

Prescott National Forest Plan Revision...

Greetings!

My name is Teresa Chase, and I am the new Forest Supervisor for the Prescott National Forest. Since arriving, I have heard many great things about the communities surrounding the Prescott National Forest.



I have also been impressed with the level of commitment and involvement between our partners. I can tell that many people care about what's happening on their national forest and want to be involved in its future.

I recognize that I came to Prescott following a summer of tragic loss and hardship for the area, and it has been a tough time for all those affected by last season's wildfires. I want to say that I am here to support our community's partners any way that I can.

I am excited to be here and serve in my new role, and I look forward to meeting and working with you.

Update on Plan Revision

As many of you know, we have spent the last few years actively engaged in the revision of our forest plan. It has been a while since you last heard from us on this topic, so I wanted to give you an update on the progress we have made this past year and what to expect next year.

In fall 2012, many of you reviewed and provided feedback on our proposed revised plan and accompanying environmental impact statement (EIS), which analyzed the effects of the plan and three other alternatives. In total, we received 116 correspondences from individuals, agencies, and organizations that included almost 800 substantive comments on various topics.

We thank all for taking the time to contribute to this important endeavor!

Since then, the forest has been busy behind the scenes with internal reviews, analysis, and fine tuning the plan and EIS. The forest leadership team has convened multiple times to review public comments and identify and finalize a preferred alternative. The plan revision team has been working on analyzing the effects of the preferred alternative, compiling responses to public comments, and consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the effects of the preferred alternative to threatened and endangered species.

This upcoming spring and summer, we anticipate completing the last steps in the plan revision process, including publishing the final plan and EIS, and beginning implementation soon thereafter. That said, our final completion date may be delayed somewhat if we have an active fire season and have to shift forest priorities temporarily.

As we look ahead to 2014, we are excited to be nearing the finish line and moving forward with implementing a land management plan that responds to current environmental and public needs.

I know getting to this point has taken a lot of work and dedication from all. Thank you again for being involved in the future of the Prescott National Forest.

~Teresa Chase

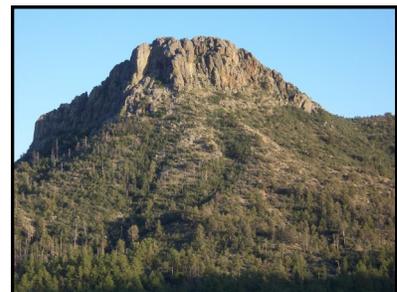


Photo: Thumb Butte



Overview of the Preferred Alternative...

Changes were made to the proposed revised plan (alternative B) based on major public concerns raised during the comment period and subsequent internal review. The end result was the formation of alternative E also called the "preferred alternative."



Major Public Concerns
<i>Wilderness Recommendation</i> - Most commented topic - see next page
<i>Forest Access</i> - Elimination of forest access where locked gates have been installed along some National Forest System roads that cross private property
<i>Target Ranges & Responsible Shooting</i> - Unsafe shooting behavior on the PNF needs to be addressed
<i>Watersheds</i> - Need for more watershed protections
<i>Species Viability</i> - Need for more protections for federally-listed and sensitive wildlife species and their habitat
<i>Soil Health</i> - Need for additional protection measures to improve the high proportion of impaired or unsatisfactory soil conditions within piñon-juniper vegetation types
<i>Livestock Grazing</i> - Proposed plan over-emphasizes livestock grazing
<i>Upper Verde River</i> - Need for more protections and special status than proposed for the upper Verde River

How the Preferred Alternative Addresses Public Concerns:

- ◆ Recommends 8 potential wilderness areas totaling 23,137 acres (approximately 50% less than recommendation in alternative B)
- ◆ Increases the number of wildlife water developments improved or constructed in Objective 28
- ◆ Adds an objective to secure legal access to areas where historic access to the PNF has been lost
- ◆ Adds an objective to pursue instream flow rights to enable the PNF to provide for channel and floodplain maintenance and recharge of riparian aquifers

Other Changes Based on PNF Review:

