

USDA FOREST SERVICE
NEZ PERCE NATIONAL FOREST

Fourteenth Monitoring and Evaluation Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2001

INFORMATION REQUESTS AND COMMENTS

Information requests or comments about the Nez Perce National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan and/or Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report can be directed to one of the following offices:

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Moose Creek Ranger District

Fenn Ranger Station
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Kooskia, ID 83539
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Clearwater Ranger District

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Grangeville, ID 83530
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INTRODUCTION

This document highlights the major issues (and findings regarding those issues) that are reported in detail in the Forest's 14th Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report (pertaining to fiscal year 2001). Upon request, a copy of the Nez Perce National Forest's 14th Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report (the detailed technical report) will be sent to you. Contact the Nez Perce National Forest Headquarters' Office for a copy. Copies are also available for review at any of the Forest offices listed on the previous page and on the Forest's web page @ www.fs.fed.us/r1/nezperce/

This document is organized by resource. Four questions are addressed for each resource:

1. What did we accomplish?
2. What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?
3. What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?
4. What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1974 states that Forest Plans "...be revised from time to time when the Secretary finds conditions in a unit have significantly changed, but at least every 15 years." The current Forest Plan revision is scheduled to begin early in fiscal year 2003 (October 2002). We hope to issue a Revised Plan and Record of Decision by September 2006.

Identification of needed changes to the Forest Plan is one of the first steps in the Forest Plan revision process [36 CFR 219.12]. This summary will be used as a tool in this identification process. You are encouraged to keep this document for future reference and use during the public involvement phase of the Forest Plan revision process.

Finally, feedback from you, the owners of the Nez Perce National Forest, is very important. How do you like the format of the Executive Summary? Do you have any suggestions for improvement? Are there things we missed or overlooked? Are there things you would like to see added to next year's report? If you have written comments, please send them to me:

Bruce E. Bernhardt, Forest Supervisor
Nez Perce National Forest
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Grangeville, ID 83530

We would also be glad to speak with you in person. Feel free to call us at (208) 983-1950, or visit any of the forest offices to share your comments.

/s/ Bruce E. Bernhardt
BRUCE E. BERNHARDT, Forest Supervisor
Nez Perce National Forest

June 20, 2002
Date

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ACCESSIBILITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

1) What did we accomplish?

The Forest has plans on file to renovate a family residence at the Fenn Ranger Station for accessibility. Work has begun on conceptual plans for renovating a bunkhouse and a family residence for accessibility at each ranger station.

The new accessible office and visitor center at Fenn Ranger Station is on the Northern Region's priority list for capital construction funding, but funding has been deferred to 2002 (when it will be the #1 Forest priority). The construction contract for this facility is to be awarded by the end of FY 2002. When the building is completed we will be able to provide accessible visitor services and barrier free employment at all our administrative sites.

A new accessible warehouse at the Grangeville Air Center has been built. We are in the process of finishing the inside of this building, including office space for the helitack operations, a pilot's lounge, office, and shop space for the tanker base manager, and restrooms with showers as well as storage space. Expected completion of this project is May 2002.

A ramp has been constructed at the Slate Creek Ranger Station and will provide access for all to the museum. The sidewalk portion will be completed in FY 2002.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

We did not get as far as we had hoped with the administrative site accessibility surveys and transition plans. National requirements for deferred maintenance reporting drained budgets and limited available time. This will continue for at least two years. However, we anticipate that all surveys and transition plans for our administrative sites will be completed by 2001.

The sidewalk portion of project to provide access for all at the Slate Creek Ranger Station museum was not completed; it will be completed after archeological concerns are addressed.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

As Forest positions become vacant we need to actively recruit persons with disabilities.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

Forest-wide, three recreation sites (including a fishing area) are accessible at the **Easy** level, another four sites are accessible at the **Moderate** level, and twenty sites are accessible at the **Difficult** level. Red River Ranger District has a hunting program for folks with mobility impairments; the program is coordinated with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. The goal is to provide accessible opportunities throughout the entire spectrum of recreation on the Forest. We are making progress, but much remains to be done.

The Forest headquarters office and all district offices (except Fenn Ranger Station) are now accessible to everyone. The goal is to provide accessible offices and residences at all our administrative sites. The trend is positive, but we are not there yet.

AIR RESOURCES

1) What did we accomplish?

A key component of the Region 1 Air Resource Monitoring Program is the monitoring of lake chemistry, which is quite reactive to atmospheric processes. In FY 2001, Phase III monitoring of wilderness lakes to determine trends in acid deposition and other atmospheric related changes to lake ecosystems were done. Shasta Lake in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness has stable to slight upward trends in pH, ANC, and conductivity.

No active sampling of air quality was done on the Forest. However, Sula Peak, to the east of the Forest, monitored fine mass concentration of air that passed over the Forest.

