CHAPTER 1 - PURPOSE AND NEED

The Proposed Action

The Forest Service proposes to revise the Land and Resource Management Plan (hereafter referred to as forest plan) for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest in order to meet legal and regulatory requirements, and to address changes, issues, and concerns that have arisen since the forest plan was originally released in 1985 (USDA Forest Service 1985).

Regulations implementing the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 (P.L. 94-588) require periodic revisions of forest plans. In 1982 instructions to revise forest plans were formulated in the Code of Federal Regulations at 36 CFR 219. Revised planning regulations were approved in November 2000 (Federal Register 2000); however, those forests that had initiated revision were allowed to complete the revision process under the 1982 regulations (36 CFR 219.35).

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

Purpose

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide a revised Wasatch-Cache Forest Plan that will: 1) guide all natural resource management activities on the forest, 2) address changed conditions and direction that have occurred since the original plan was released, and 3) meet the objectives of federal laws, regulations, and policies. Specifically the revised forest plan will provide management direction for identified revision topics and forest-wide management direction in a framework of ecosystem management and sustainability.

Need

The regulations implementing the NFMA outline conditions under which a revision of a forest plan is needed. Specific instructions found at 36 CFR 219.10(g) state:

> "A forest plan shall ordinarily be revised on a 10-year cycle or at least every 15 years. It also may be revised whenever the Forest Supervisor determines that conditions or demands in the area covered by the plan have changed significantly, or when changes in Resource Planning Act policies, goals, or objectives would have a significant effect on forest level programs."

In 1992, the Forest Supervisor determined that revision was needed because significant changes had occurred in conditions and demands. The conclusion was based on results published in the forest-wide monitoring report (USDA Forest Service 1992). This report found "serious weaknesses" which when taken in aggregate, resulted in a conclusion that a forest plan revision should be initiated. The 1992 monitoring report concluded:

1. Resource inventories lacked quality information or were outdated.
2. There was a discrepancy between recreation goals and current conditions. Developed recreation site program needed to emphasize maintaining existing facilities prior to building new facilities.
3. Riparian area direction was limited and very general.
4. Timber volume objectives were inaccurate because of problems with timber volume conversions, timber availability assumptions, and technical concerns with implementation.
5. Water quality monitoring strategy needed strengthening.
6. An accurate assessment of relationships between resources was lacking. A new emphasis on integrated resource management was needed.
7. The forest plan was never fully funded and there was no indication of priority work to be accomplished with available budgets. The program of work needed to be prioritized to allow for funding shortfalls.
8. The monitoring plan was too general to ensure forest plan direction was being accomplished. An improved monitoring plan was needed.

These important findings were supplemented by recent reviews of the forest plan revealing that since the forest plan was approved in 1985, conditions and knowledge have changed substantially from those present at that time. In some cases, outside influences have changed and in others agency national policy has evolved. Some of the more significant changed conditions are:

- New approaches, philosophies and management policies have emerged to highlight the need to ensure the sustainability of ecosystems.

- Scientific knowledge and understanding of land use effects on watershed and wildlife habitats occurring in the forest has improved in recent years. There is also new and emerging knowledge and techniques in the areas of biodiversity and viability.

- The social and economic settings have changed. As nearby urban populations soar, recreational uses grow and peoples' demands for forest recreation increase. Public views about the values and uses of public land are changing. These changes necessitate new management approaches that anticipate trends while maintaining options for future generations.

Administrative setbacks delayed the revision from formally beginning in 1992. In 1999 the Forest Supervisor reviewed the relevant information and determined that revision of the 1985 Wasatch-Cache Forest Plan was still warranted and was even more necessary. Not only have conditions and expectations changed, the forest plan is currently 15 years old -- within the timeframe prescribed by the 1982 regulations for revision.

Need For Change

In the *Preliminary Analysis of the Management Situation Summary* (USDA Forest Service 1999a) each resource area was examined along with the 1992 monitoring results and specific needs were identified where management should be changed or is required to be changed during

revision. Ten areas were identified and are referred to as revision topics. In addition there is a need to change the basic framework and organization of the plan to reflect the integrated nature of ecosystem management. An ecosystem framework broadens the perspective from that of sustaining commodity outputs to that of sustaining ecological processes and a wide variety of goods, services, conditions, and values.

Revision Topics

Upon review of existing documentation, the Revision Team identified 10 "Need For Change Topics" for forest plan revision. It is important to remember that changes are being proposed to a plan that has already been developed and implemented. In revising the forest plan the focus is on those areas that must be reviewed in accordance with federal regulations, and on critical topics identified through new information, monitoring and public concern. Through the revision process the portions of the plan identified as needing change, and as important and appropriate at this time, are being addressed. It is important to focus on the most compelling needs for change in forest plan direction.

