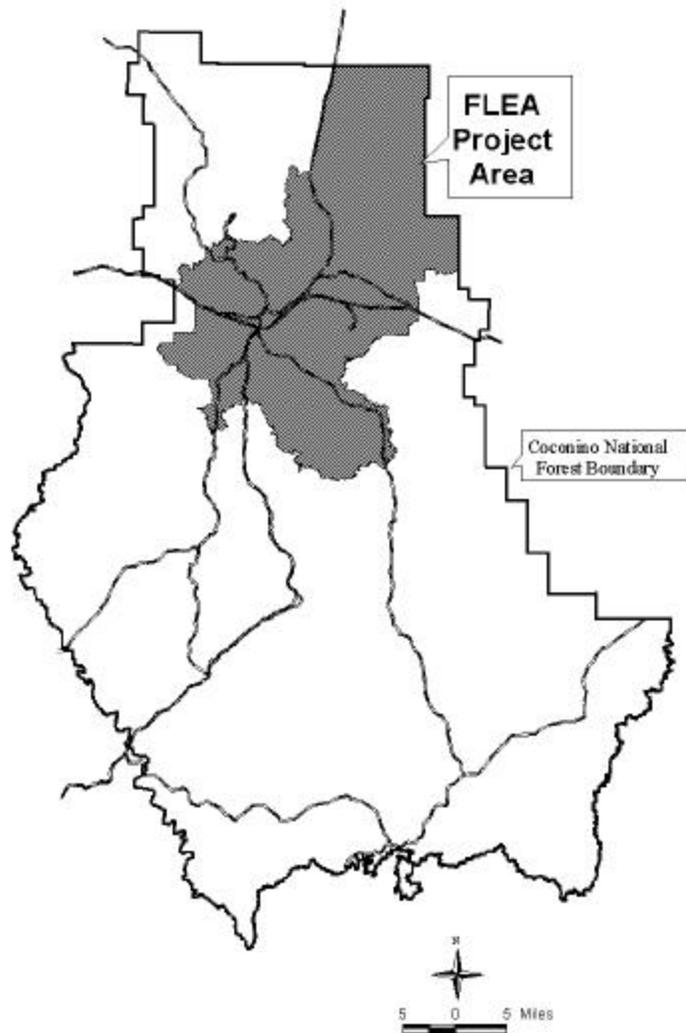


Record of Decision

Flagstaff/Lake Mary Ecosystem Analysis (FLEA) Area Forest Plan Amendment Number 17

**USDA Forest Service
Coconino National Forest
Arizona**



Decision and Reasons for the Decision

Introduction

I am pleased to announce my decision to adopt changes and clarification for our current *Coconino National Forest Plan* for the Flagstaff/Lake Mary Ecosystem Analysis (FLEA) area.¹ This action is needed because the current *Forest Plan* is silent on some aspects of recreation management, limits flexibility for reducing fire risk near residential areas, and fails to address some unique circumstances that occur on Coconino National Forest lands that are located adjacent to residential areas. There is very little site-specific direction here. The purpose of this amendment is general management direction that will be referenced when the Forest Service plans and implements subsequent site-specific projects. The *Forest Plan* Amendment update pages are attached.

This is the second place on the Coconino Forest where Recreation Settings are highlighted as objectives to guide management (the first was the Sedona area). This is an excellent method for describing the landscape and the human experiences and resource conditions desired for an area.² Recreation settings help describe the balance we are trying to strike between human uses on the landscape and maintaining the qualities that make these lands enjoyable to visit. Compared to an inventory in 1992, the new objectives for recreation settings increase the amount of Semiprimitive Motorized setting and a decrease in Roaded Natural setting. In addition, there are patches of Semiprimitive Nonmotorized setting objectives. This trend reflects habitat needs for wildlife sensitive to human disturbance, and the requests from people for accessible, natural appearing landscapes with opportunity for self-exploration. The open houses and public comments supported the choice for semiprimitive motorized recreation settings for much of the FLEA area.

