

MGT AREA 6 -- ASPEN

A VISION

There is a riot of color throughout the Carson each autumn -- and the gold is free! Color -- the sun-mimicking yellow of aspen softened by the gentle green of pines and firs. The straight, chalk-white bark and soft green canopy with the whisk of the wind across the quaking leaves invite you to join them on a warm summer day.

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

- Healthy, regenerating stands of aspen, are well distributed throughout the Forest.
- Activities and uses retain the form, line, color, and texture which are characteristic of the landscape (retention visual quality objective).
- There is quality habitat for the hairy woodpecker, turkey, and elk.

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

The area has an overstory of aspen with an understory ranging from forbs and grass to sparse conifer reproduction, usually white fir, corkbark fir, or spruce. Acres of aspen stands with stocked conifer understories are included in Management areas 2 through 5 and 7. Without treatment, those stands with conifer understories or grass will convert to conifer or grass type as the aspen overstories die, thus losing the aspen component.

Management Area 6 includes pure aspen stands that do not have a stocked or nearly stocked conifer understory. [Reference Forest-wide standards and guidelines for inventory and stand exam]

The aspen type, especially those stands with forb-grass understories, is an important producer of forage for wildlife and livestock. Aspen sprouts are favored browse for deer, elk, and livestock.

Aspen stands are important aesthetically because of the color contrast they provide with surrounding conifers. Their leaves are a light green in summer and turn yellow in the fall, and their white trunks provide further accents.

There is a history of tent caterpillar and aspen tortrix epidemics in the aspen type which have caused considerable mortality. This and other natural mortality has resulted in a large accumulation of down and dead aspen.

The commercial market for aspen wood products includes chips for particle board, firewood, excelsior, pallet material, and high grade paneling. In the past, the demand has been relatively low compared to coniferous species and this has hampered aspen management as it requires fire or harvesting, primarily

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by clearcutting, for regeneration. The existing aspen stands are a direct result of past wildfires. Forest Service fire control efforts have limited the establishment of new stands and the total acreage decreases yearly. Increasing demand for chips and firewood may increase the role of timber harvest in maintaining the aspen component and reverse the present guideline.

Aspen stands provide natural firebreaks that aid in stopping wildfires that originate in the adjacent vegetative types.

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.

DIVERSITY... Establish and maintain stand diversity to improve age class distribution, provide suitable habitat for wildlife, to maintain or enhance visual quality, and to maintain or enhance firewood and other wood product production.

MAINTAIN ASPEN... The aspen type is maintained where it exists and managed for sustained yield of firewood, and other resource objectives. Retain the type for wildlife habitat, visual quality. Stands are managed by clearcutting or heavy selection of at least 95 percent of the basal area, cutting all stems greater than 5 inches d.b.h. Snags greater than 12 inches d.b.h. are left and nest trees are retained.

REGENERATION...

- Regeneration is planned to occur naturally by sprouting.
- Manage regenerated areas and assign no grazing capacity until seedlings are established. Leave felled trees and/or slash as needed to restrict access to animals.

REJUVENATION...

- Rejuvenation of aspen will be used primarily to maintain scenic quality. Leave material on the ground as needed to protect sprouting.
- Rejuvenate aspen in small patch clearcuts to increase wildlife habitat diversity and encourage sprouting, 210 acres of treatment annually (minimum).

WILDLIFE HABITAT... Inventory and manage aspen in all forested management areas to improve age class distribution and to increase the aspen component Forestwide. When the treatment objective is wildlife habitat improvement the following guidelines apply:

- During 10-year period inventory aspen component and stand conditions.
- Older, decadent stands with little or no reproduction, that will respond to patchcutting, will receive priority treatment.
- Stands in which conifers are threatening the vigor and viability of aspen will receive next priority.
- Treat individual clones by patchcutting the entire clone, and remove all conifers during treatment.
- Salvage treated down aspen only if reproduction can be protected from the detrimental effects of livestock and big game browsing.
- Treat no more than 20 percent of inventoried aspen acres within each diversity unit every 10 years unless it has been determined necessary to maintain the aspen component.

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WILDFLOWERS... Within 200 feet of paved road projects involving reseeding with grasses or forbs include some wildflower seed mix.

INTERSPERSION... Manage for an interspersion of conifer groups when present. Limit conifer groups to one acre groups per 10 acres of aspen.

HOW HARVEST... Harvest using 40 acres or less clearcuts, usually through personal use firewood sales, or commercial sales where public access is not reasonable, to increase diversity and achieve regeneration through sprouting. Wildlife and livestock have heavily browsed small clearcuts in the past. Emphasis is to cut enough area to prevent overbrowsing through a series of small clearcuts rather than one 40-acre unit.

ROTATION... Rotation length is a minimum of 50 years or a minimum diameter of 6 inches.

INTERMEDIATE HARVEST... Intermediate harvests are applied to improve wildlife forage in the understory, improve visual quality or to meet other specific resource objectives.

COMBINE PROJECTS... When appropriate, timber harvests in aspen stands should be incorporated into surrounding sales on suitable land, otherwise treat as a separate project.

ADMINISTRATION STDS/GUIDELINES... When they are consistent with objectives for this Management Area, apply sale preparation and administration standards and guidelines listed for suitable lands in the Forest-wide section.

ROADS... Construct roads for timber sales, utilizing Best Management Practices with the following guidelines: 0.9 mile per square mile for construction first entry; 3.1 miles per square mile for reconstruction first entry; 4.0 miles per square mile for reconstruction second entry.

SAN ANTONIO... Withdraw the San Antonio high power (5 acres) from mineral location.

REPLACEMENT OF IMPROVEMENTS... Replacement of structural improvements will be planned in a 25-30 year cycle and will take priority over new structures if needed for prescribed management intensity.

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YOUR NOTES...