1. Watershed Health. Management direction for watershed health and condition is needed to maintain or restore the integrity of watersheds and soil quality. Healthy watersheds meet the needs of sustainable terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and supply values for people such as clean drinking water, recreation and commodity uses. The riparian and water quality guidance in the 1985 plan sets limits on management. A more proactive approach that describes the desired watershed conditions to be achieved will provide a basis for needed management protection. Direction that establishes priority watersheds for restoration is needed to better integrate local with broader scale needs and funding priorities.

2. Biodiversity and Species Viability. There is a need to update vegetation management direction to provide for short- and long-term sustainability, including direction for restoration, management and maintenance of plant communities, as knowledge and understanding of human impacts grows. People have substantially affected ecological processes and biodiversity and will continue to do so. As the human population continues to grow, there will be ever increasing pressures on the remaining open space and on the quality and diversity of terrestrial and aquatic habitat. There is a need to integrate management direction for all resources to maintain viable populations within the context of overall multiple use objectives. This means that for any given land area, the set of objectives must reflect a compatible blending of uses and values with the capability of the land.

3. Road and Access Management. Management direction for an integrated transportation system that serves multiple functions is needed as a primary component of the desired future for a management area. Guidance needs to be established to comply with the National Forest System Road Management Rule. The intent of the rule is to develop a science-based forest transportation system that meets the needs of the public, yet minimizes or reverses the environmental impacts often caused by roads. The 1985 plan direction needs to be updated with adaptive standards that allow the latest science and technology to be used. The revised forest plan needs to establish the framework that allows future site-specific travel management decisions to be made that meet the integrated transportation system goals.

4. Recreation and Scenery Management. Those areas where recreation will be emphasized need to be identified as the first step to provide guidance for managers dealing with increasing conflicts in uses as population and demands continue to grow. The population of the state of Utah is projected to grow by 65 percent by the year 2020 with most of the growth expected along the urban Wasatch Front. Because of this, settings of this forest will become even more valuable for the unique opportunities they provide. Current dispersed recreation use levels in some areas of the forest are so high that resource degradation is occurring. Direction is needed to provide for future desired recreation settings while sustaining ecosystem health. Updated mapping of recreation opportunity classes is needed to provide guidance on how to manage recreation across the forest. The outdated visual quality objectives contained in the current forest plan need to be replaced with guidance based on the more integrated Scenery Management System. The niche of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest in the overall scheme of outdoor recreation settings in northern Utah needs to be clarified considering other federal, state, county and private providers. Niches and unique characteristics of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest include the following:

- Proximity to a large and growing urban area (nearly 1.5 million people). People can drive 5 to 40 minutes and be at a trailhead, ski area, or other developed recreation facility in the forest.
- A broad array of recreation settings and opportunities at various locations across the forest from fully developed to pristine wilderness.
- Outstanding terrain and snow conditions that offer world class skiing opportunities.
- Wildland mountain settings that are rarely duplicated on nearby public and private lands.
- Wide diversity of users, often with conflicting desires and demands for what they feel the forest should provide.

5. Special Designations. This revision topic includes protection of eligible Wild and Scenic stream and river segments, designation of additional Research Natural Areas and the designation of Special Interest Areas. The eligibility inventory required by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was completed in August 1999. Thirty-four segments were found eligible. Until suitability determinations are made, there is a need to protect the resource values and free-flowing character identified for each eligible segment during both ongoing activities and new proposals.

In 1998 an analysis of Research Natural Area (RNA) needs was completed for the national forests in Utah. These needs were defined as vegetation types that occur on National Forest system lands that are currently lacking in existing RNAs in Utah. There is a need to identify areas of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest that have potential to contribute to the diversity within the RNA system on National Forest system lands in Utah.

Special Interest Areas can be designated to manage and protect an area's special characteristic or unique values. There is a need to identify areas on the Forest that because merit this special attention and management.

6. Roadless Areas/Wilderness Management. This is one of the required items included in the planning regulations. The roadless area inventory was updated in 1999. There is a need to determine whether any of these areas should be recommended to Congress for designation as Wilderness. If lands are recommended, the revised plan will provide that these lands be

protected and managed accordingly. The forest plan revision provides an appropriate vehicle to examine opportunities to meet the intent of the Wilderness Act within specific areas of this national forest. For those roadless areas not recommended as Wilderness, there is a need to provide direction for desired conditions and the mix of uses and values to be emphasized. The purposeful recognition of roadless area values was identified as a 'need for change' in the evaluation of the 1985 forest plan. There is a need to determine the appropriate balance of lands that allow development and those that do not.

