



# Salmon-Challis National Forest Forest Plan Revision Newsletter

April 2017

The Salmon-Challis is currently in the **Assessment Phase** of our Forest Plan Revision.

## Purposes of Assessment

There are three primary purposes of the Assessment Report:

1. Describe the existing condition of important resources and the influences on the Forest.
2. Describe trends and factors that affect trends in important resource conditions on the Forest.
3. Use that information to describe where forest plan direction should be focused or what issues it should address and to evaluate the existing plans for strengths and deficiencies in Forest Plan direction.

## Collaboration yields questions for assessment

The Salmon-Challis National Forest has held public meetings in Challis, Mackay, Salmon and Arco and hosted a webinar regarding Forest Plan Revision.

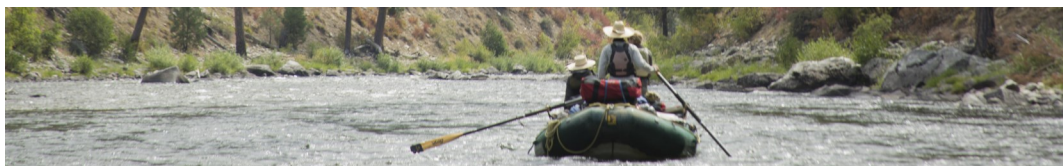
At those events, we asked what questions or discussion the public feels the Forest should address or include in the Assessment Report. This newsletter contains summaries of the major questions raised.



Photo by Crystal M. Johnston

Team Leader Josh Milligan addresses the crowd at the SCNF's forest plan revision kickoff meeting at the Idaho Fish and Game conference room in Salmon.

## ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS ORGANIZED BY TOPIC



- Are there adequate recreation facilities, such as trails, trailheads, campgrounds, boat ramps, etc.?
- Do some areas of the Forest receive so little or infrequent recreation use that they create a safety hazard?
- What are the maintenance needs or maintenance status of all trails on the Forest?
- What partnerships does the Forest have with groups to assist with trail maintenance? Are there additional opportunities the Forest should pursue?
- How will the Forest Service enforce motor vehicle prohibitions? What role can Forest partners play in enforcement?
- Is there a need for additional motorized trails or motorized loop trails? Is so, where and what kinds of trails (e.g. single-track or two-track)?
- Are there motorized trails the Forest Service should close due to lack of maintenance or overuse?
- Are there competing needs or conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreation?
- How does recreation use influence the demand for search and rescue or law enforcement services?
- How does the Forest provide information on trails or recreation infrastructure status or condition? Is there a need to improve information services?
- What is the current status of outfitter and guide services on the Forest and is there a need to increase these services (e.g. guided mountain biking)?
- What opportunities are there for improved road maintenance?
- Can backcountry airstrips be included in the assessment as recreational features?
- Are there adequate recreation opportunities for older or disabled people?
- What are the impacts of shed antler hunting on wildlife?



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## ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS ORGANIZED BY TOPIC (continued)



- What is the status of insect and disease on the Forest? Is there a need to address insect and disease? If so, what methods should the Forest Service use?
- What is the current forest health, vegetation cover, and condition?
- Does the Forest have adequate opportunities for harvesting trees for firewood or fence poles?
- Are timber harvest or firewood cutting valid and useful tools to prevent insect and disease or improve forest health?
- What efforts are made to reclaim or clean up harvested areas?
- Are “bio-indicators” a useful tool or consideration to determine appropriate vegetation treatments?
- How does the transportation network influence the ability to harvest timber products?
- Is there reasonable access to mining claims?
- Does the Forest use partners for vegetation treatment planning or projects? Are there opportunities to increase or improve the use of partners?
- What are the rules and regulations for firewood cutting? Do they create a substantial burden for firewood cutting?
- What opportunities are there to remove timber in remote areas following a disturbance event (e.g. micro-burst)?
- What are the typical terms and conditions of timber sales? Are there opportunities to plan timber sales so local purchasers are more likely to bid and win sales?
- What role does timber harvest or forest products have in the local economy?
- Does slash from thinning projects create environmental problems or concerns?

## DID YOU KNOW?

The 2012 Forest Service Planning rule requires a Forest Plan to identify the eligibility of rivers for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS). The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSR Act) of 1968 sets out the process for evaluating rivers for potential inclusion in the NWSRS. The WSR Act directs federal agencies to identify and evaluate potential rivers for inclusion in the NWSRS during agency planning. In broad terms, a river is appropriate for inclusion in the NWSRS if it is first determined to be (1) “eligible,” and then (2) determined to be “suitable.”