The Forest supported air quality forecasting through daily balloon launches during the fall burn period, and through coordinating smoke management reporting for north Idaho.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

Currently the Forest has completed all planned monitoring of air resources.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

A particulate sampler should be installed as funds become available in the interior of the Forest to gather data to identify impacts to communities.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

Currently the air quality on the Forest is good and monitoring does not indicate any significant deterioration from desired condition. However, impacts from any new stationary sources will have to be evaluated for their impacts to Class I airsheds.

A national initiative to substantial increase hazardous fuels treatments in short fire return interval ecosystems on federal land would produce a corresponding increase in smoke and particulate matter, if the only treatment is prescribed fire. Future hazardous fuels project proposals should include tradeoff analysis of prescribed fire v. mechanical treatments to assess the smoke effects.

FACILITIES

1) What did we accomplish?

Drinking water was monitored monthly for bacteriological contamination at all 13 operating potable water systems managed directly by the Forest Service. All required drinking water chemical testing was performed. Safe drinking water was provided at all systems where potable water is available.

Wastewater discharges were monitored at all three sewage treatment plants. Effluent at all three locations met water quality requirements.

Construction work completed in 2001 included the Grangeville Air Center loft addition and a new warehouse. The planned new accessible visitor information/meeting/office building at the Fenn Ranger Station was added to the Region's capital investment plan and is scheduled for construction in 2002.

Major repair and maintenance projects included a main underground power line replacement at Red River Ranger Station and installation of a water meter to record water usage at the Elk City Ranger Station for the local water district. Routine maintenance assured that all buildings in use met basic structural and public health standards.

Radon and asbestos monitoring and mitigation continued. There is still some friable asbestos in a few buildings, but neither radon nor asbestos is a current health hazard at any Forest Service owned residence.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

Funding levels preclude fully maintaining the entire transportation system. Maintenance needs continue to be evaluated and prioritized on both an annual basis and as weather events dictate.

Due to problems with aging water collection and distribution systems along the Selway River, four small campground water systems remain closed. Alternatives for providing potable water are being evaluated.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

Buildings and administrative sites do not have Forest Plan monitoring requirements. When problems are discovered during inspections or monitoring we correct them as funding permits. This practice seems to work well and does not need to be changed.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

Currently, the Nez Perce National Forest buildings, water systems, wastewater systems, and administrative sites are in acceptable condition, with the few exceptions noted above. However, as buildings and systems age, they require more upkeep each year. Since funding for maintenance has not increased in relation to inflation, it becomes a greater challenge each year to maintain structural, health, and safety standards. The Forest

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Service is addressing this issue nationally and it is hoped that maintenance funding will increase in the future. The Forest is evaluating needs and costs on an ongoing basis to assure that we are not maintaining unneeded facilities. Opportunities for ongoing cost savings are being continually pursued.

FISHERIES

1) What did we accomplish?

Projects that will result in an improvement in fish habitat condition on the Forest were accomplished (see monitoring element 1f).

Cooperative restoration work with the Nez Perce Tribe, in Meadow creek and Mill Creek, continued.

Habitat and species inventory and monitoring projects were accomplished.

Cooperative project with IDFG, including continued work on bull trout distribution and status, were continued.

Support to other resource activities was provided to minimize negative effects, and where possible provide positive benefits to the aquatic resource.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

In general, the planned work was accomplished.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

The results of monitoring continue to be used to adjust the priorities and activities on the Forest to contribute, to the extent possible, to the aquatic resource condition on the Forest. There are no monitoring results available at this time that identifies the need to make large-scale changes in practices on the Forest.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

The fisheries resource on the Nez Perce Forest has long been recognized as a very valuable and important resource. The Forest Plan established fish/water quality objectives for the subwatersheds (6th code hydrologic units) on the Forest that considered the relative potential and value of each area with respect to aquatic resources, along with other resources. The Forest Plan also recognizes that some of these areas do not meet the objective, or desired condition, established by the Forest Plan. These conditions are a result of many factors, including historic activities. There are a large number of opportunities on the Forest to restore the aquatic resource conditions, many of them complimentary with other resource priorities on the Forest.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

1) What did we accomplish?

During 2001, 20 new cultural properties/sites were discovered and recorded on the Forest.

8,512 acres were inventoried for cultural resources.

In addition to the new sites recorded, 73 previously recorded sites were revisited or monitored.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

A schedule based on 1-5 year intervals needs to be established for monitoring of all National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligible heritage resources. This was not accomplished in 2001.

An increase in the Heritage budget is needed in order to effectively monitor the recorded NRHP eligible cultural resource sites on the Forest. The current budget does not allow for detailed recording of site changes during monitoring. Under the current practices sites may be monitored, but the time and money needed for the proper documentation of changes in the sites' condition are not provided.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

None

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

Currently cultural resource sites are minimally evaluated for their eligibility to the NRHP, mostly through surface inspection. In the future a more thorough evaluation-testing program comprised of formal subsurface excavation units needs to be implemented in order to formally determine a site's National Register status/eligibility.

