



# Nez Perce – Clearwater NF Briefing Paper

*Forest Plan Revision*

*January, 2013*

## FOREST PLAN REVISION - COMMITMENT TO COLLABORATION

In May, 2012, the Forest Service announced that the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests had been selected as an “early adopter” forest with regard to revising their existing Forest Plans. The forests were selected for a number of reasons: recent information available from the 2007 draft revision document; a “need for change” to combine the two previous forest plans into one since the forests are combining, and recent, successful collaborative efforts. In the Spring, 2012 discussions were initiated with the County Commissioners and other potential collaborators interested in being involved with the upcoming revision process. A draft collaborative strategy was circulated at that time for review and comment. This update provides an overview of that Collaborative Forest Planning strategy and reflects work the Forests have completed on that strategy since May, 2012.

The new rule seeks to deliver stronger protections for forests, water, and wildlife while supporting the economic vitality of our rural communities. In addition, our goal is to be open to local knowledge about these resources as well as using the best science to inform our decisions. Although federal land management decisions remain the responsibility of the forest supervisor, the forest is committed to creating a close working relationship with communities and interested publics who use and care for the forests. The first step in this strategy was to provide orientation meetings, where the public could learn about the process and decide how they might want to participate. The next step for those wanting to participate was a two and a half day summit, followed by working groups focused on particular places and resources. With the help of facilitators from the University of Idaho, we are designing and implementing a flexible, collaborative plan revision process.

County Commissioners from Clearwater, Idaho and Latah counties co-host collaborative meetings with the Forest Service. These meetings provide opportunities to hear from the Forest Supervisor regarding his commitment and decision space for plan revision; provide a basic understanding of the planning rule and the revision process, and identify parties with a diversity of interests who want to be involved in the collaborative process at a highly committed level or at a lower informational level.

In the Fall, 2012, the Forest co-hosted with the counties, five Community Meetings. These meetings were held in Orofino, Grangeville, Moscow, Lewiston, ID and Lolo, MT. These meetings were designed to gain input to the Assessment and development of the collaborative process. The meetings hosted by the University of Idaho facilitators provided orientation and educational information regarding the planning rule and collaborative process.

In late Fall, 2012, the Forest again partnered with the County Commissioners to host a three day Forest Plan Summit in Orofino, ID. The summit, designed and facilitated by the University of Idaho provided a workshop environment to design and initiate the collaborative process. It was open to both observers (those who could not attend the orientation meetings) and those parties/individuals highly committed to the collaborative revision process for the entire 2 year period. It had a three part design: Informational Sessions, Position versus Interest Learning Sessions, and Common Vision Sessions.

The Summit initiated the current process where Resource Working Groups, comprised of locally based participants combined with regionally based video conference participants in Missoula and Boise, are meeting one weekend per month in a collaborative learning environment to combine local knowledge with

the latest science and create management recommendations that meet multiple interests and values, even where consensus cannot be reached. This information will be used to inform the decision maker and support the decision.

Periodically the Revision Collaborative will assist the Forest Service to provide facilitated Community Check-In meetings for those who cannot participate in working groups. The first of these check-in meetings will be held in numerous communities in late Feb, 2013. A Round-up session targeting at informing folks not involved in the collaborative of Forest Plan Revision progress prior to releasing the Draft Forest Plan is targeted for February, 2014.

### COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

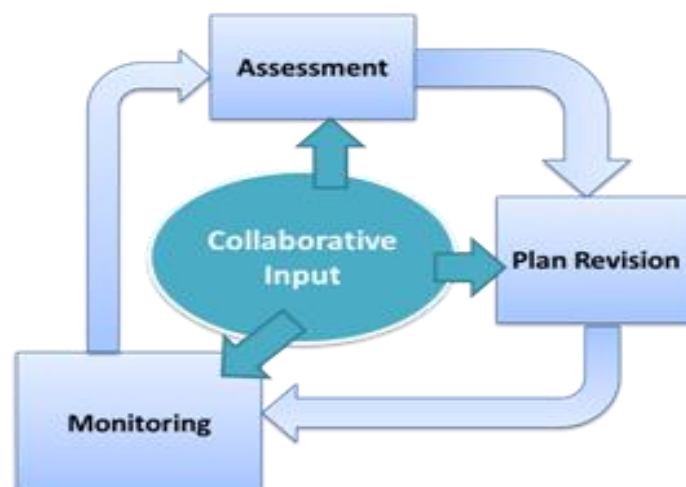
The Forest is using a concurrent, collaborative approach to develop and refine the Forest Plan Assessment while at the same time collaborating on input to the Draft Forest Plan components for resources and areas. This collaborative approach is targeted to gather input from a diversity of interests who live in very small, remote communities “imbedded” within the Forest to interested persons residing in larger local, regional and national communities and cities.

To gather this input the Forest is using a two-tiered approach to promote involvement of all interested parties many whose views are very diverse. This two-tiered approach targets those that want to participate in locally based face to face collaborative sessions to those who choose to be very involved but from a home or office computer setting using cutting edge e-collaboration tools. These tools range from Comment Inboxes where comments go directly to the Forest Service scientists and specialists, to discussion groups where members can confer outside of face to face sessions on pre and post session work to topics of interest, to a collaborative mapping tool where participants can read and post visual input to the plans draft maps and provide photos to enhance understanding of issues. The Forest hopes this provides a comfortable setting for all those wishing to be involved from youth, to persons who can't or don't wish to travel to meetings, to persons that are not comfortable with a public setting or who may be live remotely or too far away to attend face to face collaborative sessions.

In summary, Revision Collaborative participants work with the USFS and consultants to help refine the process for desired outcomes. While the Forest is initiating the process and providing the initial assessment and current condition information, it is different from the traditional linear process where the Forest provides information and then asks for input. Therefore, participants help find solutions, rather than react to pre-developed proposals. Those participating listen and learn from USFS staff, outside experts and one another. The discussions are facilitated to be respectful of all interests.

The following diagram represents the continuous nature of feedback needed as information is developed and discussed with collaborators.

### 3 Phase Planning: A Continuous Collaborative Process



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