I also am pleased that Forest Service employees will have updated management direction for recreation as a result of this amendment. Recreation uses in the FLEA area have expanded exponentially in their variety, location, and overall number of activities. The *Forest Plan* was silent on some aspects of recreation and this made it more difficult and complicated to make site-specific decisions. The additions to the criteria for road decisions are an example, where the enhanced list of management criteria reflects the complex and necessary choices that must be made for road management.

We are fortunate to have public lands in such close proximity to our homes. Over time, these areas have become more and more impacted by daily outdoor activities and infrastructure needs. This Forest Plan amendment is not a panacea for management of lands next to urban developed areas, but it does set parameters to help managers to be consistent with the Forest Service

¹The Flagstaff/Lake Mary Ecosystem Analysis (FLEA) Area surrounds the City of Flagstaff, and the Coconino County communities of Doney Park, Fort Valley, Kachina Village/Forest Highlands, Lake Mary Road, and Mountainaire. It also includes the Lake Mary watershed and lands between Sunset Crater Volcano and Wupatki National Monuments. Land features within the analysis area include Mt. Elden, the Dry Lake Hills, numerous cinder cones that make up the San Francisco volcanic field, Walnut Canyon, Pumphouse Wash, Woody Ridge, Observatory Mesa, and A1 Mountain. There are approximately 300,423 acres of National Forest land within the FLEA area. This decision is for National Forest lands only.

² See the Objectives for Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Settings map.

mission³. Good planning and the cooperation with neighbors can result in an enhanced “natural appearing” forest environment.

Lands influenced by urban and rural development are shown in the Urban Rural Influence Zone and some guidelines apply specifically to this zone. In a larger area surrounding Flagstaff and its communities fire managers have long referred to the Fire Management Analysis Zone 1U. The 1 stands for ponderosa pine and the U stands for urban interface. Wildlife cover requirements are different in the FMAZ 1U than the remainder of the FLEA area.⁴

The length of “neighborhood” perimeter that public agencies must defend from wildfire has grown, increasing our community’s exposure. There are currently 230 miles of national forest boundary adjacent to private land within the FLEA area. Creating open stand conditions near developments is a more viable option for reducing the fire hazard because there are many constraints on prescribed burning in such areas. The current *Forest Plan* management direction limits fire managers’ ability to mitigate the increasing fire hazard quickly enough, because there is not enough flexibility in cover requirements. My decision to change cover requirements in the urban interface will enhance our ability to lessen fire risk.

It is important to note that this amendment, in conjunction with the current *Forest Plan*, is used as the basis for developing budget proposals. The FLEA area is only a portion of the Forest and priorities for FLEA will be balanced with other Forest priorities for trail and other recreation management. Current recreation budgets are not keeping up with current maintenance needs or new demands. It is likely that the rate of implementation will be opportunistic and tied to other resource projects. Partnerships with communities and other agencies can help facilitate implementation.

As an example, our commitment to the Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP), and our commitment to National Fire Plan goals, has resulted in a five-year schedule of analysis that includes portions of the FLEA area. On-the-ground activities in the near future (next 5 to 7 years) will mostly occur in the locations scheduled for analysis. These include areas surrounding, Fort Valley, A1 Mountain, Kachina Village/Forest Highlands, Woody Ridge, Mountaineer, Timberline, north and south of Walnut Canyon National Monument, and Doney Park. I look forward to continued public comment and site-specific discussions for these project areas. As these analyses occur they will incorporate the *Forest Plan* direction for long-term sustainability of the ecosystem. An example is the use of management direction for northern goshawk, a species at the top of the food chain, and an indicator of a healthy and sustainable forest ecosystem.

