



Lolo Plan Revision Proposed Action: Preliminary Issues

What is an issue, and what preliminary issues have been identified for the Lolo's plan revision process so far?

What is an Issue?

A NEPA issue is a potential environmental, social, or economic effect from all or part of the proposed action, expressed as a cause-effect relationship with the “cause” being some part of the proposed action and its “effect” on a resource or component of the environment. Issues will be identified based on public comments provided during the scoping period. Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations emphasize that NEPA reviews should be focused on the important issues and that the treatment of issues dismissed should be limited to a brief discussion of why related environmental impacts do not warrant detailed analysis (1501.7(a)(3); 1502.2(b)).

What have we heard so far?

The Lolo National Forest (LNF) has heard a range of comments from the public during pre-scoping work that warrant more focus. The LNF is considering these to be “preliminary issues” and anticipates that the scoping process will validate or refine these as well as help identify additional issues.

Preliminary Issues

The Plan Revision will address the following topics that have been identified as preliminary issues.

Preliminary Issue #1: Ecosystem Integrity and Management

Terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem conditions (components such as composition, structure, function, connectivity) over time is linked to 2012 planning rule requirements for ecological integrity and plant and animal diversity. Concerns have been

expressed around desired conditions for ecosystems and whether the pace, scale, and design of management activities will be appropriate to restore them. Potential measures and plan content around this issue could include:

- Terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem desired conditions and estimated progress toward them.
- Amount and type of treatment objectives related to ecosystems contributing to desired conditions.
- Number, size, and distribution of connectivity linkage areas.
- Desired conditions for old growth, and estimated progress toward them.
- Timber volume output objectives.
- Wildland fire and other fuels treatment objectives.
- The location and extent of the conservation watershed network (CWN).

Preliminary Issue #2: Sustainable Recreation Opportunities

The 2012 Planning Rule requires plan components for *sustainable recreation*, defined as a range of recreational settings, opportunities, and access that can be sustained over time. This includes opportunities for non-motorized, motorized, developed, and dispersed recreation. Concerns have been raised related to access and suitability for a variety of uses. Potential measures and plan content around this issue could include:

- Desired distribution of Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes in summer and winter.

- Management and maintenance objectives for roads and trails.
- Opportunities (suitability) for mountain bikes or ebikes and other uses
- Recreation opportunity objectives for developed recreation.
- The extent and location for the Concentrated Recreation Use management area.
- Acres and distribution of management area 3, Backcountry, and 4, General Forest.
- Sustainable dispersed recreation sustainable recreation opportunities and access.

Preliminary Issue #3: Social and Economic Sustainability

The 2012 Planning Rule requires that forest plans recognize the role National Forest System lands play in the social and economic sustainability of communities dependent on and near them. This issue covers the importance of contributions to sustainable economies, ecosystem services, and cultural and historic resources. Concerns related to whether the revised plan will adequately support local economies, as well as concerns about cultural and historic resources, have been raised. Potential measures and plan content around this issue could include:

- Social and economic sustainability desired conditions, and estimated progress towards them.
- Estimated economic impacts (jobs and income by industrial sectors).
- Estimated effects to carbon storage or other climate measures.
- Timber harvest objectives (volume outputs, type of treatment, and acres treated).
- Amount and distribution of lands suitable for timber production and timber harvest.
- Cultural and heritage resources objectives.

Preliminary Issue #4: Recommended Wilderness

As part of the plan revision process, the Forest Service is required identify if there are lands that could be recommended to Congress for inclusion in

the National Wilderness Preservation System. Concerns have been raised about the location and amount of recommended wilderness areas, as well as the suitable uses within them. This issue is also related to sustainable recreation. Potential measures and plan content around this issue could include:

- Number, location, and total acres of recommended wilderness areas (management area 2).
- Suitability statements for recommended wilderness areas.

Preliminary Issue #5: Interface and Matrix Lands near Communities

This issue is centered around management approaches in areas close to urban areas, including but not limited to the wildland urban interface (WUI), recently acquired lands, and other areas or communities located in proximity to the forest. These areas represent a nexus of land management considerations such as hazardous fuels reduction, restoration of lands with legacy impacts from intensive harvest and road building, and high levels of recreation pressure, all of which also relate to social and economic sustainability. Potential measures related to this issue could include:

- Fire, fuels and WUI desired conditions, estimated progress toward them, and treatment objectives.
- Desired conditions and objectives in acquired land restoration emphasis areas.
- Desired conditions, objectives, and other plan components for the Concentrated Recreation Use management area.
- Acres and distribution of management area 3, Backcountry, and 4, General Forest.

What's next?

During scoping, the public is invited to review and help clarify the preliminary issues, as well as bring forward additional issues. Based on the input received during scoping, significant issues will be identified which, in turn, will inform the development of alternatives for the draft plan and draft environmental impact statement (DEIS).