

Uinta National Forest

Land and Resource Management Plan Revision



August 1999

No. 1

Opening Remarks From the Forest Supervisor

Dear Uinta National Forest stakeholders:

The Uinta National Forest is beginning the revision of the Land and Resource Management Plan of the Uinta National Forest (also referred to as the Uinta Forest Plan). The revised Forest Plan will provide management direction for the Uinta National Forest for the next 10-15 years. This newsletter is part of our public involvement process to let the public know where we are in the revision process, and which topics we are proposing to address in the revision.

Much of the data and geographic information needed for the revision has been compiled. After a 1998 inventory of the rivers on the Forest, four were found to be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. In 1997 we began updating the inventory of roadless areas on the Forest. Draft updates to the roadless areas were then identified and presented to the public. Comments on the inventory were evaluated, and in May 1999 a revised draft inventory was released. The roadless area inventory will be updated as appropriate and included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Forest Plan revision (planned for release in the fall or winter of 2000).

We are compiling an Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) and expect to complete it by September 30, 1999, at which time copies will be mailed to the public. The AMS will be used to more effectively involve the public in the initial revision process. The AMS will help the Forest Service and the public reach a common understanding of what will and will not be addressed in the Forest Plan revision effort by providing the background information we used to reach our decisions. The public will be able to use the information contained in the AMS to provide detailed comments for alternative development. The AMS will be finalized prior to release of and summarized in the Draft Revised Forest Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the revised

Forest Plan. The Final AMS will incorporate public comments and any new direction released prior to that time.

Information regarding the monitoring and implementation of the 1984 Forest Plan has been collected. Some key information from the AMS, including a list of the proposed revision topics, is summarized in this newsletter. The revision topics will be used to frame the scope of the Forest Plan revision. We welcome any comments you might have regarding the proposed revision topics. To be most useful, we need to receive your comments by September 7, 1999. You may mail these to the Uinta National Forest at the address on the last page of this newsletter. Additional, more extensive opportunities to comment and participate in the Uinta Forest Plan revision will be provided in October 1999.

We anticipate initiating the formal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for the Forest Plan revision in October 1999. This process will begin with formal scoping and the publication of a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register. At that time you will be mailed scoping documents and a copy of the AMS, which will provide useful background information for providing more detailed comments. We will also be hosting formal meetings to gather your input. We are tentatively planning those meetings for October 26th through the 28th. More information will be provided with the scoping materials you will receive around October 1st.

If you have any questions regarding the revision process or any information in this newsletter, please feel free to contact Marlene DePietro, Forest Planning Team Leader, or Reese Pope, Ecosystem Group Leader, at 801-342-5100.

Sincerely,

/s/ Peter W. Karp

PETER W. KARP
Forest Supervisor



Introduction and Scope

Throughout Forest Service history, managers have sought to sustain resource-based commodity production and meet the demand for a broad mix of natural resource goods, services, and values. Changes in the way Americans value their public lands require a reevaluation of the Forest Service stewardship objectives. Our mission remains simple and succinct, “Caring for the Land and Serving People.” Based on law and the principles of stewardship, our challenge is to achieve quality land management under the sustainable multiple-use concept to meet the diverse needs of people, now and in the future. The 1984 Uinta Forest Plan establishes general management direction for lands administered by the Uinta National Forest. Using broad language, the Forest Plan determines the availability of land for resource management, predicts levels of resource use and outputs, and provides for a variety of resource management practices.

Six Decisions Made in Forest Plans

- Forest-wide goals and objectives
- Forest-wide standards and guidelines
- Management area delineations and associated prescriptions
- Identification of lands not suited for timber production
- Monitoring and evaluation requirements
- Recommendations for official designation of wilderness

Revision of the Forest Plan

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires each national forest to develop a forest plan and update or revise it when conditions have significantly changed, or at least every 15 years. As noted above, the Uinta National Forest completed its current Forest Plan in 1984. In 1998 Congress prohibited expenditure of funds on formal forest plan revision. In 1999 prohibitions were lifted for 14 forests across the nation, including the Uinta. These actions have combined to create an extremely short time frame for our revision effort.