LANDS AND SPECIAL USES

1) What did we accomplish?

INFRA Special Use Data System (SUDS) was maintained and monitored.

The Forest administered the “Open Season” concept for special use permits and applications.

The status of special use permits and applications was reviewed and actions prioritized.

Four miles of Forest boundary were surveyed and posted to standard.

Maintained 25 miles of Forest Boundary.

Five permit applications were processed.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

Renewal of expired Special Use Permits and processing of 4 permit applications.

The Forest did not address any of the unauthorized uses.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

Additional funding and staffing is needed to address the number of unperfected right-of-ways to public lands in a timely manner. Additional funding and staffing is also needed to process permit renewals and applications.

The Forest needs to prioritize the unauthorized uses and prosecute cases both under the statutes and title. RS-2477 validations by the county continue to make management of Forest access a problem.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

The Forest’s progress in dealing with unperfected right-of-ways is slow.

The Forest is unable to address both expired permits and permit applications in a timely manner.

MINERAL RESOURCES

1) What did we accomplish?

Forest personnel were able to perform basic administration, minimize unnecessary surface disturbances, and inspect unauthorized mining operations.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

Due to the complexities of consultation under ESA, a lot of time and effort was put into processing plans and less effort into inspection of small, ongoing operations.

There were delays in the processing of plans of operations and notices of intent due to great analysis needs and the need for input from fisheries specialists.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

More efficient methods need to be developed to process and administer mining operations in anticipation of continuing shrinkage of the workforce and increase in complexity of issues. Also, inter-governmental and agency authorities and actions need coordination and streamlining throughout Idaho.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

The current trend is toward the desired conditions. The Forest was able to keep up with basic administration of mining activities. A shrinking workforce and the increasing complexity of issues (such as consultation under the Endangered Species Act) combined with rights under the 1872 mining law, contribute to difficulties in meeting regulation timeframes for processing new plans, adequately inspecting ongoing operations, and assuring that bonds are revised or released on a regular basis.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

1) What did we accomplish?

GENERAL:

The past year had even more opportunities for public involvement on the Forest, specifically during the Meadow Face Stewardship meetings, the Urban Interface/Defensible Space Public Meetings held as part of the National Fire Plan objectives and the Resource Advisory Committee selection. There were numerous public involvement efforts related to other specific projects. Techniques ranged from media ads to traditional scoping letters, public information meetings, and public comment forums. There were project-related displays, field trips, open houses, and news releases.

Various field trips were coordinated with local media and several were conducted throughout the year. Topics included: Mountain pine beetle outbreaks in the Red River drainage, Grangeville Air Center, the Earthquake Fire base camp and Wildland Fire Use on the Moose Creek Ranger District.

STEWARDSHIP:

A comprehensive public involvement plan has been developed for the Meadow-Face NEPA analysis with all potentially interested and/or affected publics participating. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement was released in May 2001. A public field trip to the Meadow Face Stewardship Pilot Project area on May 19, 2001 and an open house held on May 31, 2001, are two examples of the open communication process that we are using.

The Nez Perce National Forest is initiating contract development for proposed activities associated with the Meadow Face Stewardship Pilot Project. This project is one of 18 pilot projects in the Northern Region authorized to test new contracting methods. These methods include combining service and timber sale contracts to accomplish more work with fewer contracts, and less money exchanging hands.

PLANNING:

Resource Advisory Committee (RAC): The Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests distributed a release in April 2001 to accept nominations from individuals wishing to serve on the North Central Idaho Resource Advisory Committee. Fifteen local citizens and three replacements (from Idaho, Clearwater, Lewis, Nez Perce and Latah counties) were recommended by the Forest Supervisors to the Secretary of Agriculture and were chosen to serve on the RAC committee. The Craig-Wyden Act of 2000 was designed to stabilize payments received by counties for schools and roads. The RACs will recommend forest management projects to the Forest Service and be one of our most diverse public participation processes thus far.

Canada Lynx Amendment: In April 2000, the Canada lynx was listed as a threatened species. In September 2001, the forest began its 45-day scoping/public comment/issue identification period. The purpose and need for the proposed amendment is to establish land management direction that conserves and promotes recovery of the Canada lynx. The Nez Perce National Forest held its open house at the Supervisor's Office on October 2, 2001.

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Quarterly NEPA Report: We continued to publish and improve the Quarterly Schedule of NEPA Projects. This publication, which is mailed four times a year to nearly 300 interested individuals, includes information about proposed projects. Persons with an interest in the management of the Nez Perce National Forest should ask to be included on the mailing list. The current and previous quarterly report can be accessed electronically at our homepage at: www.fed.us/r1/nezperce.

