” approach. Adaptive management is an ongoing process that involves project implementation followed by monitoring and evaluation. As new information is gleaned, new management approaches evolve. And so the process continues. This plan is a dynamic document that can be changed and improved as approaches to natural resources management evolve.

The format of this Proposed Plan is considerably different than the Plan approved in 1987. Detailed information regarding the Plan's content and organization can be found in the Introduction to Chapter 1 of the Nez Perce National Forest's Proposed Land Management Plan.

**Land management plans do not make project-level decisions, nor do they contain commitments to implement specific projects or actions. Those decisions are made after more detailed analysis and further public comment.**

## **Plan Structure**

The 2005 planning rule requires land management plans to include five components: (1) **desired conditions**, (2) **objectives**, (3) **guidelines**, (4) **suitability of areas** and (5) **special areas**. These components have been incorporated into a plan which is divided into three chapters: Vision, Strategy and Design Criteria.

### ***Chapter 1 - Vision***

Chapter 1 describes desired conditions for the Nez Perce National Forest. This “vision” will drive project-level planning processes.

### ***Chapter 2 - Strategy***

Chapter 2 describes how the Nez Perce National Forest intends to move toward or maintain desired conditions described in Chapter 1. It describes the objectives and suitable land uses that will contribute to achievement of desired conditions. Areas that possess unique or special characteristics are discussed; some are recommended for special designation.

### ***Chapter 3 – Design Criteria***

Design criteria provide information and guidance for subsequent projects. They include guidelines and some other sources of applicable guidance.

## **Plan Set of Documents**

Planning documentation will consist of more than the resulting Nez Perce National Forest Land Management Plan. By the conclusion of the forest plan revision process, the Forest will assemble a Plan Set of Documents that contains all information relevant to the planning process.

The Plan Set of Documents will include: (1) the Land Management Plan, including applicable maps; (2) evaluation reports, including documentation of public participation and collaboration; (3) the plan approval document; (4) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents; (5) the monitoring program; (6) documents related to the Environmental Management Systems established for the Forest; and (7) documentation about how science was taken into account throughout the planning process.

The revision team is currently assembling this documentation. Much of it is available from the revision website ([www.fs.fed.us/cnpz](http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz)) under the heading “Documents.” The entire package will not be completed until the Final Nez Perce National Forest Land Management Plan is released.

## Supporting Documentation

Some documentation has been developed to display selected analysis and evaluation procedures as well as the results. This information was used to develop the plan components that address the primary issues. They are a subset of the Plan Set of Documents that will ultimately be assembled.

The topics included in the Supporting Documentation are:

<a href="#">Economic Contribution</a>	<a href="#">Forest Vegetation</a>	<a href="#">Invasive Weeds</a>
<a href="#">Monitoring</a>	<a href="#">Outfitters/Guides</a>	<a href="#">Rare Plants</a>
<a href="#">Road Management</a>	<a href="#">Recreation – Motorized/Non-motorized</a>	<a href="#">Recommended Wilderness</a>
<a href="#">Scenery</a>	<a href="#">Social</a>	<a href="#">Sustainability</a>
<a href="#">Terrestrial Wildlife Habitat</a>	<a href="#">Timber Availability</a>	<a href="#">Tribal Treaty Rights</a>
<a href="#">Watersheds/ Aquatic Ecosystems</a>	<a href="#">Wild and Scenic Rivers</a>	<a href="#">Other Supporting Documents</a>

These documents are available to readers at the forest plan revision website ([www.fs.fed.us/cnpz](http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz)) under the headings “Documents,” “Supporting Documentation.” **If desired or expected supporting documentation cannot be located in this section, readers are encouraged to contact the forest plan revision team at (208)935-4286 to determine what additional information is available.**

## Comprehensive Evaluation Report

Comprehensive evaluations are required for plan revisions and plan development. The comprehensive evaluation discloses information about the forest’s social, economic, and ecological conditions and trends that contribute to sustainability.