Eligibility is an inventory process that asks whether a river meets the minimum qualifications for inclusion in the NWSRS, while suitability asks whether it is appropriate to manage an eligible river within the NWSRS based on enumerated criteria such as public support and landownership status. Eligible rivers receive a preliminary classification of wild, scenic, or recreational based on the condition of the river and the level of development on adjacent lands.



- Is grazing site potential relevant for determining desired conditions for grazing?
- Is adaptive management an effective approach for grazing related to Forest Plan direction?
- What factors are relevant in determining whether lands are suitable for grazing?
- What is the economic influence of grazing on the Forest?
- How many or what is the size of abandoned or retired allotments?
- What is the trend of animal unit months (AUMs) on the Forest and what factors influence that trend?
- Does the current plan provide for sustainability and stability for grazing permit holders? Is additional direction needed?
- What, if any, ecological benefits does grazing provide?
- What value does grazing monitoring information have in guiding forest plan direction?
- Is stubble height useful for determining range condition? Should different or additional factors be used?
- How effective is re-seeding after a wildfire in preventing the spread of invasive plants?



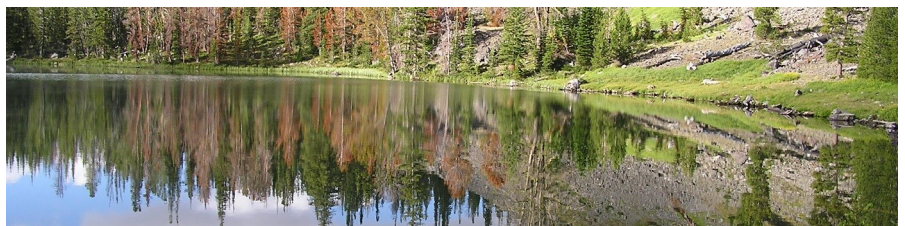
## ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS ORGANIZED BY TOPIC (continued)



- What are the current conditions and trends for recreation in the planning area?
- What factors should be considered in identifying desired future conditions for ranching, timber, mining, and recreation?
- What is the economic impact of wildfires?
- What are the opportunities for the Forest to provide a reliable supply of forest products?
- How does the Forest notify or keep the public informed about projects and plans? Is there a need for improvement?
- What roles does the Forest play in local economies? What is the magnitude of this role and in what areas?
- Why has the local timber industry declined?
- Is there adequate access to educational and interpretive activities for schools or those without 4-wheel drive?
- What activities, opportunities, or resources do users of the Forest value?
- Is the economic theory of “tragedy of the commons” a risk to the Forest?
- What is the economic impact of outfitter and guide services on the Forest?
- Does the Forest distinguish their management approach between outfitter and guides and public use? If so, how are they distinguished?
- Does the direction in the Idaho Roadless Rule influence multiple use activities; including, timber harvest and road construction?
- What role can education play in helping to enforce land use regulations?



- What influence does grazing or insect and disease have on wildfire risk and behavior?
- What impact do prescribed fires have on community events? Are there ways to reduce these impacts?
- What factors are relevant in determining fire suppression responses?
- What is the current condition of aspen stands and what role do aspen stands have on the landscape or ecosystem?
- How effective are thinning projects in reducing insect and disease?
- How does wildfire spending influence the budget available for non-fire related forest management?
- What influence can timber harvest have on reducing wildfire risk?
- Should timber value be a consideration in determining wildfire suppression responses?
- Does fire management have an influence on the spread of invasive plants?
- How much dead standing wood is on the Forest?
- What are the impacts of prescribed fire on wildlife?



- Is quality or amount of anadromous fish habitat a limiting factor in their recovery? What other factors limit their recovery?
- What natural resource factors are important to ecosystems and people on the Forest?
- Are there areas that are poorly balanced between water and soil quality and human needs?
- How do invasive plants, noxious weeds, and insects/disease influence ecosystem integrity?
- How does climate change influence ecosystem integrity?
- What opportunities are there for the public to help improve ecosystem integrity (e.g. invasive plants or noxious weeds, etc.)?
- How do wolves influence ecosystem integrity?
- What is the level of public awareness regarding threatened or endangered species? Are there opportunities to improve awareness?
- What is the impact of motorized uses on ecosystem integrity?
- Do Native American or Tribal lands influence ecosystem integrity?
- Will additional natural resource conservation measures meaningfully improve ecosystem integrity in wilderness or Idaho Roadless areas?
- What natural resource factors should be considered in determining suitability or capability?