7. Suitable Timberlands. This is one of the required items included in the planning regulations. It is also an important finding from the 1992 Monitoring Report. There is a need to identify those lands where the management direction will provide for timber production and where maintenance or restoration of properly functioning forest conditions may yield marketable timber products. Management prescriptions (Appendix D) identify whether or not timber harvest is allowed. They also identify whether vegetation treatments are allowed including prescribed fire, thinning, or timber harvest incidental to meeting other resource objectives.

8. Rangeland Capability, Suitability and Forage Production. These are required items included in the planning regulations. There is a need to identify the acreage and estimated forage production for outputs from areas suitable for grazing livestock as one of numerous uses that may be appropriate for a capable land area. Revised Forest Plan range management direction to ensure compatibility of this use with sustainable ecosystems and social values is primarily derived by incorporating direction from the 1996 Rangeland Health Amendment. There is a need to modify that management direction in the area of assigning value classes to riparian areas to recognize species at risk. There is also a need for direction to restore rangelands in unsatisfactory condition. Other factors to be considered include disposition of vacant allotments, and the risk of livestock disease transmission to bighorn sheep.

9. Oil and Gas Leasing. The forest plan was approved prior to the passage of the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Reform Act of 1987. This Act changed the role of the Forest Service in the leasing process and required additional analysis to determine which lands are available for oil and gas leasing and under what conditions. Because of this, leasing direction in the 1985 forest plan is no longer valid. The forest plan was amended in 1994 to allow leasing on a portion of the north slope of the Uinta Mountains. The portion of the Uinta Mountains specifically excluded from the 1994 decision through an appeal settlement decision (Levere and Heaton, 1994) was considered to be "roadless" at that time. When the roadless inventory was updated in 1999 it identified additional acres as roadless. However, because of specific language in the appeal settlement decision, these additional roadless acres are considered to be outside the scope of this leasing decision.

This area being addressed in the revision is the remaining portion of the forest identified as having a high potential for oil and gas reserves being present. There is a need to make the leasing decision in the forest plan revision since there are suspended leases in the area that need to be acted upon and oil and gas industry continues to express interest in exploring the area.

10. Fire Management. There is a need to update fire management direction to address new national fire policy. In the past 15 years, we've grown to understand fire's role in shaping our

ecosystems and the problems inherent in excluding fires from the landscape. The Forest Plan needs to address fire as an integral part of healthy ecosystems and to emphasize treatment efforts in ecosystems that are outside of properly functioning condition. It also needs to address how to manage fuels to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic, high-intensity wildland fire, especially in the wildland urban interface.

Decisions Made in a Forest Plan

A forest plan establishes key decisions for the long-term management of a national forest. These decisions are:

1. Establishment of forest-wide multiple-use goals and objectives, including a description of the desired future condition of the national forest as required by 36 CFR 219.11 (b).
2. Establishment of forest-wide management standards and guidelines to fulfill the requirements of 36 CFR 219.13 through 219.27.
3. Establishment of management areas and management prescriptions as required by 36 CFR 219.11 (c).
4. Establishment of lands suitable for the production of timber as required by 36 CFR 219.14.
5. Establishment of monitoring and evaluation requirements as required by 36 CFR 219.11 (d).
6. Recommendations to Congress of areas eligible for wilderness designation as required by 36 CFR 219.17 (a).

Decisions to be made in this planning process

Ultimately, the Forest Supervisor "shall determine the major public issues, management concerns, and resource use and development opportunities to be addressed in the planning process" (36 CFR 219.12 (b)). This Environmental Impact Statement analyzes a range of alternatives for revising management direction for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest. The Responsible Official for this analysis is the Regional Forester. Based on the analysis and subsequent public comments, the Responsible Official will select an alternative to revise the forest plan and document the rationale in a Record of Decision.

The Record of Decision will set a course of action for managing the forest for the next 10 to 15 years. However, project level environmental analysis will still need to be completed for specific proposals to implement the direction in the forest plan. A good example of this involves the designation of dispersed recreation sites. The forest plan may contain general direction to designate sites in order to protect land and water resources, but a site-specific analysis and decision will have to be made about the number of sites and their exact locations. This process is called staged decision-making because a series of decisions will be necessary to carry out projects as specific needs, priorities, locations, conditions, monitoring results, and public response change or become more apparent.