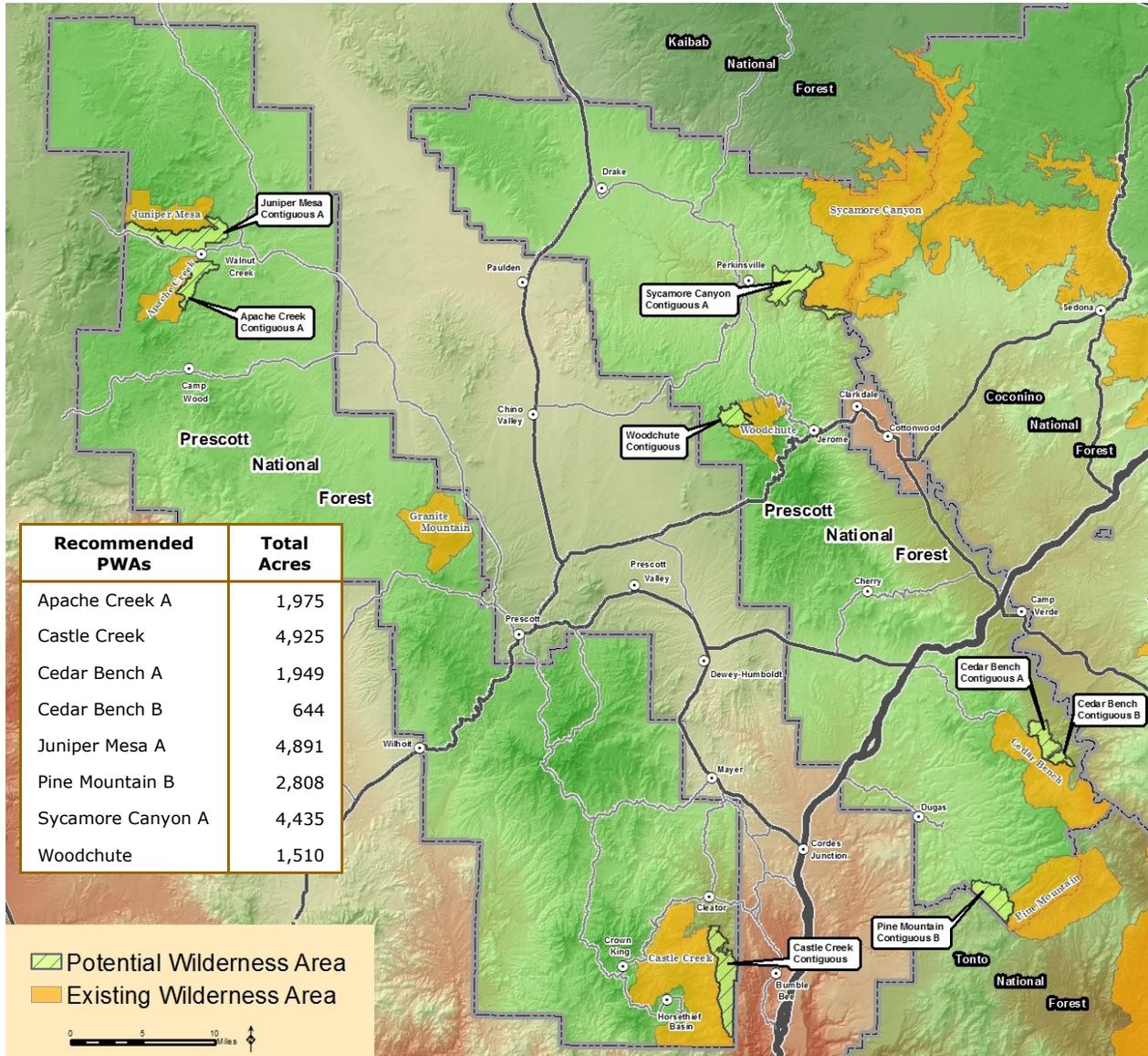
- ◆ Removed Objective 7 (construct 2-5 developed recreation areas) to respond to expected future program funding
- ◆ Reworded Objective 10 to emphasize implementing projects to raise awareness of responsible shooting rather than developing a specific shooting area
- ◆ Additional minor word changes to clarify the meaning of desired conditions, objectives, and standards and guidelines



Photos: (left) upper Verde River; (above) pronghorn antelope, Pine Mountain Wilderness, a PNF forest road, and Apache Creek.



Overview Continued...



Recommended Potential Wilderness Areas (PWAs) in the Preferred Alternative

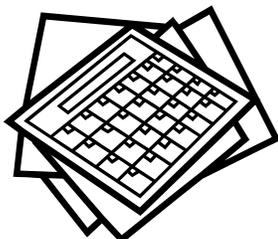
- ◆ The majority of comments received expressed a preference for or against an alternative based on the amount of recommended wilderness it contained.
- ◆ In response to comments, PNF leadership identified a new combination of 8 PWAs for the preferred alternative.
- ◆ All PWAs in the preferred alternative are extensions to existing wilderness. Also, no inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) are included.
- ◆ The 8 PWAs would recommend a total of 23,137 acres to the existing 104,483 acres of designated wilderness.



Looking Ahead to 2014...

The timeline

below outlines the steps in the plan revision process we have completed in the last year and what we expect to complete next year.



We anticipate 2014 to be a busy year, so stay tuned for further updates!

Steps completed in 2013

- ◆ Reviewed public comments and identified a preferred alternative
- ◆ Completed internal reviews at the local and regional levels to finalize the preferred alternative
- ◆ Compiled responses to public comments to be included in the final EIS
- ◆ Initiated consultation process with USFWS including the completion of a biological assessment

Spring 2014

- ◆ Complete 135-day formal consultation with USFWS
- ◆ Brief our regional and national headquarters offices
- ◆ Finalize modifications to the final revised plan and EIS

Summer/Fall 2014

- ◆ Publish the Record of Decision along with the final revised plan and EIS
- ◆ Distribute the published plan and EIS and post online
- ◆ 90-day appeal period begins with notification in the Daily Courier which is the newspaper of record
- ◆ Begin implementation of the land management plan!



Key Contacts

Mary C. Rasmussen

Forest Planner
(928) 443-8265
Email: mcrasmussen@fs.fed.us

Christopher J. Brown

Natural Resource Planner
(928) 443-8218
Email: christopherjbrown@fs.fed.us

Web site:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/prescott/home>



Photo: Winter scene on the Prescott National Forest

Visit our Web site for additional information on plan revision and to find out what else is happening on the Prescott National Forest.

