

Forest-wide Objectives



Upper Provo Falls, Western Uinta Mountains

3. Forestwide Objectives

Objectives are defined as follows and are a component of forestwide management direction:

Objectives are concise, time specific statements of measurable planned results that respond to preestablished goals. An objective forms the basis for further planning to define the precise steps to be taken and the resources to be used in achieving identified goals. (36 CFR 219.3)

Objectives for Education and Enforcement

Developed in response to Goals 7 and 8-education and enforcement, Subgoals 2k-watershed, 3t- noxious weeds, 4b-fire, 4d-fuels, 5a-OHV, 6a,b, and e-user ethics.

Purpose: To bring people who recreate in and use the Wasatch-Cache National Forest into a clear awareness of the potential impacts of their actions on natural resources such as watershed and wildlife, as well as on the experiences of other users of the Forest. To successfully integrate key messages teaching appropriate behavior while using the forest into a wide variety of public contact points from field to office, to businesses that supply recreation related products. To increase Forest Service field presence and to encourage individuals and organizations to actively work to maintain and improve resources such as trails, and to educate peers for monitoring and modifying behavior to protect resources and reduce user conflicts.

Need: A common thread heard throughout the public participation in Plan revision is the call for better education and enforcement. Given growth in population and use of the Forest along with such a large land area and limited Forest Service staffing, the need for educating forest users so they can assist in caring for the land and respecting other users is critical. Many who commented on revision wanted to see education and enforcement rather than additional restrictions on uses. They felt that education is really the only way to resolve a number of the issues raised during plan revision. Numerous organizations asked to be involved in education and enforcement efforts in order to protect the privilege of using the forest in the desired mode. An assessment of current education efforts revealed a lack of consistency and focus. Currently there is no strategy for what types of education are the priorities or how the work should be funded.

Objectives to accomplish desired conditions:

- 1.a. Develop within 1 year, and subsequently implement a Forest Interpretation & Education Plan with responsiveness to

education/enforcement issues raised during Plan revision. This Plan should integrate funding support including partnerships, for education and enforcement in key focus areas.

- 1.b. Develop key messages for focus areas within 1 year and set measurable education/enforcement goals. Focus areas are: OHV use, recreation user ethics, role of fire and fuels hazards, noxious weeds, and watershed health.

Objectives for OHV and Non-Motorized Travel Management

Developed in response to Goal 2-watershed health, Subgoal 2k-watershed, Goal 5-road/trail and access management, Subgoal 5a-access management, 5c-motorized opportunities, Goal 6-recreation, Subgoals 6a and 6b-user involvement.

Purpose: To provide a variety of recreation access opportunities both motorized and nonmotorized that meet user needs and desires while at the same time protecting and restoring watersheds, and providing for the needs of wildlife. To reduce conflicts between recreation users.

Need: Comments from the public proved that this issue is one of the most important to visitors to the Wasatch-Cache. Motorized uses are increasing rapidly in areas close to population centers. Technology continues to change resulting in previously seldom used areas being frequented by many. Drainage by drainage recreation management planning has not kept pace with user expectations, needs for development of opportunities engineered for the activity within the capability of the land, and compatibility with other uses. User-created trails are causing unacceptable resource damage and undesirable use patterns. In the winter, snowmobilers may be entering areas where motorized use is not allowed and affecting the experience of non-motorized recreation users. This may be the result of trails/areas that are not well marked or users that are not well informed. Some travel management plans are over ten years old and do not address mechanical uses such mountain biking or distinguish routes designated only for ATV use. Motorized users desire loop trails and adequate mileage for quality motorized opportunities, and these are lacking especially in the Logan and Ogden areas. Users far outnumber enforcement abilities.

Objectives to accomplish desired conditions:

- 2.a. Update the Salt Lake, Ogden and Logan Ranger District Travel Management Plans within 5 years (Includes user created route inventory, maintenance levels 1 and 2 roads analysis, updating of Road Management Objectives, and refining of winter decisions where appropriate).