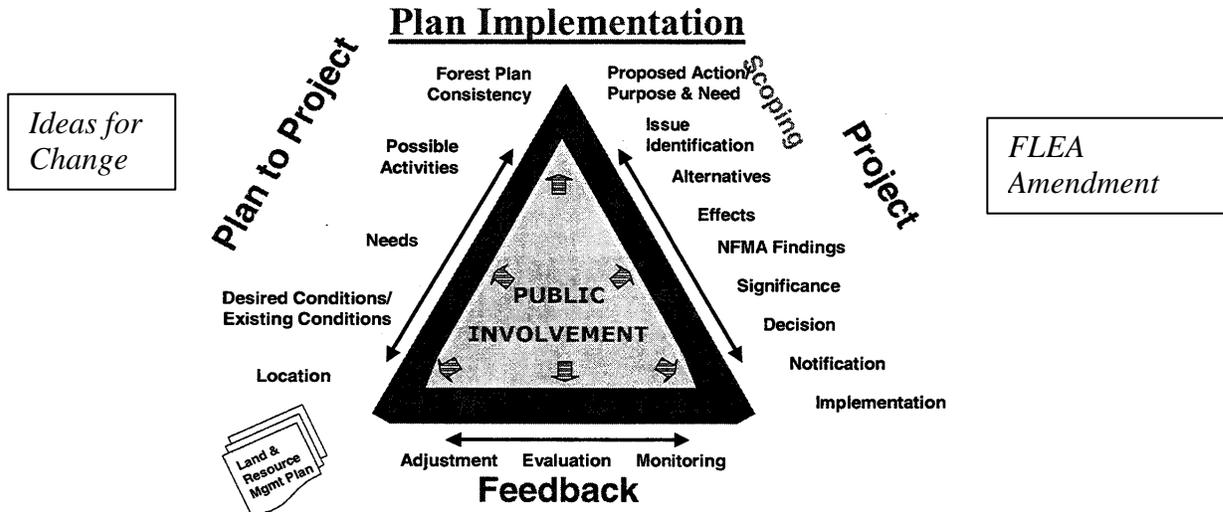
Background

The overall goals and objectives of the *Forest Plan* continue to guide our management. Since the mid-80’s, when the *Forest Plan* was originally written, there have been many amendments, which made either very minor changes in direction or more major shifts. The FLEA Amendment needs to be considered within the context of the entire amended *Forest Plan*. It is not intended to be a stand-alone document.

³ Examples include parameters for social trails, flexibility to reduce risk of wildfire, and additional road management criteria.

⁴ This decision applies to these zones as shown in the Maps of these two zones can be found in the Forest Plan Amendment update pages.

From 1997 to 1999 team members were evaluating the Flagstaff/Lake Mary Ecosystem Analysis (FLEA) area for the “left” side of the planning triangle. Forest Service staff reviewed existing conditions, and discussed where we were not progressing towards desired conditions, or where desired conditions described in the *Forest Plan* no longer “fit”. Options were identified for change (possible management practices) that ranged from site-specific items, to *Forest Plan* direction adjustments. The publication *Ideas for Change* documented this work. Public comments to the *Ideas for Change* are referenced regularly for this project as well as various other site-specific projects on the Peaks and Mormon Lake Ranger Districts.



In moving from the left side to the right side of the NEPA triangle, the “ecosystem analysis” portion was complete and the task remained of choosing which management practices (changes to the *Forest Plan*) were most important to carry over in a Proposed Action for NEPA analysis. In addition, at this step, the choice was made to do separate proposed actions for some site-specific projects and gather the *Forest Plan* amendment actions into the *Proposed Action to Amend the Coconino Forest Plan for the Flagstaff/Lake Mary Ecosystem Analysis (FLEA) Area* (Proposed Action). Publishing the Proposed Action started us on to the right side of the planning triangle and the standard NEPA process for conducting a nonsignificant amendment to the *Forest Plan*. Appendix D of the DEIS describes the rationale for why this is a nonsignificant amendment in terms of National Forest Management Act, which guides the contents of forest plans.⁵

