MGT AREA 14 -- RIPARIAN

A VISION

Each riparian site is visually attractive. It is a pleasure viewing them as you go by and being a part of them while you are on the site. There is healthy, native vegetation along most of the stream and lake. The stream and lake shore banks are stable with a diverse mix of vegetation to minimize erosion and provide good wildlife habitat. There are signs of many types of wildlife throughout the area. There is a stable fish population along the shaded, healthy stream and lake bottoms, with diverse aquatic species.

This looks into the future, although some of it may be happening now. It is stated in the "present tense" as if it is already that way. This gives a feel of where we are heading. It paints a general picture with a broad brush.

DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION

- 80% of natural shade over water surfaces.
- 80% of natural bank protection.
- 85% of stream substrate surface free of inorganic sediment.
- 60% of natural shade over land surfaces, for wildlife species.
- 60% of the woody plant composition in three or more riparian species.
- Three or more age classes of woody plants, with at least 10% of the woody plant cover in sprouts, seedlings and saplings.
- A mosaic of tree diversity to include all stand conditions and basal area levels (up to the maximum possible for the site condition).
- Have large diameter trees with ages up to 240 years.
- Wildflowers will be along the roadways.
- 25% in satisfactory condition by year 2000 (Regional Guide).

This table snaps a more detailed picture of what this management area will look like in the future. Since much depends on natural cycles, which need time, these conditions may take many years to achieve. Some of it may be in this condition now.

DESCRIPTION

Riparian ecosystems are wetland ecosystems which have a high water table. They usually occur as an ecotone (transition) between aquatic and upland ecosystems, and have distinct vegetation and soil characteristics.

The riparian areas are extremely variable due to potential combinations of types of water bodies (lakes, streams, ponds) and the attributes of the areas in which they occur, such as: gradient, topography, soil type, elevation, and plant community.

Riparian ecosystems are distinguished by the presence of free water within the common rooting depth of native perennial plants at least 10 percent of the time. Riparian ecosystems are normally associated with seeps, springs, streams, marshes, ponds, or lakes. They commonly comprise a mixture of water (aquatic) and land (phreatic) ecosystems (FSH 2509.23).

D. Management Area Prescriptions

Types Of Riparian Areas on the Carson
Intermittent streams
Perennial streams
Wet meadows
Bogs
Seeps
Rivers
Ponds
Lakes

Each type of riparian has associated vegetation that is characteristic of that type. For example: the wet meadow riparian may include bluegrass, carex, timothy, brome, and forbs while the perennial streams, rivers or ponds may include aspen, narrowleaf cottonwood, boxelder, alder, chokecherry, and willow.

All of the Ranger Districts on the Carson contain one or more of the eight riparian types, and they are often small inclusions in a larger vegetational zone. The riparian standards apply to riparian areas even though the sites may not have been large enough to be mapped as a discrete unit.

This is probably the single most critical management area on the Carson because:
- They are generally more productive per acre of biomass, plant and animal, than the remainder of the Forest.
- The linear shape of streams and drainages and the related riparian areas provide large amounts of edge. This adds significantly to the diversity of an ecosystem.
- Greater plant structural diversity (different species and age classes) provides greater vertical edge for wildlife species.
- The three basic requirements of wildlife habitat (food, cover and water) are often met in this area.
- The cold water fisheries resource of the Carson (approximately 350 miles) is associated with this area.
- Gentle topography, high productivity, easy availability, and the presence of water are characteristics that concentrate livestock into these areas, which are often highly sensitive to overuse.
- Scenic values are very high.
- Most of the Carson's developed campgrounds and picnic areas are in or directly adjacent to the riparian area. Other dispersed recreationists concentrate because of existing water.
- Gentle topography provides for less expensive road construction, yet is also used as wildlife travel corridors. These uses are often in direct conflict.
- These areas total 2.5 percent of the total Forest land base.

In brief, riparian zones are important to many users.

Standards and Guidelines

This section contains the standards and guidelines against which activities and uses are to be compared. It focus on and provides more details about the "Desire Future Conditions." In some cases it gives the long term "where and when." The Forest Plan Implementation Schedule is the tool used for all short-term planning and scheduling. The Implementation Schedule provides the operational perspective [making the commitment -- asking for the dollars and scheduling what year it will be done in.] The tactical perspective [the execution] is the actual implementation on the ground. This is done after we get the funding. It is also documented as accomplishments in the Forest Plan Implementation Schedule.

BORROW PITS & MINERAL STORAGE...New borrow pits or long term road material storage areas will not be permitted.

INDICATOR SPECIES... Manage for these indicator species: resident trout (cutthroat), hairy woodpecker, aquatic macroinvertebrates, elk.

SEDIMENT... Activities that generate sediment will be avoided during fish spawning.

STREAM FLOW... Manage all existing perennial streams for favorable conditions of flows for instream and downstream uses.

FLOOD ANALYSIS... A flood analysis survey will be conducted for any proposed projects in areas with sizeable stream channels. (Where the mean 100 year flood plain width is 200 feet or more, or the drainage area above the parcel is greater than 1 square mile.) A land exchange will be withheld unless the community is covered by the Federal Flood Insurance Program or through an environmental analysis it is determined that the intent of Executive Orders 11988 and 11990 are met.

FLOODPLAIN AND WETLANDS... Any projects prepared in the floodplain/wetlands will be subject to an analysis which evaluates them in context of Executive Orders 11988 and 11990.

VISUAL QUALITY...
- Areas which are located within the immediate foreground (100 to 300 feet) of a sensitive travel route, use area, or water body will be managed for the visual quality objective of retention.
- Manage for large diameter trees with a stand age replacement of at least 240 years.

WILDFLOWERS... Within 200 ft. of paved roads, reseeding will include wildflowers.

ROADS:

NEW ROADS... Locate new roads outside of the riparian type. If new roads are to be built, then erosion control measures utilizing Best Management Practices (i.e., buffer zones, sediment catch basins, seasonal road closures, etc.) will be included.

EXISTING ROADS... If feasible, relocate or remove existing roads and trails or manage them with seasonal closures to minimize disturbance to wildlife.

CROSSINGS... Align crossings so that the minimum possible area is affected. Do not align roads to pass through the long axis of narrow riparian strips. Schedule construction activities during low water periods. Minimize road clearing widths. Provide fish passage in all perennial stream crossings.

D. Management Area Prescriptions

YOUR NOTES...