Significant Issues

Issue Identification

The Revision Team identified the following set of issues after a review of the many letters that responded to the September 1999 Proposed Action for the Plan revision as well as compilation of work completed at numerous public workshops in November and December of 1999. Over 800 comments from approximately 250 letters touched on every aspect of forest management. Narrowing the scope of the issues to those significant to this analysis is a primary task of the team and forest leadership.

Following are the issues that were determined to have the potential to drive development of alternatives. Most issues have several components and a brief discussion explains the basis for concern.

Issue 1 – Recreation Use Conflicts/Access Management

How should increasing conflicts between and among users of motorized/mechanized vehicles (ATVs, snowmobiles, helicopters for skiing, *ski area expansion into adjacent areas*, and mountain bikes) and non-motorized recreation be addressed? How much and where is access appropriate for each of these groups? What user densities should we manage for in the future and where?

Since the 1985 plan, the population has increased, types of recreation have diversified, and technology for off road vehicles, snowmobiles, mountain bikes and other conveyances has improved. This allows users access to portions of the forest they could not reach in the past. As use on the forest increases, conflicts between users occur more frequently. User densities and the perceived degree of freedom or restrictions affect desired recreation opportunities. Also, as demographics of the population change over time, the additional considerations for both older and younger segments as well as the physically challenged are increasing in importance.

Type. In general, most conflicts occur between motorized/mechanized and non-motorized users of the forest. The actual areas of conflict vary with the season of use (winter/summer). From the motorized user's perspective, their use is less affected by the presence of the non-motorized user. However, non-motorized users feel that the quality of their experience is compromised by motorized use (e.g. sound, smell, speeding, safety, and dust). Some feel that separating uses is the best way to address conflicts between users, while others feel that this would only drive the polarized user groups further apart, diminishing the opportunity to resolve conflicts. Conflicts tend to be most prevalent in easily accessed terrain and areas closest to population centers.

The evolution of ATVs, mountain bikes, and snowmobiles and their skyrocketing popularity in the past decade have created new user conflicts never anticipated in the 1985 plan.

Extent. Many people are concerned about being prohibited from areas previously open to them. Some feel we should be creating new motorized opportunities while others feel that we have too

much to manage already. Some users, such as those with mountain bikes, are expanding their ranges, accessing areas previously not used.

Ability Levels. Some feel that a continuum of challenging experiences needs to be available. With the advent of new technology, many off-road vehicles (especially snowmobiles) and four wheel drives are now able to venture into areas once considered inaccessible. This combined with more people results in an ever-increasing demand for additional motorized areas.

User Densities. Many people have stated that they want to see the forest continue to be managed for the same opportunities available today. Although they have seen a marked increase in the number of people recreating, user densities are still within the realm of desirable recreation experiences. However, there appears to be a belief for some that no action is necessary to sustain current opportunities in the face of rapidly increasing use and demand. Others state they would be willing to submit to various limits such as permit systems or alternating use times in order to achieve opportunities similar to those available now. They point out that currently we have no systematic way of monitoring use and use trends and that inaction results in use patterns that are difficult or impossible to control or change once they have been established.

Issue 2 – Roadless Area Management

How much and where should additional acreage be recommended for wilderness designation? How much, where, and how should inventoried roadless areas be protected from development? How much and where should inventoried roadless areas be available for which types of development and uses?

About 300,000 acres of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest is designated as wilderness. About 572,000 of the remaining acres are inventoried as roadless. Federal regulations direct national forests to evaluate roadless areas for wilderness recommendation during the forest planning process. Beyond this, in recent times numerous values associated with roadless areas have been highlighted. It is now recognized that roadless areas have significant ecological as well as social values. The values of roadless areas are of both local and national significance. Roadless areas are often aquatic strongholds for fish. They also often provide critical habitat and migration routes for many wildlife species and they are particularly important for species requiring large home ranges.

Some people want to see all inventoried roadless areas managed to protect their undeveloped character. Some of these see Wilderness designation as the only permanent protection avenue available. They are concerned about whether any other management prescriptions actually protect roadless character. For some, even those prescriptions that do not allow land-altering activities but do allow winter motorized use have a negative impact on roadless values. Others feel these lands need not be protected and should be available for development for a variety of uses. As population and demand continue to grow, some people feel that roadless areas offer the opportunity to spread use out to meet growing demands and reduce impacts. Others are not advocating new road construction but are very concerned about maintaining motorized access currently available. They see designation of wilderness followed by protection of roadless areas

as incremental steps toward additional restrictions on their activities and uses of the forest. Another point of view is that certain key roadless areas should be identified and protected.