It is interesting to note that the interdisciplinary team reviewed the details of the current *Forest Plan* and found that many of the topic areas identified in the *Ideas for Change* did not require any changes or additions. Many concerns have been more about implementation of the current *Forest Plan* rather than changes to that Plan. The staff and District Rangers noted these concerns and some administrative choices about our program of work have been influenced by the FLEA analysis. Some items discussed in the *Ideas for Change* have been or are currently being implemented under separate NEPA analysis. Examples have been the Old Caves Crater Roads and Trails Project, road maintenance and obliteration work in the Deadman Wash area, GFFP

⁵ The 1982 planning regulations are being used for this amendment.

projects, Lake Mary Streams Rehabilitation in the Priest Draw area, Cinder Hills OHV area signing and maintenance, the San Francisco Mountain Mineral Withdrawal, Campbell Mesa Roads and Trails, Canyon Vista Campground Maintenance, and Marshall Lake Maintenance and Rehabilitation. Because many of the topic areas in the *Ideas for Change* did not require changes to the *Forest Plan*, the FLEA Amendment decision is a set of programmatic course corrections applying specifically to the FLEA area.

Some of the new management direction in this decision provides clarification only, in that it brings the *Forest Plan* up to date with current concepts and terms the Forest Service currently uses. Some of the text provides direction where there previously was none, that is to say the *Forest Plan* was silent. The remainder of the text represents an additional or changed goal, objective, standard, or guideline.

Briefly, the purpose and need for this project includes management direction additions or clarifications for:

- fire risk reduction;
- recreation management for lands in close proximity to residential areas;
- recreation settings (including recommendations for motorized versus nonmotorized settings) based on landscape analysis and design;
- recreation setting framework for outfitter/guide and group use, road management, camping; and rock climbing direction;
- wildlife cover and redistribution of future Mexican spotted owl habitat near residential areas; and
- increased emphasis on cooperation and coordination with local, State, and Federal agencies.

In addition, topics such as scenery, non-native and invasive plants, land ownership-planning, watershed, mountain meadows and riparian needed additional *Forest Plan* language for clarification and emphasis.

When the Proposed Action to Amend the *Forest Plan* for the FLEA area was published, only a few topic areas received comments. Therefore the alternatives vary only slightly from each other. The remainder of Proposed Action was carried forward as common to all alternatives. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) documents the analysis of three alternatives, and documents analysis of the no action alternative (continue with current *Forest Plan* direction). Because there are very few changes required to the text of the DEIS, an errata sheet has been completed and the DEIS will serve as the final NEPA document for this project.

Decision

Based upon my review of all alternatives, I have decided to implement **Alternative C**. Per 1503.4 (c), changes from the analysis of comments to the DEIS are minor and are described in an attached errata sheet.

Alternative C, which includes all of the items, listed in Table 1 below, plus the following:

- In the Fire Management Analysis Zone, cover is provided on a maximum of 15 percent of the forested acres in a Section.⁶ Dense stand conditions on steep slopes and within MSO PAC’s contribute to the targeted 15 percent cover-condition. Cover-conditions might exceed 15 percent per section due to the presence of steeper slopes or MSO PAC’s. In the absence of steep slopes or MSO PAC’S projects could retain a maximum of 15 percent cover condition to maintain a wildlife travel-way through a section. Projects do not have to retain cover-conditions of 15 percent, if a given section poses a high fire hazard to nearby neighborhoods.
- The Waterline Road area is SPM with roads located to limit impacts to disturbance sensitive species. There would be fewer miles of road than the current condition.
- The A1 Mountain area adjacent to private lands in Fort Valley is SPNM.
- The Skunk/Fay Canyon areas and lands north of Fisher Point are classified as SPNM ROS settings with one or two SPM road corridors located to protect wildlife habitat and watershed values of the canyon rim.⁷

Table 1 below, describes *Forest Plan* changes common to all alternatives and how they meet the purpose and need for change. This table reflects my reasons for choosing these items.

When land managers undertake NEPA analysis for site-specific projects, they will refer to at least four places in the *Forest Plan* for management direction. First will be the Forest-wide standards and guidelines, second will be the current management areas defined primarily by vegetation type and topography, third will be the FLEA area-wide goals, objectives, standards and guidelines, and fourth will be the FLEA Management Area direction.