## QUESTIONS OUTSIDE SCOPE OF FOREST PLAN REVISION DECISION

Several questions were raised regarding the scope of the Forest Plan Revision decision: whether the Forest Plan would replace the 2009 Salmon Challis Travel Management plan; whether the Forest Plan revision would open or close roads to motorized travel; whether Wilderness or Idaho Roadless Area (IRA) boundaries could be adjusted; and whether prohibitions within IRAs could be adjusted.

These questions are outside the scope of Forest Plan Revision for the following reasons:

### **Travel Management Plans (36 CFR part 212)**

Travel Management Plans make site specific designations that identify roads and trails where motorized or mechanized vehicle travel will be allowed, restricted, or prohibited. 36 CFR 212 provides the separate procedural framework for making these designation decisions.

The Salmon Challis completed our travel management decision in 2009. Forest Service policy recommends that Forest Plans do not include these designation decisions. While a Forest Plan does not replace travel management designations, it may include information and guidance used to inform travel management decisions or designations (e.g. areas where motorized or non-motorized uses should be emphasized).

The primary reason the Forest Service separates travel management planning from Forest Plan Revision is due to the differences in environmental analysis used to inform those decisions. For example, the analysis used to develop forest-wide direction across multiple resources or activities is substantially different from the analysis used to determine whether a specific road should be open to motor vehicle use.

In general, the analysis to support travel management decisions involves specific considerations of the impact of motorized vehicle travel; whereas, forest planning analysis involves consideration of a wide array of direction (e.g. standards and guidelines across multiple resources).

### **Wilderness Management Plans and Wild and Scenic River Management Plans**

The Forest Plan makes recommendations on whether to include any additional Wilderness Areas; however, it does not include specific management direction for these areas. Wilderness areas and Wild and Scenic Rivers, if designated by Congress, are legislatively required to have separate management plans that provide direction on the use of these areas.

### **Idaho Roadless Areas (IRA)**

IRA boundaries and direction are established through Department of Agriculture rulemaking. Adjustments to IRA boundaries are made by the Chief of the Forest Service and changes to IRA regulations are made by the Department of Agriculture.



## CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

**Some clarifying questions were raised at the public meetings and are not represented in the list of questions relevant to the Assessment Report (e.g. "Why are firewood permits required?" or "What is the Forest Service policy with respect to opening previously abandoned or closed allotments?").**

**The Forest can provide information on general questions, such as these, throughout the revision process. They are not included in this discussion, however, because they do not directly address information that helps determine where forest plan direction should be focused or what matters it should address.**



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## **For more information about Forest Plan Revision:**

- **E-mail [scnf\\_plan\\_rev@fs.fed.us](mailto:scnf_plan_rev@fs.fed.us),**
- **Call Team Leader Josh Milligan at 756-5560, or**
- **Visit our website at [www.fs.usda.gov/scnf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/scnf)**

## **What's Up Next with the Forest Plan Revision Process?**

At the same time the Salmon-Challis is collecting information for general forest assessment, we have several concurrent processes to follow. In late April, we'll host public meetings to explain the steps we'll take to evaluate Wilderness areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Species of Conservation Concern.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

- **Salmon:** 6 -8 p.m. Monday, April 24, Idaho Department of Fish & Game Salmon Region
- **May:** 6 -8 p.m. Tuesday, April 25, 6 – 8 p.m., Pashimeroi Valley Grange (May Grange)
- **Mackay:** 6 -8 p.m. Wednesday, April 26, 6 – 8 p.m., American Legion Hall
- **Ketchum:** 6 -8 p.m. Thursday, April 27, 6-8 p.m., Ketchum Community Library
- **Webinar:** 12:30-2 p.m. Thursday, May 4, <https://usfs.adobeconnect.com/scnf-fpr/>

### **What the Salmon-Challis will bring:**

- Initial map of areas to be evaluated for suitability as Wilderness
- Initial map of rivers to be evaluated for suitability as potential Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Potential list of animals and plants being considered as Species of Conservation Concern

### **How you can be involved:**

- **Wilderness Inventory** – provide any on-the-ground knowledge or corrections to the improvements and roads data; and provide information on use trends (for example, popular hiking, mountain biking or Off-Highway Vehicle areas).
- **Wild and Scenic Rivers Inventory** – review inventory map and provide information to correct errors or omissions.
- **Species of Conservation Concern Designation** – provide on-the-ground knowledge or scientific information to inform the list.