Issue 3 –Biodiversity and Species Viability

What are the key factors to emphasize and what is the proper balance of management and land use activities that can maintain biodiversity on the forest? Which areas need what kind of management direction to support overall biodiversity as well as viability of species?

In 1992, the Chief of the Forest Service committed the agency to the practice of ecosystem management with its goals to produce diverse, healthy, productive and sustainable ecosystems while operating under a philosophy based on environmental sensitivity, social responsibility, economic feasibility and scientific principles. Watersheds are an essential component of these ecosystems. It should be assumed when we refer to sustainability and biodiversity that watershed health is an inherent consideration. Biological diversity (biodiversity) refers to the diversity of life. There are at least three levels of biological diversity: genetic, species, and ecosystem diversity. Maintaining biodiversity at appropriate scales is a key part of ecosystem management.

Major land use decisions can and have changed the biodiversity of the forest. Conserving biodiversity while managing the land for multiple uses is a balancing act. While the science of biodiversity is not new, interpretations and applications to the management of national forests is relatively new. Goals for each action must be carefully assessed, and trade-offs between resource needs and human wants must be made.

While various goals, objectives, general direction, and standards and guidelines in the 1985 forest plan considered some elements of biodiversity, this revision attempts to take a more holistic approach to viewing the forest.

People have a broad range of opinions about what management is needed to meet goals for biodiversity and viability. Some feel we should manage conservatively, taking a more passive approach to management allowing natural processes to dominate, while others feel a more active approach is necessary to restore biodiversity. Some feel that we should place our primary emphasis on factors such as: protecting regionally significant corridors; protecting and/or restoring connectivity of unfragmented forested lands; reintroductions of historically native predators (e.g. grizzly bears and wolves); discontinuing predator control and introductions of non-native species; eradication of non-native species; expand protection of species to include invertebrates, reptiles, and amphibians as well as neotropical migrants, and more well known wildlife already identified as threatened, endangered, or sensitive; protection of old growth and special habitats; reintroduction of natural fires; allowing the natural role of insects and disease; removing livestock grazing; identifying and protecting a system of reserves representing all native ecosystem types and seral stages across their historic range of variation; and protecting all existing roadless areas from any extractive or motorized uses to maintain values such as Canada lynx habitat. Others, however, feel that these measures are extreme, unnecessary, and will only result in a loss in the ability of the public to use and enjoy their national forest. Some are especially concerned about what affect these actions would have on traditional uses of the forest

such as livestock grazing and timber harvest. They feel we simply do not know enough to justify these actions.

Issue 4 – Concerns About Continued Economic Contributions and Personal/Social Benefits of the Forest

What will be the effects on traditional and current economic outputs and social benefits of the forest? These include forage for livestock, timber for harvest, production of oil and gas, recreation related services and all of the accompanying "quality of life/lifestyle" benefits obtained from the forest? Where and how much of these outputs and benefits can be expected in the future?

Communities near the Wasatch-Cache National Forest have often benefited from products or uses of public land. Traditional uses here have centered on wood products, livestock forage, ski areas, and mineral and oil and gas production. As recreation uses and popularity have increased, some communities have seen economic benefits from increased visitation through providing services (food and gas), equipment, and some outfitted guiding services. As restrictions and investments related to protection of sensitive and other species increase, there is concern that economic viability of many traditional uses becomes marginal or not viable. Changes in forest management can affect traditions, lifestyles, and the economic livelihood of residents and some communities. Those who depend on the forests for their livelihoods are concerned that other uses (e.g. recreation, wildlife, rare species, etc.) will take precedence. Others suggest that a variety of other values such as clean air and water, wildland scenery, and maintenance of biodiversity be included in the analysis of the "net public benefit."

Livestock Grazing. The economic well being of a portion of the local livestock industry is dependent upon a continual source of available forage on federally administered rangelands. The western rural lifestyle and traditions associated with the livestock industry are highly valued by permit holders and rural communities. Many permittees (and in some cases their forefathers) have made a financial and emotional investment throughout their lifetime to continue the tradition. Many have seen range conditions improve over time. In addition, the continuation of agriculture in these areas in light of the burgeoning growth in northern Utah prevents development and loss of open space. Increasing management requirements for grazing in light of threatened, endangered and sensitive species and other conflicts (such as recreation) are of great concern to permit holders and rural communities. Permit holders are concerned that management prescriptions that do not emphasize grazing will result in reductions in grazing and subsequent economic benefits. Other people view the economic contribution from grazing as limited, the environmental and administrative costs as too high, and feel grazing should be reduced, phased out, or eliminated.

