

2. Public Issues, Management Concerns and Opportunities

OVERVIEW

Local issues and concerns have been identified for the Cibola National Forest and the Kiowa, Rita Blanca, McClellan Creek, and Black Kettle National Grasslands. The Forest Plan and alternatives to it are designed to respond to these issues as well as RPA Program objectives assigned to the Forest and Grasslands in the Regional Guide.

Issues, concerns, and opportunities were identified from the Regional Guide and from comments solicited from the public and Forest Service employees. Comments were received in response to a number of public involvement workshops and to an information brochure and response form mailed to the public.

Comments received were analyzed in a scoping process to determine the most relevant issues and concerns. Content analysis was then utilized to extract substantive comments from the responses. Results of the analyses were compared and consolidated in a summary of responses. A list of major issues was compiled, based on whether an issue was: 1) specifically relevant to the Forest and/or Grasslands; 2) of widespread concern to the public; 3) within the Forest Supervisor's authority to resolve; 4) long-term in duration; and 5) within the Forest's physical and biological capability.

ISSUES

The following information describes the major issues and opportunities which were selected to be addressed in the planning process and how the proposed Forest Plan responds to each issue.

FIREWOOD AND MISCELLANEOUS PRODUCTS

"Demands for firewood will result in the future supply being less in quantity, or quality, or not in locations desired or accessible by users. The Forest lacks management direction for a coordinated firewood program."

Quantifiable Comparison

In Period 1

Total average annual firewood production

<u>Period 1</u>
15,500 MBF
31.0 M cords

Non-Quantifiable Comparison

The Forest will not be able to meet the expected future demands for firewood. Two-thirds of the firewood produced in early periods results from available dead and down material. The remainder results from commercial green firewood sales and slash generated from timber sale activities. Additional firewood is also available from modification of the pinyon-juniper overstory for range and wildlife habitat improvement work.

By Period 5, 50 percent of the firewood produced will come from green firewood sales and timber harvest slash.

In addition to the volumes displayed in the Quantifiable Comparison, overstory modification annually provides 2,391 MBF for Periods 1 and 2 and 290 MBF for Periods 3 and 4. Overstory modification reduces acreage available for firewood production by 12 percent.

The Plan meets 48 percent of the projected firewood demands in Period 1 and only 18 percent in Period 5.

RANGE MANAGEMENT

"Forage production and/or intensity of management on approximately 75 percent of the Forest grazing allotments, excluding the National Grasslands, is inadequate to support permitted livestock. Current levels of use and management intensity on these allotments result in declining site productivity and unacceptable soil loss."

Quantifiable
Comparison

In Periods 1 and 3

Average annual permitted use (MAUMs)		Average annual grazing capacity (MAUMs)		Management intensity in Period 5 (MAcres)					
Period 1	Period 3	Period 1	Period 3	A	B	C	D	E	X
189.7	180.9	185.2	190.0	110.9	766.7	117.3	142.1	363.1	87.8

Non-Quantifiable
Comparison

Moderate reductions in permitted livestock use and increased grazing capacity because of increased management and investment in structural and nonstructural improvements will result in balancing use with capacity in Period 3 for the National Forest. The National Grasslands are currently balanced and will remain balanced. Once this balance is obtained, range conditions will improve because of increased ground cover and soil loss will be reduced. Plant and anise l diversity, watershed condition and water quality will also improve. Long-term productivity is enhanced as range condition improves.

SOIL AND WATER

Resource use and activities have created unacceptable soil erosion and reduced water quality on some watersheds on the Cibola. Soil productivity has been reduced on these areas, and continuing erosion further reduces potential production."

Quantifiable
Comparison

At the end of Period 5

Percent change in soil loss from present	Satisfactory watershed acres (MAcres)
- 10	1,478.9

Non-quantifiable
Comparison

Balancing livestock use with capacity, increased range management, direct watershed treatment such as pitting, interseeding, and water spreading, and some travelway closure and road reconstruction will result in increased ground cover and moderate reduction in soil loss. These actions will lead to long-term productivity of all related resources. Watershed condition will change from the current level of 80 percent unsatisfactory to 80 percent satisfactory by the end of Period 5.