Forest Plan Revision: The Forest is scheduled for Forest Plan Revision in FY 2003. We are zoned with the Clearwater National Forest for this revision effort. The two forests have been coordinating sources, structure, and types of information that will be needed for revision. The Planning Unit Assessments (Sub-basin assessment) (PUA) will be used as building blocks for revision. The Nez Perce Forest will complete its last PUA (Salmon Sub-Basin) by January 2002.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION:

There are many forest events and programs held throughout the year that stimulate public involvement, the highlights include:

- ❖ Archaeology Week
- ❖ Wildflower week
- ❖ Border Days Parade in Grangeville
- ❖ Nez Perce County Fair in Lewiston
- ❖ Idaho County Fair in Cottonwood
- ❖ Idaho County Sportsman Show in Grangeville
- ❖ Bighorn Sportsman Show in Spokane
- ❖ Horse Council in Boise

Programs:

- ❖ Fire Squirts Camp at Red River
- ❖ Fishing Derbies at Clearwater, Red River, and Moose Creek Districts
- ❖ 7th Grade Field Trip
- ❖ Syringa General Hospital Wilderness Education Program
- ❖ 5th/6th Grade Fish Creek Camp
- ❖ Water Awareness Week (water conservation for 6th grade students)

Other:

- ❖ Trailhead Hosts/Field Contacts

FIRE:

In January 2001, the Nez Perce Forest distributed a news release announcing that funding was available to replace fences that were burned during Fire Season 2000. One application was received from a private property owner in the Burnt Flats Fire area and eleven applications were received from private property owners in the Maloney Fire area. All landowners were reimbursed by the end of June 2001.

Urban interface specialists were available to work with private landowners and rural fire protection districts on wildland urban interface education and identification of issues. Three public meetings were held in July at Elk City, White Bird, and Grangeville.

The Forest worked with eight area high schools to produce Smokey and Athlete posters.

One of our most notable accomplishments this season was the excellent cooperation between fire protection agencies, the public and private companies. The efforts of this group, including rapid reporting, quick suppression, thorough mop-up, and great logistical support, undoubtedly limited the acres of private and public lands burned and in several cases saved structures from burning.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

All targets were met. However, the General Management Review scheduled for September 2001, was postponed until June 2002 due to wildland fire activity.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

A public involvement plan should be developed for each project. This plan should include objectives, identify potentially affected or interested public, and focus on techniques that will match the needs of the public.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

The trend in public involvement is to move toward a collaborative approach as shown in all of our examples above (Stewardship, National Fire Plan, RAC, Lynx Amendment, etc.). This approach will require careful coordination with special interest groups on each of our high priority projects outlined in our annual Program of Work to reach the desired condition.

RECREATION RESOURCES

1) What did we accomplish?

The Forest continued use of a new financial reporting system that required the completion of a new trail and recreation database.

Forest personnel conducted a physical inventory of recreation and trail assets (20% a year).

Continued Recreation Fee Demo Program, which includes most of the current fee campgrounds and the cabin rental program.

Cooperated with Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho County Snowmobile Advisory Committee, High Country Snowmobile Club of Elk City, Valley Cats Snowmobile club of Kooskia, and Sno-Drifters Snowmobile Club of Grangeville to groom 330 miles of snow trails in State Snowmobile Grooming Areas 25A and 25B.

Cooperated with Idaho Parks and recreation in the Park N' Ski program to provide for seven miles of groomed and tracked cross country ski opportunities on the Forest.

The Forest worked with a variety of volunteer groups and individuals to complete trail maintenance, trail reconstruction, and rehabilitation, signing, campground maintenance, and visitor contacts. These volunteers were members of organizations representing motorized trail vehicles (4-wheelers, motorcycles, snowmobiles), stock users, youth groups, and Tribal youth/young adults. Many individuals not associated with organized groups also volunteer their skills to assist with the accomplishment of many recreation-associated tasks.

Administered 65 recreational special use permits for outfitters and guides, recreation events, resort and vender permits.

Continued rental cabin program.

Coordinated efforts with Salmon/Challis National Forest to better manage river patrols on the Salmon River

Personnel administered scenic easements on the Salmon and Selway rivers.

Completed challenge cost share/partnership projects with Idaho Whitewater Association, Mountain Cove School, and the Girl Scouts of America. Projects involved campsite cleanup and noxious weed control on the Main Salmon River.

Maintained developed recreation sites, including campgrounds, boat ramps, and swimming areas.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

Due to lack of funding and personnel, the only new recreation special use permits issued on the Forest were for 1-3 day recreation events.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

Inventory Off-Road-Vehicle (ORV) impacts, particularly those created by All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use, both on and off trails.

Continue development of system that will provide better estimates of the number and kind of recreation users the Forest is serving.