- 2.b. Expand communication medias (signs, maps, brochures, and websites) to improve user knowledge of opportunities, restrictions, and riding conditions. Complete this within 2 years for messages common to all areas and 2.c. within 1 year of completing Travel Plan update decisions, for messages specific to a particular area.
- 2.d. Expand or initiate peer education through motorized use organizations and dealerships within 2 years for winter and 3 years for summer.

Objectives for Vegetation Management

Developed in response to Goal 2-watershed health, Goal 3-biodiversity and viability, Subgoals 3d-fire-adapted ecosystems, Goal 4-fire and fuels management, Subgoal 4b-public support, and Goal 10-economic contributions, Subgoal 10b-timber, and 10c-forage.

Purpose: To achieve forest and rangeland vegetation composition, structure, and patterns in properly functioning condition (i.e. within their historic ranges of variation). To move toward a variety of vegetation types, age classes, and patch sizes covering the landscape and contributing to healthy watersheds, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitats, recreation environments, and production of commodities such as wood and forage.

Need: A forestwide assessment concluded that aspen communities as well as conifer, sagebrush and several other vegetation types are currently outside the historic range of variation. This appears to be primarily related to successful fire suppression in vegetation types that evolved with repeated fires. A few *examples* of ramifications of the current situation include: fuel build-ups that may result in larger and hotter fires than historic; undesirable changes in vegetation composition and patterns such as extreme loss of aspen with it's highly productive and diverse understory that provides habitat elements for many wildlife and bird species as well as outstanding scenery; undesirable changes because of increases in canopy cover of shrubs such that grasses and forbs valuable for preventing erosion and providing forage are underrepresented; undesirable changes in hydrologic functioning because of particular types of vegetation's role in intercepting and storing water as well as contributing organic materials for soil productivity.

Because of the very large acreages currently not functioning properly, *no one approach can create enough change in vegetation across the landscape in a reasonable time frame, to reach desired conditions.* (In addition, several factors (staffing/skills, budgets, appeals & litigation) limit ability to accomplish this work.) For example vegetation modeling shows that even with prescribed fire use on 3,200 acres per year (many

times greater than recent years), it will require 20 years to return to aspen within historic ranges. In many areas, such as areas with adjacent urban development (wildland urban interface) it will not be practical to use fire, at least not without some other preparatory treatments. Timber harvest can also be used to contribute to movement toward the historic range of variation for some vegetation types. However in areas where there are dense trees or vegetation with little commercial value, (such as many of the alpine fir stands) and/or where there are no existing roads, it will likely not be practical or economical to use commercial timber harvest. Stewardship contracting is being piloted in various forests to determine feasibility of treating vegetation where commercial value is limited. Given the complexity of the situation, a number of actions are recommended.

Objectives to accomplish desired conditions:

- 3.a.** Allow fire to play a more active role in returning vegetation to historic ranges of variation by developing and incorporating Wildland Fire Use for priority areas of the Forest into the Wasatch-Cache Forest Fire Management Plan at the rate of one per year for priority areas.
- 3.b.** Stimulate aspen regeneration and reduce other encroaching woody species in aspen by treating (fire use and/or timber harvest) approximately 3,200 acres average annually¹ for a 10-year total of 32,000 acres.
- 3.c.** Restore natural disturbance patterns and increase age-class diversity in conifer cover types by treating (timber harvest and/or fire use) approximately 850 acres average annually¹ for a 10-year total of 8,500 acres.
- 3.d.** Increase grass and forb production and plant species and age-class diversity in sagebrush and pinyon/juniper by treating approximately 2,000 acres average annually¹ for a 10-year total of 20,000 acres.

Objectives for Wildland Urban Interface Fuels Management

Developed in response to Goal 4-fire and fuels, Subgoal 4d-fuels reduction.

¹ We expect to begin the decade with smaller acreages, ramping up over the first 5 years and with experience and skills gained during that period, to be able to achieve larger acreages over the last 5 years-bringing the total to the desired acreage. However, where fire is the selected treatment, air quality and weather are limiting factors outside our control.

