

Example Desired Conditions for Aquatic, Riparian, Meadow and Spring Resources

What this Document Is

These are example desired conditions like those that may be included in the National Forest (NF) Plan. Desired conditions (or goals) set forth the desired social, economic, and ecological goals of the NF. They attempt to paint a picture of what we (the public and the Forest Service) desire the forest to look like or the goods and services we desire it to provide. Desired conditions are generally expressed in broad, general terms; however, more specificity may be added to clarify the intent. Desired conditions are timeless in that there is no specific date by which they are to be completed. They may only be achievable over a long timeframe (e.g., several hundred years). In some cases, a desired condition matches the current condition, so the goal is to maintain the current condition. Desired conditions are the focus of this plan; management of the National Forest resources will be directed toward achieving the desired conditions. Desired conditions are the basis for the other plan components and describe the framework for future projects and activities. They are aspirations and not commitments or final decisions approving projects. Projects and site-specific activities must be consistent with desired conditions

Integrated Watershed, Aquatic, Riparian, Meadow and Springs

- A full range of desirable native and non-native species, development stages, habitats, and ecological processes occurs.
- Watersheds are functioning and resilient to natural and human disturbances.
- Watersheds have the following characteristics: a) they are resilient and recover rapidly from natural and human disturbances; b) they exhibit a high degree of connectivity along the stream, laterally across the floodplain and valley bottom, and vertically between surface and subsurface flows; c) they provide important ecosystem services such as high quality water, recharge of streams and aquifers, the maintenance of riparian communities, and moderation of climate variability and change; d) they maintain long-term soil productivity.
- Aquatic and riparian ecosystems are resilient to fire and climate change.
- Aquatic and riparian ecosystems are restored so that they provide for ecosystem functions (habitat, hydrologic and nutrient cycling processes) and are able to adjust and recover from natural and human-caused events.
- Native biotic communities dominate the landscape while invasive species are nonexistent or in low abundance and do not occur at levels that disrupt ecological functioning. Establishment of invasive aquatic species new to the NF is prevented. Existing invasive aquatic species are prioritized for eradication, containment, or control.
- Permanent and temporary road systems minimize stream crossings. Bridges and culverts allow for safe passage for aquatic organisms.

Meadows

- A complexity of meadow habitat types and successional patterns support native plant and animal communities. Meadow species composition is predominantly native, where graminoid species are

well represented and vigorous, and regeneration occurs naturally. Healthy stands of willow, alder, and aspen are present within and adjacent to meadows with suitable physical conditions for these species. Natural disturbances and management activities are sufficient to maintain desired vegetation structure, species diversity, and nutrient cycling.

- Fire (prescribed or natural) or fire surrogates (e.g. thinning) maintain and/or reclaim meadow landscapes from encroaching conifers, and increase the vigor and diversity of herbaceous meadow vegetation. Where necessary and possible, stream down-cutting and meadow soil loss is halted. Meadows continue to adequately carry out important hydrologic functions. Meadows with perennial and intermittent streams: a) dissipate stream energy from high flows and result in increases in infiltration rates, reducing erosion and improving water quality; b) filter sediment and capture bedload, with subsequent floodplain development; c) enhance floodwater retention and groundwater recharge through increased rates of infiltration; and d) support healthy root systems which stabilize streambanks against down-cutting action.

Springs

- Springs provide sufficient water to maintain healthy habitats for native riparian and aquatic species and meet the demands of legally held water rights and uses.
- Springs are resilient to natural disturbances and changing climate conditions and are functioning across the landscape within their type and capability. They are in proper functioning condition.
- The physical and biological components of springs provide habitat for a diverse community of riparian and aquatic species including cover, forage, available water, microclimate, and nesting/breeding habitat.

Beneficial Uses and Restoration

- Domestic livestock grazing management maintains the desired composition, structure, and conditions of plant communities. Forage, browse, and cover needs of wildlife and authorized livestock should be managed in balance with available forage. Areas that are grazed have satisfactory soils, functional hydrology, and biotic integrity.
- Grazing occurs at sustainable levels in suitable locations while protecting resources.
- Traditional ecological management strategies are considered in restoration projects.