Conduct a comprehensive review of Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) changes.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

While the national trend in recreation use is increasing, recreation dollars to the Nez Perce National Forest have been declining over the past several years. The effects of increased national regulation, high level planning costs, fixed overhead costs, and inflation, aggravate the budget situation. These factors continue to negatively influence the amount of funds available to unit recreation programs. The result has been a loss of permanent and seasonal recreation positions, a reduction in the service and maintenance of recreation facilities, a reduced recreation special use program, and fewer miles of trails maintained.

Despite the reduced funding and loss of positions, the Forest managed to keep all recreation facilities open. This was largely due to the dedication of Forest employees, along with grants, partnerships, and help from volunteers.

It is projected that recreational use within the national forest system will continue to increase in the near future. It is safe to assume that recreation use on the Nez Perce National Forest will follow this trend. This will present a challenge as recreation budgets are projected to be flat or slightly lower over the next three to five years. The recreation and recreation trails programs might be affected in several ways, including:

- Service and maintenance will be a minimum levels
- Some campgrounds may be closed
- The Forest will lose some of its investment in recreational facilities
- Fewer miles of trails will be maintained
- The ability to process recreation special use applications will be curtailed.

Given the recreation projections, it will be incumbent upon the Forest to determine the needs of the public and organize to meet those needs to the fullest extent possible. It should be realized, however, that the recreation programs of the near future might be very different from the current approach to recreation management.

RIVER RECREATION RESOURCES

1) What did we accomplish?

Monitoring of the River recreation resources is required every year as directed in the Forest Plan (V-7). The monitoring was completed for FY 2000. The raw data is available at the Slate Creek Ranger Station. The results of these monitoring efforts are to be reported every five years. The rationale behind these reporting requirements is that while change may occur incrementally with these resources, trends are better explored over longer periods of time. Monitoring results for this resource were reported last year and will be reported again in the FY 2004 report, in order to better display the use and management trends on the river resources.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

A complete review of our monitoring efforts will be reported in the FY 2004 Monitoring Report (which will be published in 2005).

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

A complete review of our monitoring efforts will be reported in the FY 2004 Monitoring Report (which will be published in 2005).

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

A complete review of the social, ecological, and administrative trends will be reported in the FY 2004 Monitoring Report (which will be published in 2005).

SOIL AND WATER RESOURCES

1) What did we accomplish?

Sixty-two acres of soil and water improvement projects were accomplished using a variety of funding sources. The assigned target was 10 acres. The Forest Plan goal is 200 acres per year.

Water quality and stream flow monitoring was conducted at eight stations.

Implementation or effectiveness monitoring was documented on four timber sales, one road obliteration project, one wild fire, one mine rehabilitation project, and one instream habitat improvement project.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

Most project monitoring was qualitative rather than quantitative due to the funding constraints and work priorities. Several watershed improvement projects were delayed due to other work priorities and lack of staff.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

The Forest's watershed improvement program is suffering from a lack of funds to implement identified projects. Additional emphasis should be given to securing funds from sources internal and external to the Forest Service to accomplish these projects.

When designing road decommissioning or road-to-trail conversion projects, it is generally most effective to recontour the road prism as fully as possible if the primary goal is site and watershed recovery.

Single season temporary roads have limited utility on timber sales due to difficulties of operating in short time frames. Single season restrictions are a valuable tool, but should only be prescribed if they are feasible.

Criteria for meeting soil quality standards should be consistent between the logging, slash disposal, and site preparation phases of treatment.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

Watershed condition has probably improved gradually in most watersheds over the past decade, because of marked reductions in road construction and logging, and reduction of mining and grazing impacts. Recovery has been primarily natural. Watershed improvement projects within the last few years have become more ambitious in scope, including road obliteration and decommissioning, as well as mine reclamation projects and channel and valley bottom restoration projects. Staffing and funding limitations have limited accomplishments, as has priority of other work.

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Subbasin-scale assessments identify the need to more highly emphasize restoration in certain key watersheds to recover aquatic habitat potential. Developing a coordinated strategy could increase recovery effectiveness. Recovery rates could be improved by giving higher priority to restoration in program planning and implementation.

WILDLIFE RESOURCES

1) What did we accomplish?

We successfully partnered with Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation for project work on the Forest.

Discovered natural risks and initiated adaptive types. Forest personnel have begun designing and implementing catastrophic fire risk reduction and ecosystem restoration treatments incorporating timber harvest/thinning and/or prescribed fire plans as tools, i.e. Salmon River Canyon fire project, Meadow Face Stewardship Project, and Clean Slate Project.

We continue to use biocontrol agents to help suppress noxious weed infestations affecting native plants and big game ranges.

Rejuvenated and enhanced forage production for big game using timber harvest, thinning, and prescribed fire.

We completed suitability habitat mapping for lynx on the Forest. In addition, we continued implementation of conservation measures identified in the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy. A public open house was conducted to initiate the Forest Plan Amendment for Canada lynx.

Reviewed effects of land management activities on federally listed species and prepared 89 biological assessments and evaluations to meet ESA requirements. We informally consulted with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in potential conflict circumstances.