The revision for the Nez Perce National Forest was initiated in 2003 in accordance with direction in 1982 forest planning regulations. The project transitioned to the 2005 planning regulations in May 2005. This change did not result in the project returning to the first step in the new planning regulations. Therefore, several documents developed under the 1982 regulations fulfill the comprehensive evaluations requirement. Social, economic and ecological conditions and trends are discussed in the Draft Analysis of Management Situation ([http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz/forest/documents/ams/040204\\_review\\_ams.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz/forest/documents/ams/040204_review_ams.pdf)), the 2004 Social Assessment ([http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz/forest/documents/social/Final\\_Clearwater4\\_20.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz/forest/documents/social/Final_Clearwater4_20.pdf)), the Forest Plan issues summary ([http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz/forest/documents/sup\\_docs/index\\_other\\_nez.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz/forest/documents/sup_docs/index_other_nez.shtml)) and watershed analysis and inventory and assessment documents ([http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz/forest/documents/sup\\_docs/index\\_water\\_nez.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz/forest/documents/sup_docs/index_water_nez.shtml)).

## National Strategic Goals

This Land Management Plan tiers to national goals and direction. Priority goals for the Forest Service are based on the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) and are explained in the Forest Service National Strategic Plan for 2004-2008 (<http://www.fs.fed.us/plan>). The priority goals embody the agency's many areas of responsibility, as captured in the agency's mission statement: "The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."

## National Agency Goals

1. Reduce the risk from catastrophic wildland fire.
2. Reduce the impacts from invasive species.
3. Provide outdoor recreation opportunities.
4. Help meet energy resource needs.
5. Improve watershed condition.
6. Complete other mission-related work.

Forest land management plans also identify the role each National Forest plays in attaining these national goals by developing forest-wide desired condition statements and forest-specific objectives.

## Four Threats to National Forests

At this time (2006), the Chief of the Forest Service has identified four primary nationwide areas of concern. The Proposed Plan supports the agency's goal to remove the "four threats" from the national landscape. This is necessary to achieve long-term outcomes: clean air, clean water, conserving wildlife and protecting communities from wildfire.

Actions needed to address the four threats include:

1. **Fire and Fuels** – Restore healthy, resilient ecosystems on lands at risk for catastrophic fire, improving the condition and function of critically important watersheds and sustaining critical wildlife habitat.
2. **Invasive Species** – Protect forest and rangeland ecosystems by preventing the release of non-native species and by controlling the spread of, or eradicating, invasive species.
3. **Loss of Open Space** – Conserve the nation's forests and rangelands most at risk due to subdivision and land conversion by working with partners, communities and landowners to balance development with sustaining ecosystem services and viable working landscapes.
4. **Unmanaged Recreation** – Work with partners to develop travel management plans that regulate the use of off-highway vehicles on designated roads, trails, and parks in an appropriate manner.

## ***Collaboration***

Collaboration – the ongoing process of working with people, agencies, organizations and governments – has provided valuable information and ideas that have shaped this Proposed Forest Plan.

Collaboration was initiated with 81 data collection sessions involving over 100 individuals from a variety of backgrounds. This information was the foundation for the Social Assessment prepared for the Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests. Forest representatives have also discussed the revision effort, issues and content at nearly 200 meetings with individuals, elected officials, agencies, organizations and governments.

A formal comment period regarding the Proposed Action occurred from October to December 2004. It yielded 11,018 responses. These responses are summarized in a 368-page Content Analysis Report that was used to develop the content of this Proposed Land Management Plan.

Nineteen issues generated from collaborative efforts are available in Supporting Documentation ([http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz/forest/documents/sup\\_docs/index\\_other.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz/forest/documents/sup_docs/index_other.shtml)).

## ***Preparing Comments Regarding Proposed Plans***

A public comment period will be initiated with the release of the Nez Perce National Forest's Proposed Land Management Plan. These comments will be used to refine the proposal into the Final Land Management Plan.

Thousands of people often comment on high-profile Forest Service projects, such as forest plan revision efforts, during formal public comment periods. Some of these comments are very helpful to decision-makers because they convey new information or creative ideas that hadn't been considered by the agency. When drafting comments, please consider the following suggestions:

1. Provide your name, address and (if possible) a telephone number.
2. Reference the document and section number to which the comment pertains.
3. Provide specific facts or ideas along with supporting reasons.
4. Submit comments by the close of the formal comment period.

Commenting on the Proposed Land Management Plan may seem very challenging because the Proposed Plan is very different than forest plans developed using the 1982 planning rule. To help readers make sense of guidance in this succinct, strategic Plan, some explanatory information is included (i.e. Introductions, Existing Condition, Performance History, Program Emphasis, Program Risks and Additional Sources of Design Criteria). This information is intended to provide context.

**You are encouraged to focus comments on the essence of the Plan, the five required plan components (desired conditions, objectives, suitability of areas, suitable uses, and guidelines) and monitoring<sup>1</sup>.** Please share any information and ideas you want considered along with supporting rationale.