Table 1 Summary of Changes Common to All Action Alternatives and How They Meet Purpose and Need

Topic Area	Summary of <i>Forest Plan</i> Amendment
Fuels Urban/Rural Influence Zone	Changes create greater emphasis for fire risk reduction within approximately ½ mile of private land. There is recognition of the high levels and types of daytime recreation uses prevalent near residential areas. There is recognition that human disturbance to wildlife is greater in areas adjacent to residential areas.

⁶ The word “section” as used here, means a square mile in a legal description of township, range, and section. The intent of this guideline is to distribute cover where needed within the FMAZ 1U without accruing unacceptable wildfire threat to nearby neighborhoods. Wherever possible, projects should retain cover-conditions within wildlife travel-ways, MSO protected-activity centers (PAC’s), along canyon rims, and on steeper slopes. Projects within the FMAZ 1U, should attempt to retain 15% cover within a given forested section.

Dense stand conditions on steep slopes and within MSO PAC’s contribute to the targeted 15% cover-condition. Cover-conditions might exceed 15% per section due to the presence of steeper slopes or MSO PAC’s. In the absence of steep slopes or MSO PAC’S projects could retain a maximum of 15% cover-condition to maintain a wildlife travel-way through a section. Projects do not have to retain cover-conditions of 15%, if a given section poses a high fire hazard to nearby neighborhoods.

⁷ The map for this alternative shows a SPM road corridor linking Old Walnut Canyon Road to Fisher Point area. An alternate open road corridor may be chosen based on site-specific analysis. The final outcome would not be required to follow the existing FR301 alignment. Another possible open road corridor is FR720 near the water treatment plan on Lake Mary Road. Site-specific analysis and decision is required to maintain this road as open or close it.

Topic Area	Summary of <i>Forest Plan Amendment</i>
<p><u>Recreation Opportunity Spectrum</u></p>	<p>Changes provide a forest setting tool (ROS objectives) giving land managers a recreation experience and forest character to strive towards.</p> <p>Much of the areas currently supporting key wildlife habitat would be Semiprimitive ROS setting, either Motorized or Nonmotorized.</p> <p>Objectives include an increase in Semiprimitive recreation opportunities.</p>
<p><u>Recreation Camping</u></p>	<p>Changes describe a wider variety of camping management options (an example is designated dispersed camping).</p> <p>The changed text is current with ongoing practices concerning stay limits and no camping near developed recreation sites on the Peaks and Mormon Lake Ranger Districts.</p> <p>Text allows us to take actions to reverse deleterious trends and improve soil and water quality conditions in areas of very high concentrations of dispersed camping in the Highway 89A corridor, Pumphouse Wash, Marshall Lake, Lake Mary, and Walnut Canyon.</p> <p>Changes include a change from 53.7% to 75.9% of the Urban/Rural Influence Zone closed to camping thereby reducing risk of fire ignition in this zone.</p>
<p><u>Recreation Outfitter/Guides and Group Use</u></p>	<p>Changes create a more efficient process for review, approval, or denial of outfitter/guide proposals. New outfitter/guide permits will be awarded competitively by soliciting proposals.</p> <p>ROS objectives would provide a tool by which recreation experience is considered when approving outfitter/guides. There is recognition of areas where outfitter/guide activities may not be suited, given ecological sensitivity or levels of individual use or both.</p>
<p><u>Recreation Rock Climbing</u></p>	<p>Changes provide direction for this activity.</p> <p>A desired condition is described to manage climbing opportunities while protecting sensitive wildlife and vegetation.</p>
<p><u>Recreation Trails</u></p>	<p>Changes recognize the trail situation that occurs adjacent to residential areas in terms of higher levels of daytime use, and user-created (social) trails.</p> <p>Changes place emphasis on reducing impacts of social trails to threatened and endangered species.</p> <p>Changes place emphasis on reducing or eliminating impacts of social trails to riparian sites (drainage bottoms and lakebeds).</p> <p>Changes emphasize the need for community linkages and access points.</p> <p>Changes provide for ecologically sound trail conditions, without micromanaging each user-created (social) trail.</p> <p>ROS objectives would provide a planning tool that helps managers determine the amount and type of trails to construct for nonmotorized and motorized use.</p>