Timber Harvest. Forested lands serve both as important habitats for plants and animals and as a source of wood products. Traditionally, all the timber volume sold on the forest was processed at mills in local communities. Operators and employees of these mills are concerned about availability of timber from public lands to sustain their businesses. Some people want to see most of the forested acres available for timber harvest and wood production. Others have expressed concern about the methods of harvest (i.e. do they lead to successful reforestation) and

post harvest appearance. (i.e. does it degrade the visual integrity of the area). Some people feel harvest should be restricted or eliminated because they view the economic contribution from timber harvest as limited, and the administrative and environmental costs too high. They feel the net public benefit measured in forest planning should include less tangible benefits such as those associated with ecological systems (e.g. clean air and water, nutrient cycling, habitat for sustenance of biodiversity, wildland settings for recreation).

Oil and Gas Leasing. While much of the economic focus of Summit County, Utah is centered on the Park City area and its economy, the exploration and extraction of oil and gas reserves over the eastern part of the county have contributed significantly to the economic base of the area. Summit County also receives revenue from taxes, royalties, and other fees assessed to operations. These revenues are used to enhance the communities through construction of public facilities such as public schools, libraries, community centers, etc. Residents of Uinta County, Wyoming and Summit County, Utah rely on the production of oil and gas reserves to provide for continued services and infrastructure. Others feel that the economic benefits do not outweigh the environmental costs and feel forest lands should be protected from oil and gas exploration and development.

Recreation Related Contributions. There are a variety of services associated with recreation in the forest including nearby convenience stores, gasoline, food, recreational and off-road vehicle rental, sales and maintenance, concessionaires, outfitter guides, and outdoor sporting goods sales to name only a few. Economic contributions to local communities from these sources are on the rise. Depending on forest recreation opportunities provided, a range of potential benefits to communities can be realized. The amount of motorized and non-motorized opportunities available, the number of visitors, and degree of management restrictions all affect the social and economic contributions of recreation to communities. In addition to economic benefits, various recreation opportunities in the forest enhance the quality of life for residents in nearby communities.

Ski Area Contributions. Skiing on national forest lands is important to the economy of Salt Lake and Summit Counties, and to a lesser degree Weber County. Many feel the premier skiing offered in northern Utah contributes to their reason for living near and/or visiting the Wasatch Front. World-class ski areas and high quality snow bring people from around the world to ski here. Of the nearly three million skier visits to Utah in 1996, nearly half were to the five large resorts on the forest. Resort owners and patrons see improvements and expansion as essential to providing a desirable, safe skiing experience and attracting new and return customers. At the same time, increased restrictions because of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species and conflicts with opponents of development threaten profitability and management flexibility. Others are concerned that environmental and social tradeoffs for this development are too great and are opposed to any further development, improvements or expansion. They point out that nearby private lands provide similar opportunities for this kind of development.

Personal/Social Benefits. In addition to the above contributions of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest to local communities, an additional aspect of values brought forward in many public comments should be acknowledged. This category we have labeled “personal/social benefits” and while difficult to describe, it is no less important to those who voiced concerns about it than

the items described above. Among the comments were statements about how the forest environment provides opportunities for families to bond, for escape from the crowded urban and work world hustle, for continuation of highly valued lifestyles and longstanding traditions, for nature's healing to the human imagination and spirit, for solitude, serenity, and spiritual renewal, and simply for the knowledge that wild places are wild and will remain that way. These comments cross the boundaries of groups advocating motorized or non-motorized access, commodity production or reduction/elimination of commodity production, and strongly differing world-views on the appropriate role of humans in stewardship of the forest. We heard advocates of both motorized and non-motorized access mentioning serenity or escape from urban hustle as values, and both groups expressed concern about crowding. Both commodity and non-commodity advocates voiced concerns about family, tradition, and caring for the land.

Issue 5 – Environmental, Social, and Economic Impacts of Uses

How will we ensure that impacts of uses to watershed conditions, terrestrial, riparian and aquatic wildlife and fish habitats, recreation settings and scenery, and local quality of life are kept within acceptable limits? Uses include livestock grazing, timber harvest, recreation, oil & gas development, and road and trail management.

The potential environmental and social impacts of various uses of the forest are of great concern to many people. They see the long-term planning process as a rare opportunity to look into the future and examine what kind of environmental and social legacy today's decisions will leave.