Initiated broad-scale habitat inventories in ponderosa pine and dry Douglas fir cover types (on burned and unburned sites), for Neotropical migratory birds on the Forest. Forest personnel continued coordination and data sharing across the Northern Region to address associated, emerging international biological diversity issues related to land birds.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

Prescription burning of big game winter range acres fell short of Forest Plan objectives by about 2,600 acres for FY2001.

Population trend monitoring of pileated woodpecker did not get done.

Timber harvest treatment on big game winter ranges again fell short of Forest Plan goals for FY2001.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

Population trend monitoring of elk, big horn sheep, and moose should be dropped as Forest Service monitoring items since these species are regulated principally through hunting and are carefully managed and monitored by Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Drop individual Management Indicator Species and replace with various species complexes or groups that exhibit common (within group) thematic requirements, but are diverse and complementary (between groups) in overall habitat needs. Utilize GIS technology for landscape perspective.

Incorporate and formally adopt the north Idaho old-growth standards, rather than the generalized standards that exist in the current Forest Plan.

Change snag monitoring to become a coordinated, joint effort among wildlife/timber/fire and fuel wood administration disciplines to ensure greater integration.

Change road density monitoring (i.e. open/closed roads and trails) to a multi-resource monitoring element using GIS technology. Consider adapting habitat effectiveness monitoring for elk (summer), forest carnivores, grizzly bear habitat, and other human-activity-adverse species to use this single variable.

Incorporate habitat diversity (vegetation communities/successional stages status) as a new, GIS-tracked, multi-resource monitoring element Forest-wide.

Secure additional staff time and resources now spent on listed species population monitoring to more fully gather and monitor baseline data on emerging sensitive species and biodiversity issues.

Drop the monitoring of grand fir/Pacific yew (designated management area #21 in the Forest Plan) communities due to major shifts in forest management and harvest strategies away from clear-cut/burn techniques.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

Lower elevation habitat types and “protected” old growth areas are too heavily stocked and fuel rich to remain self-sustaining in the long term without active fuel reduction using intermediate harvests, reintroduction of fire or both. Several sensitive species as well as numerous Neotropical migrant birds may be in decline partially because of the accumulation of acres that have had natural fire processes interrupted in these habitats.

Most federally listed terrestrial species (with the exception of lynx) are in relatively good condition with upward trends. Recovery for bald eagles and wolves is on schedule or ahead of schedule. Peregrine falcons were delisted in 1999. Grizzly bear reintroduction and recovery has been indefinitely shelved by Interior Department.

Current condition and trend of several sensitive species and some emerging biodiversity-issue species (i.e. neotropical migrant birds) are under-studied and poorly understood from the landscape perspective.

Big game winter range conditions and forage distribution is being cited along with summer forage conditions as a key factor in slow recovery of local elk population numbers from heavy hunting pressure and effects of predator numbers. Forest carnivores including wolverine, wolves, lynx, and other species have no doubt been indirectly affected by past fire exclusion and unchecked forest succession in many habitat types.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

FIRE AND FUELS

1) What did we accomplish?

The Forest continued successful implementation of the Federal Wildland and Prescribed Fire Management Policy on the Forest in FY 2001. This included the use of appropriate management response, wildland fire use, and management ignited prescribed fire to meet Forest Plan goals, standards, and expectations.

A Programmatic Biological Assessment of the Fire Management Program for Fall Chinook Salmon, Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon, Steelhead Trout, Bull Trout (ESA listed species), and Spring Chinook Salmon, Westslope Cutthroat Trout (USFS sensitive species) continued to be implemented.

National Fire Management Analysis was completed in 1997, establishing a most cost efficient level (MEL) for the Nez Perce National Forest. This analysis helps establish the annual level of funding for fire protection. The Forest was funded at MEL and followed the Region One Workforce Plan to hire additional seasonal firefighters.

The FY 2001 fire season was very active in the Northern Region. Fire danger indicators reached the high and very high levels earlier than normal and continued to climb until all stations were reporting extreme values. Very high fire danger was caused by a long period that was nearly rain-free. The dry summer weather had fewer thunderstorms than normal, which limited the number of lightning caused fires.

Fire	Administrative Unit(s)	Acres
Taco	Salmon River RD	3,350
Earthquake	Clearwater RD	1,260

All wildfires on the Forest were successfully managed under appropriate management response policies. Lightning fire starts and, therefore, total fire starts and total acreage were well below average. Human caused fire starts and acreage burned were above average.

Nez Perce NF	Fires	Ten Year Average	Acres	Five Year Average
Total	99	173	11,989	7,771
Human Caused	14		1,376	
Lightning (AMR)	68		3,364	
Wildland Fire Use	17		7,249	

An uncharacteristic late thunderstorm caused ignitions that were managed for benefits in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness. The 10-year trend for managing natural ignitions for resource benefits shows an increase.