New regulations are being proposed as a result of a two year review of the Forest Service planning process. Until such time as the recommendations from the review committee can be considered and incorporated (consistent with existing

NFMA regulations), the revision will follow regulations as they are currently found in 36 CFR 219.

Analysis of the Management Situation

The Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) describes implementation of the current Forest Plan and resulting management conditions on the Forest. It was developed through a comprehensive review of the Forest Plan, identified changed conditions, and new information, including new public issues and changed public attitudes. The NFMA regulations require that an AMS be prepared when initiating forest planning. The preliminary AMS summarizes the current biological, physical, and social and economic conditions pertinent to the Forest and identifies areas or items where management direction in the Forest Plan needs to be established or changed.

Determining the Scope of the Forest Plan Revision

The regulations found in 36 CFR 219.12(b) provide the following direction regarding the scope of the revision process: “The Forest Supervisor shall determine the major public issues, management concerns, and resource use and development opportunities to be addressed in the planning process.” The first step in determining the scope of the Forest Plan revision involves a review of current laws, regulations, policies, and direction. The Uinta’s first review effort resulted in the identification of the following items:

- Timber suitability
- Recommendation on wilderness
- Recommendations on Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Needs for change

Determining Needs for Change

Considering national, regional, and local direction, policy, and strategies for natural resource management, the Forest initiated a four-step process to identify the “needs for change” in management direction on the Forest. The process included:

- A review of monitoring items,
- A review of existing legislation, regulations and Forest Service Manual policy and direction,
- A review of management direction in the 1984 Forest Plan, and
- An assessment of existing conditions.



Public Involvement and Collaborative Planning

The authority for making forest plan decisions rests with designated federal officials, in this case, the Intermountain Regional Forester and Uinta National Forest Supervisor. These decision-makers are responsible for ensuring appropriate public participation and guaranteeing no group has undue influence or unfair access to the decision process. The Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972, as amended, provides the guidelines for how national forests work with the public. To this end, decision-makers and Forest Planning Team members will:

- Be effective listeners,
- Meet with single individuals at their request,
- Speak to groups upon their invitation,
- Conduct public meetings open to all who are interested,
- Gather factual data from the public but not solicit advice,
- Seek input from intergovernmental partners, and
- Interact with the public via the mail.

Setting the Context for Forest Plan Revision

The Forest Plan is part of a 50-year framework for long-range resource planning established by the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act. The Forest Service has conducted several reviews (through Forest Service channels) throughout the planning process to help set the context for forest plan revision. This review of national, regional, and local findings provides the context in which forest planning occurs.

National Direction, Policy, and Strategy Review Findings

On March 2, 1998, Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck unveiled the agency's Natural Resource Agenda for the 21st Century. The agenda focuses on four key areas:

- Watershed health and restoration
- Sustainable forest ecosystem management
- Forest roads
- Recreation

One of the primary forces affecting forest management today is the shift in focus toward ecosystem management and sustainability. Ecosystems are places where all plants, animals, minerals, soils, waters, climates, people, and processes of life interact as a whole. They may be small, such

as a rotting log, or large, such as a mountain range; smaller ecosystems are nested within larger ecosystems. The structure and functions of a healthy ecosystem allow maintenance of a desired condition of biological diversity, biotic integrity, and ecological processes.

The goal of ecosystem management is to restore and/or sustain the health, productivity, and biological diversity of ecosystems. Social values and economic goals are included as an important part of all ecosystems. Ecosystem management focuses on overall ecosystem health and productivity rather than on achieving a set of resource outputs. This is achieved through an understanding of how different parts of the ecosystem function with each other.

Regional Direction, Policy, and Strategy Review Findings

The Uinta National Forest is an integral part of larger ecosystems. As part of the context for Uinta National Forest planning efforts, it is important to consider the findings and management strategies contained in these larger assessments and their application on the Forest:

- Utah Northern Goshawk Project, in progress
- Wildland Fire Analysis, in progress
- Sub-Regional Assessment of Properly Functioning Conditions for Areas Encompassing the National Forests of Northern Utah, completed May 1998.