Recreation. There are concerns about effects on watersheds from off road vehicles, mountain bikes, facility development, and improper trash disposal; effects on wildlife/habitat from off road vehicles, facility development, human presence (both motorized and non-motorized), noise, packed snow trails; effects on fragile alpine and remote ecosystems from four season use in ski areas (mountain biking, hiking, large numbers of people, waste disposal), expansion of recreation into previously inaccessible areas associated with ski based resorts and with improved technology of snowmobiles; and effects on aquatic ecosystems from facilities, fish stocking (distribution of fishing use), and sediment from user-created roads; social impacts of recreation to local communities including increased demand for law enforcement and search and rescue, and changes to character of rural communities because of increasing numbers of recreation visits. Debates about the actual environmental impacts of various types of recreation are common. Debate and disagreement around the social impacts are even more contentious because impacts are a matter of human values and perceptions that vary greatly from person to person. Some people are also concerned that the Forest Service promotes commercial opportunities without consideration of local needs and long-term implications (i.e. difficulty removing any commercial use once established even though conditions change making the use less appropriate).

Livestock Grazing. There are concerns about effects on riparian and aquatic habitats, watershed conditions, upland vegetation, alpine habitats, and recreation experience. At the same time, beneficiaries of livestock grazing see the environmental and social impacts as acceptable and question the actual contribution of livestock grazing to negative environmental impacts.

Timber Harvest. People are concerned about impacts of road construction and harvest on visuals/scenery, fragmentation of forests, old growth habitats, wildlife and fish needs, and watershed health. Those who benefit economically from timber production while also concerned about sustainability of the forest, are skeptical about the actual negative environmental impact of this activity and its effects on other values of the forest.

Oil and Gas. Exploration and development there are concerns about effects on values associated with undeveloped areas.

Road and Trail Management. There are concerns about effects on watershed and aquatic habitats from erosion and sedimentation, and about effects of road and trail densities on wildlife/habitat connectivity.

Issue 6 – Appropriate Types and Amounts of Facility Development for Wildland Settings in the Forest

How much more recreation related facility development, where and of what types, should be allowed in the future?

Increasing recreation demand and the extent to which facility development is allowed or used to accommodate increased use is of concern to some people. Given current and expected growth in demand, there is concern that wildland settings may be compromised by too much or certain types of additional facility development. The kinds of facilities most often associated with recreation include ski resort improvements, campgrounds, picnic areas, overlooks, trailheads, parking areas, fishing access, boat launches, signing, visitor centers, and designated dispersed campsites.

Some people would prefer that growth in recreation be accommodated by construction of additional facilities. They see this as a way to further disperse visitors in more heavily used areas or to protect sites from heavy use through hardening and preventive services such as trash containers. They have also noted the need to include demographic considerations such as an aging population and accessibility for physically challenged as facilities are developed. Others prefer to see limitations on types and/or amounts of facility development, particularly in certain areas that already have numerous facilities such as the tri-canyon area of the Wasatch Mountains. Some would like to see approaches to recreation management other than new facility development. An example is advocating additional mass transit rather than building additional parking facilities. There are concerns that continually adding facilities may result in the loss of the special niche the Wasatch-Cache National Forest offers for recreation.

Other Topics And Issues Raised But Not Addressed

Several issues raised by the public and other agencies are not addressed in detail in this analysis. Issues are addressed in the analysis to the extent they relate to the decisions being made in a forest plan and the scope of the revision topics. A summary of the issues with the reason why they are not analyzed in detail follows.

Outside of Forest Service Authority

Wildlife Management. Some people commented on various aspects of wildlife management such as hunting restrictions, bear baiting practices, fish stocking practices, and the appropriateness of introducing non-native wildlife species or top carnivores. The State of Utah, not the Forest Service, has the authority for managing wildlife. The Forest Service works cooperatively with the State Division of Wildlife Resources and often makes recommendations for management in those instances where national forest resources are affected by its actions.

Predator Control. Some people commented that predator control should be eliminated. Predator control responsibilities have shifted since the last round of forest planning. Another agency of the Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services now has the authority to make those decisions in cooperation with the Forest Service.

Listing of Canada lynx as threatened. Some people disagreed with the finding of the Canada lynx as threatened. The Endangered Species Act prescribes the authority of species listing to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), an agency within the Department of the Interior. Land management agencies such as the Forest Service work in consultation with the USFWS to define species conservation strategies.