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The natural fuels/hazardous fuels reduction program exceeded the Forest Plan projected output of 6,265 acres for the 1998 to 2007 period by accomplishing 13,279 acres this year. This also exceeded our MAR target of 9,000 acres.

Fuel treatment from all funding sources increased slightly in FY 2001, the fifth year of program increase. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation contributed funding to prescribed burning projects.

The annual updates to the Fire Management Plan were distributed in June. Annual fire preparedness reviews were informally conducted this year. The rapid escalation of fire suppression work precluded formal systematic reviews. The annual Clearwater and Nez Perce Fire Zone Report was completed.

An interdisciplinary team established for the Salmon River Canyon Project continued an interagency and multi-forest effort to produce an environmental impact statement proposing 214,000 acres of prescribed burning treatments in support of hazardous fuel reduction and ecosystem management.

The Red River Ranger District reviewed the post treatment effects of the Elkhorn Jersey Project. The project is unique in that it used management ignited prescribed fire in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. The review group found that project implementation was consistent with the Forest Plan, the Decision Memo for the project, and with the site specific burn plan.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

The Brush Disposal MAR target of 1,300 acres was not met; only 1,060 acres were treated. Planning for future projects generally fell behind schedule.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

Monitoring of activity fuel treatment and hazardous fuels treatments should be done in an interdisciplinary setting to ensure all resource objectives are being identified and met.

More thorough and consistent monitoring of the Programmatic Biological Assessment for fish needs to occur.

Total acres treated by fire needs to be monitored (Wildland Fire Use and prescribed fire). Monitor by ecosystems (Land Type Association) to see if we are meeting objectives to maintain and sustain healthy ecosystems.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

Appropriate Management Response

Suppression oriented responses to wildland fires are generally successful; this continues the past trend of protection of wildland resource values.

Fuel accumulation in short, moderate, and long fire interval groups has occurred with the potential result being more acres burning at higher fire intensities. The current trend toward

higher intensity fires is a departure from the historic pattern of a variety of fire intensities on the landscape.

Prescribed Fire

Fewer acres are being burned today from both planned and unplanned ignitions that burned historically (before fire exclusion policies began). The recommendations from Subbasin assessments and watershed analysis are for increased prescribed fire and/or natural fire in most ecosystems. The need is especially great in short fire return interval ecosystems. The Forest has been increasing hazardous fuels treatments and with the completion of the Salmon River Canyon Environmental Impact Statement will be positioned to significantly increase acres treated.

Field reviews indicate that the objectives of prescribed burns are being met.

Despite increases in prescribed burning, the need for fire disturbance processes identified in Subbasin assessments will not be met.

The trend for prescribed fire projects is for increasingly complex objectives, constraints, and mitigations; (i.e. air quality, Threatened and Endangered species, noxious weeds) the result of which is that future accomplishment could be constrained.

Wildland Fire Use

Wilderness areas where natural fires are allowed to burn are returning some areas to a more historic vegetative condition. However, these fires are burning fewer acres than were burned in the pre-exclusion era, and current fire intensities are often higher than in the past. The desired condition would be to return to historic fire regimes with greater acreages burned at lower fire intensities.

INSECTS AND DISEASE

1) What did we accomplish?

Insect and disease conditions on the Forest were monitored via aerial detection flights and field reconnaissance. This continues to contribute to the data set of historic conditions.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

None.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

Monitoring results indicate that the Forest is experiencing outbreaks of at least three insects that may require a shift in management priorities in order to protect and restore forest, wildlife, and aquatic resources. As this information is incorporated into watershed assessments, it will help identify specific needs.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

Insects and diseases are an integral part of the ecosystem. They are part of the disturbance regime and have contributed to the makeup and structure of the forests we have now. Current outbreak levels of Douglas-fir beetle and mountain pine beetle are above desired levels. Losses of whitebark pine to white pine blister rust and mountain pine beetle are far beyond desired conditions. Mortality of subalpine fir caused by the balsam wooly adelgid and the western balsam bark beetle are increasing and could become a larger concern in the future.

NOXIOUS WEEDS

1) What did we accomplish?

Forest personnel treated 1150 acres (all methods).

Three thousand six hundred fifty insects were released across 18 sites for control of spotted knapweed and yellow star thistle. Six different insects were released.

Began weed treatment in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness.

Implemented weed free forage requirements and washing of off-road logging equipment as prevention practices.

The Forest continues to integrate the noxious weed program with two coordinated weed management efforts in the Salmon and Clearwater drainages.

Forest personnel were involved with federal and state agencies in implementing an interagency Weed Management Strategy for Idaho.

The Forest received a grant from the Regional Partnership Program to use hyperspectral images to detect small infestations of weeds with low canopy cover along the Salmon River Canyon. The project includes the University of Idaho, Idaho County, Idaho Department of Agriculture, and Bureau of Land Management.