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Purpose: To work with the States of Utah and Wyoming and communities at risk to reduce unwanted wildfire on or near the Forest. To emphasize the safety of people and the protection of property in the heavily populated and increasingly developed wildland urban interface adjacent to the national forest.

Need: Soaring populations and a desire to live near forested lands coupled with increased use of national forest system lands have increased the risk and frequency of fire. Compounding the situation is the presence of vegetative communities that have uncharacteristically high fuel loading because of years of fire suppression. The gambel oak and bigtooth maple vegetation types found along the Wasatch Front are an example of this situation. These communities support severe fires, which can result in significant impacts to properties and natural resources.

Objectives to accomplish desired conditions:

- 4.a.** Treat approximately 2,000 wildland urban interface acres annually for a 10-year total of 20,000 acres.
- 4.b.** Expand outreach and education by helping communities and homeowners recognize fire hazards, and design fire resistant homes and landscapes by participating annually in Community Planning meetings and city or rural planning groups.
- 4.c.** Expand community participation in fuels treatment and restoration and assist in the development of community fire plans by assisting State and private groups to develop 3 to 5 fuel reduction plans annually.

Objectives for Rangeland Management

Developed in response to Goal 2-watershed health all Subgoals, Goal 3-biodiversity and viability, Subgoals 3f-species composition, 3l-prey species, 3n-cutthroat trout, 3o-big game, 3s-noxious weeds, and Goal 10-economic contributions, Subgoal 10c-forage.

Purpose: To manage rangeland ecosystems so they support vegetation with adequate ground cover to protect watersheds and plant communities with desired species composition, structure, and function dominated by desired perennial grasses and forbs, with a range of shrub cover. To manage riparian areas for proper functioning with deep-rooted vegetation or rocks armoring stream banks and allowing sediment filtration and erosion prevention. To protect spring sources, associated wetlands and other critical areas from excessive use and to restore these to proper functioning condition. To manage for rest and deferred rotation grazing systems, riparian pastures and/or necessary structural improvements that are in place and maintained. To ensure that grazing permit holders move livestock as needed to comply with riparian stubble height requirements,

upland utilization standards, and to achieve ground cover standards. To encourage permit holders to share responsibility with the Forest Service for monitoring use, and to take full responsibility for movement and control of their livestock.

Need: Public comment on the Forest Plan as well as other recent projects consistently expresses concern about the condition of rangelands and frustration with our ability to manage and administer livestock grazing in some portions of the forest. Current information about potential and existing conditions of rangelands is lacking across major portions of the Forest although we know we are not meeting desired conditions in a number of riparian and upland sites. Progress toward implementation of the 1996 Rangeland Health Amendment has been slow and/or inconsistent across the Forest. Resources available to administer grazing permits, collect and interpret monitoring data, and develop up-to-date Allotment Management Plans are entirely inadequate currently.

Objectives to accomplish desired conditions:

- 5.a.** Fully implement the Rangeland Health Amendment Forestwide by finalizing riparian classification and notifying permit holders of utilization standards based on this classification within 1 year,
- 5.b.** Validating key areas and focusing monitoring of utilization standards in Allotments containing riparian dependent TES within 3 years,
- 5.c.** Developing ground cover potentials for missing vegetation cover types within 2 years,
- 5.d.** Assess/validate existing conditions and continue establishing long-term trend monitoring for 10% of Allotments annually.
- 5.e.** Establish clear expectations with all permit holders to achieve stated purposes within 1 year.
- 5.f.** Assess and prioritize noxious weed infestations for appropriate treatment within 1 year.

Objectives for Concentrated Use Camping Management

Developed in response to Goal 2-watershed health, Goal 6-recreation, Subgoals 6a-user stewardship, 6b-user involvement, and 6e-reducing impacts.

Purpose: Provide for management of undeveloped recreation use sites by designating Concentrated Use Areas (CUAs) in currently heavily used locations striving to protect recreational activities while achieving compatibility with standards for resource protection rather than user convenience.