Topic Area	Summary of <i>Forest Plan Amendment</i>
	<p>Changes identify some areas where off-trail use by large numbers of nonmotorized recreationists is discouraged in order to maintain minimal human disturbance to wildlife or limit soil movement on steep cinder or canyon slopes.</p> <p>Changes identify motocross as an activity that is not suited for National Forest lands.</p>
<u>Roads</u> ⁸	<p>Changes add items to the list of criteria used to make road closure decisions. Examples include, recreation experience and opportunity, (ROS settings), redundant and/or poorly located social roads, noxious weeds, and illegal human activities.⁹</p> <p>Changes create a list of criteria for keeping roads open.</p> <p>Changes provide direction on how to choose where roadwork should occur first.</p>
<u>Wildlife Habitat</u> Mexican Spotted Owls	Changes emphasize future allocation of target threshold habitat outside of the U/RIZ and accounting for it in the Shultz and Lake Mary Management Areas.
<u>Wildlife Habitat</u> Northern Goshawk	Changes provide more detailed direction concerning recreation use in Post-Fledgling Family Areas (PFAs), and a recognition of high levels of human influences in PFA's located adjacent to residential areas.
<u>Wildlife Habitat</u> Threatened and Endangered Species	Changes emphasize monitoring human disturbances prior to approving new site-specific projects. Proposed changes allow for future recreation use restrictions, if needed, based on monitoring.
<u>Wildlife Habitat</u> Bald Eagle Winter Roost Guidelines	Changes allow management activities to occur within and adjacent to winter roost trees and in surrounding areas for the purpose of maintaining the longevity of the roost tree and promoting replacement roosts in the future.
<u>Wildlife Travelways</u>	Changes allow for the maintenance of wildlife travelways through balancing human uses and fire risk reduction needs with wildlife cover needs in travelways.
<u>Forestry</u> Fuel treatments on Cultural Sites as Appropriate	Changes allow for fire risk reduction activities to occur on cultural sites if those activities are determined to be nonimpacting and/or in the best interest of protecting the site.
<u>Coordination with Other Agencies</u>	Changes add emphasis on communication and coordination especially related to adjacent land uses and development.
<u>Visuals</u> Viewshed to National Monuments	Changes identify viewsheds of the National Monuments as important considerations in future decisions.

⁸ A Roads Analysis Report is complete that meets the intent of the Roads Analysis Process (RAP) as described in FSM7710. The RAP is appropriate for FLEA because this decision updates road management criteria. There are no site-specific road decisions here. The Roads Analysis Report contains additional programmatic information for the line officer to reference when making site-specific maintenance level decisions. The Roads Analysis Report is a narrative document that follows the format outlined in FS-643 Roads Analysis: Informing Decision about Managing the National Forest Transportation System. There is a working database and map as well that may be updated over time to display desired conditions for roads in the FLEA area.

⁹ Because of the ongoing analysis of road policy in the *Cross-country Use of Motorized Vehicles in Five Arizona National Forests* Amendment currently occurring, this decision does not address road policy.