The Forest, working with the University of Idaho, Forest Health Protection Group, and the Nez Perce Tribe Bio-control Center, monitored biocontrol agents for yellow star thistle in the Salmon and Clearwater basins. This work included the distribution, release and monitoring of five different insects that have been approved for release. It also incorporates vegetation monitoring as part of the management of the release sites. Noxious weed risk assessments are being incorporated into project analysis.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

Treated noxious weed acres were only approximately three percent of the total infestations found on the Forest.

Weed management off the Forest across all lands is also far below the level necessary to slow the spread of many weeds. This has forced weed managers to strongly prioritize management efforts.

The coordinated implementation of prevention practices statewide (all lands) is poorly developed, causing ineffective and inconsistent results across a broad regional scale.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

More emphasis and time needs to be placed on coordinating practices and treatment across all ownerships.

A long-term early alert system needs to be developed to track the introduction and spread new invasive exotic plants into the region and state.

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Additional funds are needed if weed managers are to manage and treat invasive exotic plants at a biologically significant level.

Noxious weed management needs to be integrated into vegetation restoration strategies that are being implemented across all property ownerships.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

Many noxious weeds and invasive exotics continue to spread across the Forest and on other lands. Low elevation grasslands, conifer savannas, and recently disturbed sites are at greatest risk for invasion by exotic plants.

Transportation corridors (trails and roads) and river systems continue to be the main vector of weed spread.

Weed management efforts are becoming more coordinated across all properties as a result of the formation of broad scale partnerships.

RANGE

1) What did we accomplish?

Basic permit administration was accomplished on 28 active allotments. Livestock grazing did not occur on 3 allotments because permittees decided not to run on the National Forest in 2001.

Implementation monitoring of the Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) was accomplished on 22 allotments.

Grazing was within allowable use levels prescribed in AOI on all but two riparian areas that were monitored. A total of 48 riparian reaches were inspected as part of the grazing monitoring program.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

NEPA process on scheduled allotments was deferred due to increased work under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Additional effectiveness monitoring sites along sensitive stream channels are needed.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

Improved administration and inspections of existing range improvements to ensure that required maintenance is completed.

Improved communication between fish biologists, range specialists, and permittees concerning effective grazing practices and management of riparian habitat for federally listed fish.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

From visual assessments and implementation monitoring, riparian areas generally appear to be improving or maintaining conditions within active allotments. There remains isolated areas where grazing is affecting specific riparian attributes. Long-term effectiveness monitoring is needed to validate these assessments.

Upland (non-forested) vegetation is generally in stable condition. However, many low elevation grasslands have a significant component of annual grasses or exotic forbs. Little change is expected in the condition of non-forest vegetation over the next five years.

SENSITIVE PLANTS

1) What did we accomplish?

Forest personnel continued to survey Sensitive plants in high probability habitats. Approximately 2,000 acres were surveyed in 2001. Surveys were conducted within planned project areas.

New occurrences of, broad-fruit mariposa, Cluster lady-slipper, and Puzzling halimolobos were found and documented.

Monitoring continued on Puzzling halimolobos and Cluster lady-slipper.

The Forest contributed to a pollination research project and long term monitoring on Cluster lady-slipper lead by the Pacific Northwest Research Station.

Biological Assessments (BA) and Biological Evaluations (BE) continue to be completed for proposed projects.

Rare plants are being integrated into landscape and planning area assessments.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

Monitoring data over the past few years has not been summarized.

General inventory of suitable habitat outside of project areas continues to be a low priority action.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

Rare plants need to be more integrated into project prescriptions and design. Many projects could be designed to improve habitat structure for sensitive plants along with accomplishing other vegetation objectives.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

It appears at this time that the known populations of our sensitive plants are secure, and there is a low probability of a loss of population viability over the short-term. Monitoring suggests that there is significant yearly variation in population levels. This variation appears to be a common trait among herbaceous plants.

TIMBER AND SILVICULTURE

1) What did we accomplish?

One hundred twenty two acres were precommercially thinned.

Planted 1,119 acres.

Harvested 1,976 acres or 18.9 million board feet*.

Sold 1.1 MMBF of non-chargeable (not part of ASQ) component such as firewood and post and pole material.

Sold 9.5 MMBF of regular (part of ASQ) component. This volume sold was volume added to active timber sale contracts.

2) What outputs and/or work was planned that did not get accomplished?

Timber sale offering fell short of target by 10.5 MMBF.

3) What practices need to be changed based on monitoring results?

Vegetation management acres need to be increased if the Forest Plan objectives are to be met.

4) What is the current condition and trend of the resource when compared to the desired condition?

Higher than historical stocking is contributing to increased insect and disease incidence, as well as contributing to potentially higher fire intensities. The trend needs to change to lower density and create more shade intolerant seral species stands.

*These timber volumes can be converted to CCF measure by multiplying by 1.78, the average forest conversion factor.

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