

NEZ PERCE NATIONAL FOREST
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
AMENDMENT NO. 33

SITE-SPECIFIC AMENDMENT TO SOIL QUALITY STANDARD #2
FOR THE RED PINES PROJECT AREA

The purpose of this amendment is to allow fuel hazard reduction activities in areas that currently exceed Forest Plan soil quality standard #2.

The Nez Perce National Forest soil quality standards (Forest Plan II-22) apply to lands in the Red Pines project area. Soil quality standard #2 currently reads as follows:

"A minimum of 80 percent of an activity area shall not be detrimentally compacted, displaced, or puddled upon completion of activities. This direction does not apply to permanent recreation facilities and other permanent facilities such as system roads".

The following amendment is proposed, specific to the Red Pines project area:

"Where detrimental soil conditions from past activities affect 15 percent or less of the activity area, a cumulative minimum of 85 percent of the activity area shall not be detrimentally compacted, displaced, or puddled upon completion of activities.

Where detrimental soil conditions from past activities affect more than 15 percent of the activity area, the cumulative detrimental soil disturbance from project implementation and past activities shall not exceed the conditions prior to the planned activity and shall provide a net improvement in soil quality."

ANALYSIS OF FACTORS - SOILS

Soil Standard #2 (NPFP, II-22) will be amended with a site specific Forest Plan Amendment for the Red Pines project area on the Red River Ranger District. The amendment will allow fuels reduction treatments and restoration activities to proceed in an area with extensive pre-existing detrimental soil conditions. The amendment takes into account the amount of detrimental soil disturbance, and allows the flexibility to achieve multiple resource objectives while showing an upward trend in net soil condition.

TIMING

The amended Soil Standard #2 will be effective until the Forest Plan is revised or amended. The Nez Perce National Forest is in the process of forest plan revision, with completion of the revision process planned for 2007. The temporal scope of the amendment is therefore limited.

LOCATION AND SIZE

The proposed Forest Plan amendment would affect implementation of activities only in the Red Pines project area. The project area encompasses approximately 103,000 acres, and is located in Townships 27, 28 and 29 North, Ranges 8, 9, and 10 East, Boise Meridian. The project area represents less than five percent of the total 2,274,146 acres of National Forest System land within the Nez Perce National Forest.

Proposed activities for Red Pines include soil restoration activities to achieve a net improvement within proposed fuel reduction units with past soil disturbance, as well as disturbed areas outside

proposed fuel reduction units. There are 10 to 11 units that have activity areas that exceed the 15 percent disturbance standard, but will show a net improvement following treatment (See FEIS, Section 3.4.6.2). The preferred Alternative E of the Red Pines project proposes to actively manage through fuels reduction roughly 3,454 acres, and soil restoration on roughly 547 acres within the Red River watershed. These 4,001 acres represent less than two percent of the total National Forest System land on the Nez Perce National Forest.

Table D-1: SOIL - Forest Plan Amendment by Alternative				
	Alt. B	Alt. C	Alt. D	Alt. E
Site specific - Soil Quality Standard 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Units that have activity areas that exceed the 15% disturbance standard, but will show a net improvement following treatment	11	11	10	10

GOAL, OBJECTIVES, AND OUTPUTS

The Forest Plan goal for soils is to maintain soil productivity and minimize any irreversible impacts to the soil resource. The Forest Plan objective for soils is to maintain soil productivity and minimize soil erosion through the application of best management practices, careful riparian area management, use of fishery/water quality drainage objectives, and soil and water resource improvement projects.

This amendment is fully consistent with the goals and objective of the Nez Perce Forest Plan because the amendment would: impose a standard to maintain soil productivity and allow activities to restore areas with considerable pre-existing detrimental soil disturbance. These activities will respond both directly and indirectly to the Forest Plan goal and objective for soils. The activities will not inhibit achievement of the Forest Plan goal/objective. This amendment will allow a net improvement in soil condition in the units treated with prior impacts.

This is a site-specific amendment of Forest Plan soil quality standard #2 for lands within the Red Pines project area. This site-specific amendment would allow the Red Pines project to proceed despite the fact that several proposed fuel reduction units currently exceed the 20% compacted, displaced or puddled standard for soils.

The recent extensive lodge pole pine mortality in the Red River watershed, resulting from a mountain pine beetle outbreak, initiated the need to remove dead and dying trees and reduce forest fuels in areas that have been previously managed. The soil analysis for the Red Pines project area found that many of the units harvested in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s with ground based systems, have compacted or displaced soils over more than 20% of the harvested area. Proposed activities for Red Pines include soil restoration activities to achieve a net improvement within proposed fuel reduction units with past soil disturbance, as well as disturbed areas outside proposed fuel reduction units. In order to enter these units under the Red Pines project to reduce hazardous fuels, an amendment to soil quality standard #2 is needed.

MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTION

Amendment of Forest Plan Soil Standard #2 is specific or applicable only to the Red Pines activity areas (any action alternative). This amendment does not apply to activities occurring outside the Red Pines activity areas. The proposed change would occur on less than two percent of the forest (4,001 acres, Alternative E), therefore there would be no measurable change to goods and services produced within the total forest planning unit (2,274,146 acres, Forest) prior to completion of the Forest Plan revision.

This direction does not apply to permanent recreation facilities and other permanent facilities such as system roads. This amendment would make the Forest Plan standard consistent with Regional soil quality guidelines.