The following questions may be helpful as you compose your ideas.

1. **Overall Reaction** - *What would you do to improve the Proposed Land Management Plan?*
2. **Desired Conditions** – *Has the Proposed Land Management Plan identified the appropriate desired conditions? If not, state which should be changed, how they should be changed and the rationale for your suggestion(s).*
3. **Objectives** – *Do objectives in the Proposed Land Management Plan contribute to attaining or maintaining desired conditions? If not, which objectives should be changed? How should they be changed? Why?*
4. **Suitability of Areas** – *Has the Forest identified appropriate suitable uses for the various areas? If not, which suitable uses should be changed? How? Where? Why?*
5. **Special Areas** – *Have the right areas been recommended for special designation? Is appropriate management proposed? What should be changed? Why?*
6. **Guidelines** – *Do guidelines provide technical guidance for project activity and decision-making? If not, what should be changed? Why?*
7. **Monitoring** – *Does the Forest pose appropriate monitoring questions? What monitoring do you think should be accomplished? Why?*

While all comments will be read, the ones with the best chance to influence decision-makers are those that focus directly on subject matter relating to content of the Proposed Land Management Plan.

**A single comment submitted multiple times (form letter) will not receive more consideration than a well-thought-out comment submitted once. The Forest is looking for quality, not quantity. This is not a voting process.**

Please note that all comments, names and addresses become part of the public record and, with the exception of proprietary documents and information, are subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

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<sup>1</sup> A draft Forest Plan Monitoring Program can be found at the revision website ([http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz/forest/documents/sup\\_docs/index\\_monitor.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz/forest/documents/sup_docs/index_monitor.shtml))

Comments must be postmarked no later than 90 days after publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register. Comments should be submitted to:

Proposed Land Management Plan  
Clearwater and Nez Perce Revision Team  
Rt. 2, Box 191  
Kamiah, ID 83536

Comments will also be accepted via facsimile (208-935-4275) or submitted through the website: [www.fs.fed.us/cnpz](http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz).

**An optional form designed to help reader's craft comments is attached at the end of this document. It is a separate page that can be detached, filled in and submitted to the revision team.**

## ***Next Steps***

### **Revised Land Management Plans**

After all public comments are read and considered, revision team specialists will use this information to refine and improve the Proposed Land Management Plan. The resulting Land Management Plan will be available for public review for 30 days prior to approval

### **Objection Process**

During the above-mentioned 30-day review period, individuals will also have an opportunity to file "objections" to the Plan. It is important to note that this is not a traditional "appeal" period; rather, it is a pre-decisional opportunity for individuals to voice concerns about the Land Management Plan. This provides an opportunity for the agency to further collaborate with individuals to work through concerns prior to actual Plan approval.

Only those individuals who provided comments regarding the Proposed Clearwater National Forest Proposed Land Management Plan during the formal 90-day comment period can object to the Plan.

### **Plan Approval**

After objections are resolved, the Forest Supervisor will document the decision on an issue in a Plan Approval Document. At this time, the formal process of revising the Nez Perce National Forest's Land Management Plan is complete.

## ***Optional Comment Form***

### ***Nez Perce National Forest***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Represented \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Telephone (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

**OVERALL REACTION – What would you do to improve the Proposed Plan?**

**DESIRED CONDITIONS – Has the Proposed Plan identified the appropriate desired conditions? If not, which should be changed? How should they be changed? Why?**

**OBJECTIVES – Do objectives in the Proposed Plan contribute to attaining or maintaining desired conditions? If not, which objectives should be changed? How should they be changed? Why?**

SUITABILITY OF AREAS – Has the Forest identified appropriate suitable uses for appropriate areas? If not, which suitable uses should be changed? How? Where? Why?

SPECIAL AREAS– Have the right areas been recommended for special designation? Is appropriate management proposed? What should be changed? Why?

GUIDELINES – Do guidelines provide technical guidance for project activity and decision-making? If not, what should be changed? Why?

MONITORING - Does the Forest pose the appropriate monitoring questions? What monitoring do you think should be accomplished? Why?

Comments must be postmarked no later than 90 days after publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register. Comments should be submitted to:

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Kamiah, ID 83536  
Fax: (208)935-4275  
Website: [www.fs.fed.us/cnpz](http://www.fs.fed.us/cnpz)