PROVIDE VARIOUS RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

- "Demand for dispersed recreation opportunities, including off-road vehicle use and winter sports activities, has steadily increased. This results in visitor conflicts and resource conflicts."
- Demand for developed recreation, especially opportunities for large group use areas near Albuquerque, exceeds capacity. Overcrowding exists on peak days. Opportunities need to be identified in private and public sectors for various types of public use sites."

Quantifiable
Comparison

At the end of Period 5

Developed Recreation Additions		Recreation Use (MRVD) Developed Dispersed (excluding wildlife)	
(PAOT)	(Acres)		
9,470	916	1,321.5	1,084.7

Non-Quantifiable
Comparison

Future need for dispersed recreation in Period 5 is satisfied at the 64 percent level. Only 32 percent of needed trail construction and 28 percent of needed trail reconstruction will be met during the planning period. Full service level management is provided in approximately one-fourth of the management areas for dispersed recreation.

Developed recreation meets 59 percent of the expected needs. Rehabilitation of existing sites and new site construction provide 56 percent of the needed PAOT to meet developed site needs. The private sector will provide a substantial amount of the PAOT on Forest land. Full service level management will be provided at 40

percent of the developed sites Forest-wide, with the Sandia Ranger District level at 65 percent. Some site deterioration can be expected because full service level management is not at 100 percent.

MINERALS MANAGEMENT

Exploration, development, and production of minerals, energy resources, and common varieties have the potential to conflict with other resource protection, uses and activities. Knowledge of mineral potential is lacking for some areas on the Forest, and more of this type of information is needed for long-range resource planning. Minerals exploration is limited in some locations by lack of rights-of-way."

Quantifiable Comparison

The annual minerals budget, which is a measure of the Forest's ability to adequately administer the minerals program is \$90,000 annually in Period 1 and \$110,000 thereafter.

Non-Quantifiable Comparison

Mineral withdrawals for locatable minerals will be increased by approximately 6,000 acres for: 1) protection of new recreation sites; 2) new and expanded electronic sites; 3) the Langmuir Principle Research Site; 4) the Mt. Taylor administrative site; and 5) Research Natural Areas.

For leases on nonwilderness lands, surface resources are extended additional protection by information notice on slopes from 16 - 40 percent and by limited surface occupancy stipulations on slopes above 41 percent. All wildernesses are withdrawn from leasing.

An average of 82 percent of the mining plans of operation, lease applications and common variety permits will be handled in a timely manner during the planning period. Approximately 18 percent may require a request for extension of time to properly process because of work time needed.

TRANSPORTATION

"Management of the Forest is somewhat restricted by lack of access and an inadequate transportation system."

Quantifiable Comparison

At the End of Period 5 (Roads)

Travelways closed (miles)	Total road ROW acquired (miles)	Total road construction/reconstruction (miles)	Average annual road system management by maintenance levels over 5 decades (miles)	
			Levels	
			1-2	3-5
1,790	19	3,030	1,493	1,264

Non-Quantifiable Comparison

Road construction, reconstruction and maintenance will benefit the timber resource and aid in the overall management of the Forest. The moderate levels of reconstruction and maintenance will prevent loss of the investment in the road system. Soil and watershed conditions should be improved slightly by obliteration of the travelways. Rights-of-way acquisition provides 11 percent of the mileage needed.

Quantifiable Comparison

At the End of Period 5 (Trails)

Average annual trail construction/reconstruction over 5 decades (miles)	Total trail ROW acquired (miles)	Average annual trail system maintenance over 5 decades (miles)	
		Level 1	Level 2-5
3.36	3.6	330	60

Non-Quantifiable Comparison Moderate levels of trail construction and reconstruction will increase opportunities for dispersed recreation. The planned level of maintenance will limit loss of investment. Access in later decades may be limited by lack of rights-of-way.

ELECTRONIC SITE MANAGEMENT "As population and technology increase, the demand for key electronic sites in central New Mexico will become critical as present demand exceeds available suitable sites."

Quantifiable Comparison At the End of Period 5
Acres Allocated
422

Non-Quantifiable Comparison The eleven existing electronic sites, totaling 150 acres, will be retained. Of these, four will be expanded by 79 acres. An additional four new sites will be designated covering 195 acres. These actions will provide for orderly development of local, regional and national communication facilities through the planning period.

WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT "The Forest lacks management direction for its four wilderness areas, particularly for access, trailheads, use patterns, and coordination with adjacent private land."

Quantifiable Comparison At Periods 1 and 5

Average annual use (MRVD)	Total trail construction/ reconstruction (miles)
<u>Period 1</u> <u>Period 5</u>	<u>Period 5</u>
78.4 89.6	64

Wilderness management direction is established in this plan.

Non-Quantifiable Comparison Full service management is provided at the 76 percent level for the Sandia Mountain Wilderness and the 39 percent level for the remaining three wildernesses. Management at reduced service level will cause deterioration of natural processes and reduce wilderness values. Fifty-three percent of the trails needed to disperse use are provided. Sandia Mountain Wilderness is managed at capacity through self registration and user contacts. Capacity management is by visitor information techniques for the other wildernesses.

RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT "Many riparian areas have deteriorated. Roads, recreation use, livestock grazing, and logging are contributing factors. This downward trend is continuing in some areas.

"Riparian areas are essential to many plant and wildlife species and are important in water quality and visual resource management."

Quantifiable Comparison At the End of Period 5
Total acres treated
2,244

Non-Quantifiable Comparison Water quality and wildlife habitat will improve moderately as direct treatments are implemented and livestock use is controlled on 44 percent of the riparian acreage. This will increase vegetation and reduce sedimentation within these areas. Riparian areas will also benefit when permitted use and grazing capacity are balanced in the third decade and from intensified range management and direct watershed treatment. Deterioration of the Bluewater Creek riparian area by recreation use is reversed by control of vehicle access. Management options for the Las Huertas area will be studied in an environmental analysis which will address

impacts on the riparian zone from dispersed recreation and reconstruction, closure or rerouting of State Highway 44.

UNAUTHORIZED USE

"The level of Forest Service law enforcement is generally perceived as inadequate and does not meet public expectations. The protection of cultural resources off-road vehicle use, firewood theft, vandalism, and user protection are some of the major problems identified."

Quantifiable
Comparison

Enforcement personnel	
(5 decades average annual man years)	
Level 4	Cooperative
<u>Technicians</u>	<u>Programs</u>
4	5

Non-Quantifiable
Comparison

Funding for law enforcement is increased by 47 percent over the current level. This will be adequate for reducing wood theft, vandalism, man caused fires, and other law infractions in the high public use areas. Forestwide, however, funding is at 28 percent of estimated need.

OPPORTUNITIES

NATIONAL GRASSLANDS

"The National Grasslands are to be managed to demonstrate and promote grassland agriculture in the areas of which they are a part. There is an opportunity to expand this role on the Black Kettle, Rita Blanca and Kiowa National Grasslands. There is a need to examine ownership patterns, combinations of land and resource uses based on soil capability and expanded cooperative efforts with other agencies and landowners to fulfill this intended role."

Non-Quantifiable
Comparison

The National Grasslands were established in part to demonstrate good grassland agriculture. The Plan continues this charter by managing the range resource to provide optimum forage for livestock while maintaining and enhancing wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities. Grazing penmittees, private land ranchers and ranching organizations as well as educational institutions are invited to participate in and/or review management on the National Grasslands.

PUBLIC INFORMATION
AND EDUCATION

"Public comments suggested the Forest needs to strengthen its information and education programs."

Non-Quantifiable
Comparison

The Plan provides for the following:

1. Host at least two Environmental Education Workshops each year.
2. Initiate Ranger Column in local newspapers on a monthly basis.
3. Expand efforts in developing feature stories for the news media. Efforts will be made to average one feature story per month.
4. Produce a variety of slide/tape or video programs regarding resource management for out-service use. Emphasis will be placed on slide/tape or video programs addressing the ten issues listed above.
5. Develop a list of Forest Service employees to fill requests for speakers to outside groups or organizations.
6. Initiate monthly letter covering Forest and Grassland programs and send to key individuals or organizations.
7. Assign Cibola employees to attend meetings of various special interest groups as a means of establishing stronger ties with these groups.

8. Encourage Ranger District personnel to participate in local county fairs.
9. Supervisor's Office will coordinate State Fair display.
10. Develop a series of public brochures covering such topics as ORV use, geology, mountaineering, outdoor safety, snowmobiling, grazing, timber harvest, watershed management, special uses.