Topic Area	Summary of <i>Forest Plan Amendment</i>
<p><u>Recreation</u> Cinder Hills OHV Area</p>	<p>Changes allow for slope closures instead of designated routes to respond to resource concerns and provide for safe, enjoyable riding.</p> <p>Changes allow for distributing riders more evenly within the area and away from areas of resource concern by relocating improved roads and camping areas.</p> <p>Changes identify geologic features in the OHV area that are tied to the eruption of Sunset Crater. Proposed changes identify potential activities such as road relocations, camping relocation, slope closures, and an area closure around Gyp Crater to better maintain and protect these sites.</p>
<p><u>Management Area (MA) Boundaries</u></p>	<p>Changes maintain the link to vegetation and topography, but also provide references to communities and established uses. Management emphasis and highlights of each MA provide additional desired conditions unique to each location. The MAs include, Cinder Hills OHV (MA13), Craters, Deadman Wash, Doney, Flagstaff, Lake Mary Watershed, Schultz, Walnut Canyon, West and additions to Environmental Study Areas (MA18)¹⁰.</p>
<p><u>Management Areas</u> Flagstaff MA lands within growth boundaries</p>	<p>Changes identify lands within the Urban Growth Boundary for the City of Flagstaff. These lands are suited for transfer to other ownership in keeping with local City plans.</p>
<p><u>Recreation</u> Parking</p>	<p>Parking Management is added as a tool for reducing impact and providing for recreationists.</p>
<p><u>Environmental Study Areas (ESA's)</u></p>	<p>Changes adopt two new ESA's at Old Caves Crater and Griffiths Springs and expand the existing ESA at the base of Mt Elden.</p> <p>Desired Conditions are described for the high levels of daytime recreation use and landscape features that make these places available to study and enjoy.</p>
<p><u>Lake Mary and Oak Creek Watersheds</u> Priority for Watershed Restoration and Maintenance</p>	<p>New language identifies the Lake Mary/Walnut and Oak Creek Canyon as important waters. Within the FLEA area, priorities are identified for conducting roadwork, meadow restoration, and other practices.</p>

Rationale for Choosing Alternative C

I understand some people wanted a total SPNM setting completely around the Skunk/Fay and Fisher areas. However, Alternative C provides a balance for those people who desire access in the area, and the need for administrative access for fire suppression and other management needs. The area is managed currently as providing very low human disturbance to wildlife and key wildlife areas are within nonmotorized settings under all alternatives. The District Rangers have the ability to make site-specific choices about the open road corridors through the area, and Alternative C augments the current management trends for this area. Alternative C continues protection of soil and water quality. Identification of the open road corridor will be a future site-specific road management decision, which includes public notification and analysis.

¹⁰ See the Management Area map attached to the Forest Plan Amendment update pages

Since the patch of landscape north of A1 Mountain is small and isolated from other motorized setting areas, it is beneficial to manage the area as SPMN.

Alternative C will provide adequate wildlife habitat cover given the amount of human use in the FMAZ 1U and will also provide good protection of long-term cover habitat because of the reduced risk of stand replacing wildfire. Cover requirements under Alternative C give land managers the flexibility they need to reduce fire risk.

Closing the Waterline¹¹ area to public motorized travel would eliminate a convenient and high quality opportunity to those seeking a SPM setting at high elevation. Rather than eliminating motorized recreation opportunities from this area, I choose to locate roads carefully and in consideration of disturbance sensitive wildlife species. This improves wildlife habitat conditions while providing access. The result will be fewer roads than are currently present, and roads will continue to be designed for high-clearance vehicles only. I also note the traditional cultural values of this area as identified in a letter from the Hopi Tribe. I believe the choice of an SPM setting with carefully located primitive roads will maintain these values. Identification of the open roads will be a future site-specific road management decision, which includes public notification.

Findings Required by Other Laws

This is a *Forest Plan* amendment that does not result in any on-the-ground activities. Rather future on-the-ground activities will undergo separate NEPA analysis and disclosure of affects.

This alternative meets requirements under the following laws, regulations and policies.

As required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and 40 CFR 1500 Regulations, the DEIS displays alternatives and the environmental effects. The procedural requirements of NEPA have been followed and are met.

As required under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and 36 CFR 219 Regulations, 14 sensitive species are evaluated in a biological assessment and evaluation regarding the preferred alternative for this project. This *Forest Plan* amendment does not provide management direction that would cause future site-specific projects to conflict with resource integration and management requirements of 36 CFR 219.