Local Direction, Policy, and Strategy Review Findings

The Forest has completed Landscape Assessments for the Strawberry, Vernon, and White River areas, and is working to complete Landscape Assessments for the American Fork, Diamond Fork, and North Zone areas. The scope of these assessments is to review the interrelationships between the biological, social, and economic components of landscape; identify cause and effects associated with historical land uses; and describe the range of natural variability of these components. This data is then synthesized to identify the relative sustainability of each component and to develop a desired future condition for each landscape.



Application of Ecosystem Management in Forest Planning

Forest planning determines standards, guidelines, goals, and objectives affecting the health and productivity of the forest's ecosystems. Ecosystems are first defined and their needs assessed through Properly Functioning Condition (PFC), defined as ecosystems at any temporal or spatial scale when they are dynamic and resilient to disturbances in structure, composition, and processes of their biological or physical components.

While there are differences between ecosystem management and the way National Forest System lands have been managed in the past, we are still managing under the Multiple-Use, Sustained-Yield Act. We have, however, placed a greater emphasis on sustaining ecological processes as well as providing for a wide variety of goods, services, conditions, and values. The 1984 Uinta Forest Plan lacks an integrated, multiscale focus on the principles of ecosystem management. The ecosystem management framework will establish limits, to some degree, as to what we will and will not address in the Forest Plan revision. The framework will also influence how we define and describe desired future conditions.

Principles of Ecosystem Management

In 1992, the Deputy Chief for the National Forest System, James Overbay, noted that we must take an ecosystem management approach to multiple-use, sustained-yield management.

The *Report of the Ecological Society of America Committee on the Scientific Basis for Ecosystem Management* defined the principles of ecosystem management as Sustainability, Goals, Sound Ecological Models and Understanding, Complexity and Connectedness, Dynamic Character of Ecosystems, Context and Scale, Humans as Ecosystem Components, and Adaptability and Accountability.

Steps Required to Implement Ecosystem Management

The four steps or actions identified to implement ecosystem management are:

- Delineating ecosystems,
- Understanding ecosystems' ecologies,
- Making management choices, and

- Adapting management to new information.

The Forest Plan Model

Work has been ongoing in the Northern and Intermountain Regions of the Forest Service to refine the model of what a forest plan accomplishes. Today, with an emphasis on ecological sustainability and collaborative planning, we envision a Uinta Forest Plan that:

- Provides clear desired future condition descriptions--a "visualization of the future landscape,"
- Reflects the principles of ecosystem management and sustainability,
- Builds proposed pathways from the current state to the desired future,
- Preserves options for the future,
- Shows how relevant policies and decisions tie together to affect the management of this national forest,
- Provides a framework within which future, more site-specific decisions can be made,
- Considers the broader geographic, political, economic, and social landscape and the special role the Forest contributes to sustainability in that context,
- Is built from collaborative relationships with others who have relevant information, knowledge, expertise, and interest,
- Is adaptable to new scientific understanding of natural and social systems as well as to changing societal conditions and values,
- Includes meaningful monitoring requirements for evaluation of outcomes including making changes as necessary,
- Integrates budget realities,
- Recognizes that some issues, like developing conservation strategies for wide-ranging species, need to be addressed at a regional (multi-forest) scale, while others, such as developing travel management plans, need to be addressed on a smaller, landscape scale, and
- Is the result of open public debate and clear disclosure of divergent interests and of difficult choices about what this national forest will be and provide in the future.



Proposed Forest Plan Revision Topics

A. Topics Which Must Be Addressed in the Forest Plan Revision

Law and/or regulation require the following topics be considered in all forest plan revisions.

1. Wild and Scenic Rivers
2. Wilderness recommendations
3. Reevaluation of lands not suited for timber
4. Areas where change may be needed

B. Topics Where Monitoring Indicates Existing Direction Is Inconsistent with Achieving Forest Plan, Ecosystem Management, or Natural Resource Agenda Goals

Our experience in implementing the Forest Plan indicates existing management direction for the following topics is too limited or is inappropriate. Forest plan direction could be changed on a project by project basis through various amendments; however, addressing these topics through the revision would eliminate the need for several future site-specific amendments and would facilitate achievement of ecosystem management and Natural Resource Agenda goals.