Need: Camping in areas outside of developed facilities yet readily accessed by car or RV is a popular recreation activity. Scattered throughout the forest are areas where this type of undeveloped camping is so popular that soil has been compacted and vegetation is denuded destroying the natural amenities that made the area popular for recreation initially. Often these areas are in or affect fragile riparian areas. Years of increasing use have left sites with undesirable resource conditions. However the recreation use of these areas is well established and many are even traditional undeveloped family camping and family reunion sites, and a desired opportunity.

Objectives to accomplish desired conditions:

- 6.a.** Inventory undeveloped recreation sites in General Forest Areas and identifies CUAs forest-wide within 1 year.
- 6.b.** Develop and implement CUA recreation plans for CUAs prioritizing those areas with the highest use and impacts for both recreation activities and resource conditions. Work with users to design sites meeting their needs and desires while protecting resources including scenery. Complete 1 site-specific plan every 3 years for highest priority areas. Establish appropriate density for designated concentrated use sites for these areas during plan development.
- 6.c.** Initiate public education and outreach explaining the purpose of the new management actions during and after development of CUA recreation plans. Communicate through variety of available medias (including signing on site) the opportunities and restrictions within 1 year of plan completions.

Objectives for Bonneville Shoreline, Great Western and Shoshone Trails

Developed in response to Goal 5-road/trail management, Subgoals 5a-coordination of OHV, 5c-motorized access, 5d-trails, Goal 6-recreation, and Subgoal 11b-lands/easements.

Purpose: The Bonneville Shoreline Trail, designated in 1999 as one of sixteen national Millennium Legacy Trails, is envisioned to be an aesthetically pleasing (though urban influenced), non-motorized recreational trail experience, nearby yet apart from the urban Wasatch Front and its many communities stretching from Santaquin to the Idaho border with a loop around the Wellsville Mountains in Northern Utah. Recognizing the open nature of the BST corridor in several locations, motorized trails and roads that closely parallel the trail are generally not provided. In addition to recreational purposes, the trail may serve as a fire buffer, a recognizable, defensible physical boundary for the Forest, and access for fire suppression to protect property in the wildland urban interface. The Great Western Trail, proposed as a National Discovery

Trail, is envisioned to be a continuous interstate trail that helps users experience and learn about aspects of American life and history and that connects urban with rural/backcountry areas having both motorized and non-motorized segments facilitating winter and summer uses. The existing route crosses all Ranger Districts of the Wasatch-Cache except Mountain View. The Shoshone OHV trail would be a motorized trail on State, BLM, private and National Forest system lands on the Logan and Ogden Ranger districts. The proposed Shoshone Trail would establish a network of motorized trails in northern Utah to connect the existing trail opportunities on the National Forest with trails on BLM, State and private lands. The trail would provide extended riding opportunities between communities while providing an alternative to the unauthorized trails in sensitive watersheds along the Wasatch front.

Need: The Bonneville Shoreline and Great Western trails are two very important regional trails yet critical portions of each remain incomplete. The Shoshone trail would provide a motorized trail network in northern Utah. These trails serve a variety of users and provide both recreational and economic benefits to local communities. Access to the national forest continues to be threatened as development near the forest continues. In the future the Great Western trail, Bonneville Shoreline trail and the Shoshone Trail will be recognized and valued as unique opportunities to provide recreation corridors across multiple ownerships in the face of continuing urban development.

Objectives to accomplish desired conditions:

- 7.a.** Focus trail development and management emphasis on Bonneville Shoreline and Great Western trails, working with the public and other agencies to complete these trails using partnerships and grants as much as possible, while minimizing impacts to big game winter range, adjacent property owners, and Wilderness.
- 7.b.** Coordinate with the State, Counties, BLM and local partners to establish a trail system (Shoshone Trail) in northern Utah to address the demand for motorized trail recreation while decreasing unauthorized uses in more sensitive areas.