RS 2477 road assertions of counties. Some people commented that the Forest Service should recognize all RS 2477 road assertions made by counties. At the present time the Forest Service does not have a mechanism by which it can administratively recognize public roads under RS 2477. Only a legal determination usually through a court action can actually establish an RS 2477 right of way. We are identifying asserted roads on maps and maintaining their status until a determination of their validity can be made.

Outside framework level of analysis

Site-specific issues. There were many comments about issues that are dealt with in project level decisions that implement the forest plan. In some cases comments pertained to current implementation of projects. Many people commented on travel management issues such as closure of specific trails, allocation of uses on trails, and signing, while others commented on specific locations where they believed new or improved facilities should be added for recreation users. There were also many comments about non-recreation issues such as removing a fence in a specific location.

The forest plan revision will identify general areas of the forest where various types of uses or facilities are appropriate. The forest plan does not make site-specific determinations of specific locations for those uses or facilities. The forest plan will not address specific route changes. Site-specific decisions are made in the future through project level analysis that must be consistent with the broad area direction established in the forest plan.

Administrative Actions. Many people commented on administrative issues such as the current and future levels of law enforcement needed, the appropriateness of partnerships to accomplish agency goals, and whether or not user fees should be charged for using the national forest.

The forest plan identifies goals and objectives for land management and outlines environmental measures to achieve these goals. However, the forest plan does not prescribe administrative actions. These types of issues are administrative aspects of implementing the forest plan and are not appropriate for inclusion in the forest plan itself.

Addressed by Regional Inventory Protocol

Definition of a road to establish roadless inventory. Several people thought the definition of what was considered a road established too high of standard thereby allowing inappropriate acreage to be included within the roadless inventory. The regional protocol for establishing roadless inventories was completed with public input considered in the final definitions. The Wasatch-Cache National Forest used the definition from the approved protocol.

Outside the scope of the Revision Topics

Communication sites and utility corridors. Some people believed additional commercial electronic sites and utility corridors should be designated to accommodate future use. The 1985 forest plan established ten utility corridors after an extensive review of industry needs. The forest currently has communication sites established that allow commercial use. Analyzing new areas for these uses requires a high degree of complexity and extensive involvement and coordination with private industry. These issues are currently not as pressing as some others necessary in the forest plan revision and will be addressed in the future as warranted.

Wild and Scenic River suitability determinations. Some people suggested that the forest plan revision was the proper context in which to address suitability of wild and scenic rivers. An inventory of the rivers on the Wasatch-Cache National Forest was completed in August 1999 in accordance with the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Based on this inventory, 34 segments on the Wasatch-Cache were found eligible for inclusion. As allowed for in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Wasatch-Cache will complete the suitability determination though a separate analysis at a later date rather than as part of the forest plan revision. The potential complexity of analysis required a degree of detail that would reduce resources available for other important revision decisions. Suitability is currently not as pressing a decision as some others necessary in the forest plan revision. In addition there is a backlog of rivers that have gone through the suitability process and have had no Congressional action for designation. As more national forests in Utah complete eligibility inventories, it might be possible to conduct suitability studies at a broader and more comprehensive statewide scale.

Until this analysis can be completed, the revised forest plan will provide for protection of the eligible river segments until the suitability determinations can be made and, if appropriate, designations are accomplished.

Addressed by Management Direction

Many people's comments related to narrow aspects of management that would be addressed the same regardless of the alternative. These were not identified as issues used to develop the range of alternatives but instead will be addressed by management direction in the revised forest plan.

An example of this would be “wildland fire should comply with state and federal air quality standards”.

Recent National Direction Considered in the Revision Analysis

Several months prior to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement being published two new rules were issued establishing new national direction. The most recent direction concerning these rules is reflected in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

The National Forest System Road Management Final Rule revises regulations concerning the management use and maintenance of the National Forest Transportation System. The final rule approved a new road policy that uses a science-based forest transportation system that meets the needs of the public yet minimizes or reverses the environmental impacts often caused by roads. The programmatic aspects of the new policy have been more fully incorporated into the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

The Roadless Area Conservation Final Rule establishes prohibitions on most road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvesting in inventoried roadless areas on National Forest System lands. Presently, the Rule is being challenged within the federal court system. The Forest Service has initiated efforts to move forward with a responsible and balanced approach to re-examining the rule. For now, the Chief has instructed forests to ensure that Forest Plan revisions consider, as appropriate, the long-term protection and management of unroaded portions of inventoried roadless areas.

The terms of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule are applied to Alternatives 1, 2, and 6. Other alternatives consider the protection and management of inventoried roadless areas by varying degrees. All give full consideration of the values of each inventoried roadless area on the forest.