1. Revise timber practices
2. Eliminate game retrieval policy
3. Expand management direction for areas of heavy dispersed recreation use
4. Revise fuelwood harvest levels
5. Update/revise Management Indicator Species
6. Eliminate emphasis on adding developed recreation capacity
7. Remove post and pole harvest objectives

C. Topics Where the Current Forest Plan Insufficiently Articulates Management Intent

Our experience has shown the lack of specificity or direction in the following areas has hampered implementation of the Forest Plan. Addressing these topics, while not required and possibly resulting in considerable work, would provide the necessary over-arching framework to allow effective implementation of the Forest Plan.

1. Refine management area boundaries
2. Define management prescriptions
3. Identify desired future conditions for all ecosystems

4. Identify desired recreation environment (Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS))
5. Identify desired scenery management objectives
6. Delineate areas suitable for domestic livestock grazing
7. Add direction for managing cave resources

D. Topics Where Corrections Would Not Require Significant Revision Resources

Addressing these topics in the Forest Plan revision would simplify and clarify the intent of the Forest Plan and would not likely require significant resource expenditures.

1. Remove administrative or procedural direction
2. Correct typographical and description errors
3. Correct and clarify direction for 3-pasture rest rotation
4. Clarify existing minerals goals and objectives
5. Incorporate Best Management Practices and air quality standards
6. Remove direction for afforestation of oak woodlands
7. Eliminate unrequired objectives and implementation schedules
8. Update property management goals and terminology
9. Remove direction allowing horse use during hunting season in all developed sites
10. Identify the Jumpoff Point Research Natural Area (RNA) and its management direction
11. Differentiate standards from guidelines
12. Revise/correct the section describing amendment of the Forest Plan
13. Eliminate redundant monitoring requirements
14. Correct the monitoring frequency for timber suitability
15. Update acreages and other "Current Situation" data in the Forest Plan
16. Use People at One Time (PAOTs) instead of Recreation Visitor Days (RVDs) for developed recreation supply objectives

E. Topics to Be Addressed Through Continuous Assessment and Planning

The following topics are areas where existing management direction may need to be clarified, refined, or changed. Addressing these topics in the Forest Plan revision would require significant resources. These are topics where implementation can usually proceed and be consistent with existing Forest Plan direction (only occasional site-specific amendments to Forest Plan direction may be needed to allow implementation to proceed). These topics can be addressed using the principles of Continuous Assessment and Planning.



1. Topics Where Additional Direction May Require Significant Revision Resources and Where Such Direction Is Consistent With Existing Forest Plan Direction

There may be a need for additional, more specific management direction in the following topics. These topics apply to much of the Forest, but addressing them through the revision would likely require significant additional resources. Furthermore, additional, more specific direction can be developed and implemented through site-specific decisions for these topics and be within the decision space provided for in existing Forest Plan direction (i.e., no amendments would be necessary).

- i. Refine grazing standards for stream channel types
- ii. Establish management direction for non-greenline conditions in streamside management zones
- iii. Establish species-specific conservation measures for threatened, endangered, or sensitive species

2. Topics More Appropriately Addressed Through Localized, Site-Specific Analysis

There is a need for management decisions to be made on the following topics, to the extent they involve Forest Service discretionary decisions. These topics involve proposed uses of specific sites. More thorough, detailed analysis and consideration of these topics, and the issues related to them, would occur if they were analyzed as projects proposed outside of the revision process.

- i. Wild and Scenic River suitability determinations
- ii. Wildlife reintroductions
- iii. Nonconforming uses in wilderness areas
- iv. Energy corridors

A. Topics Where No Change Is Proposed

These topics cover areas where the Forest Plan provides management direction that some may want changed, but which otherwise appears to be adequate (and therefore, not a need for change).

- i. Western Uinta Basin Oil and Gas leasing decisions
- ii. Desired future conditions established through the Rangeland Amendment
- iii. Predator control direction established through the Predator Control Environmental Impact Statement

- iv. Direction to harvest timber only where needed for forest health or other resource objectives
- v. Identification of recreation residences
- vi. Direction established through the ongoing Wildland Fire Analysis
- vii. Direction established through the ongoing Utah Northern Goshawk Project

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