This project was determined to not be an undertaking as defined by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) because this decision is programmatic in nature. American Indian tribes were contacted as part of the scoping process and public disclosure process as required under NEPA.

A Biological Evaluation and Assessment has been prepared for threatened and endangered species to disclose effects as required by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). There are two species within the FLEA area considered in these evaluations, the Mexican spotted owl and the bald eagle. The determination of no effect was found for both species and therefore consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service was not required. However, a representative from US

¹¹ The Waterline area east (downslope) of FR146 (the waterline road) and west (upslope) from FR420 (Shultz Pass Road).

Fish and Wildlife Service was contacted during the scoping and public disclosure process as required under NEPA.¹²

This decision is consistent with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) as well as recent agency guidelines for conformance with the MBTA. Analysis in the DEIS disclosed expected trends from applying this management direction to future projects.

This decision does not change current *Forest Plan* direction that requires cooperating with State agencies in preventing reducing, and eliminating pollution in concert with programs for managing water resources as required under the Clean Water Act. Current Best Management Practices and Guidance Practices will continue to be used as appropriate on a site-specific basis.

This decision does not change current practices related to prescribed burning or other activities that effect air quality. This decision therefore meets the intent of the Clean Air Act.

Future site-specific projects analyzed and implemented under the FLEA management direction are not anticipated to cause disproportionate adverse human health or environmental effects to minority or low-income populations. Therefore this project meets the intent of Environmental Justice, Executive Order 12898.

The NEPA implementing regulations (Section 1505.2) require that the alternative(s) that best promotes the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA, Section 101, be identified in the Record of Decision as the “environmentally preferable alternative” or alternatives. Implementation of the FLEA management direction as described under any of the action alternatives provides protection to the environment. No alternative is environmentally preferred over another.

Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered three other alternatives in detail, which are discussed below. A more detailed comparison of these alternatives can be found in the DEIS on pages 32 through 44.

Alternative B

Alternative B does not provide the changes listed in Table 1, rather the current *Forest Plan* text applies. Alternative B does the following.

- Under No-Action, cover is provided on 30 percent of the forested areas of a 10K Block with 10 percent in hiding cover, 10 percent in thermal cover, and 10 percent in combination hiding and thermal cover.
- The Waterline Road area is classified as SPM.
- The A1 Mountain area adjacent to private lands in Fort Valley is classified as RN.
- The Skunk/Fay Canyon areas and lands north of Fisher Point are classified as RN.

¹² See summary of public participation section of this document.

Alternative D

Alternative D would adopt the changes listed in Table 1 above and the same wildlife cover guideline as Alternative C. Alternative D also does the following:

- Cover is the same as Alternative C.
- The Waterline Road area is classified as a SPNM.
- The A1 Mountain area is classified as a SPNM.
- The Skunk/Fay Canyon areas and lands north of Fisher Point are entirely classified as SPNM.

Alternative A

Alternative A would adopt the changes listed in Table 1 above. Alternative A also does the following:

- There is no cover requirement in the FMAZ 1U. In the remainder of the FLEA area, cover is provided on 30 percent of the forested areas of a 10K Block¹³ with 10 percent in hiding cover, 10 percent in thermal cover, and 10 percent in combination hiding and thermal cover.
- The Waterline Road area is classified as a SPNM.
- The A1 Mountain area adjacent to private lands in Fort Valley is classified as a SPM.
- The Skunk/Fay Canyon areas and lands north of Fisher Point are classified as a SPM.

Table 2 Summary of Issues and Alternatives

Issue	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
#1 – Cover	No requirement in FMAZ	30% of forested acres in 10K block	15% of forested acres in a Section ¹⁴ within FMAZ 1U	15% of forested acres in a Section within FMAZ 1U.
#2 – A1 Mountain	SPM	RN	SPNM	SPNM
#3 – Skunk/Fay	SPM	RN	SPNM with SPM corridor(s)	SPNM entirely
#4 – Waterline	SPNM	SPM	SPM with roads designed for wildlife	SPNM

¹³ 10K Block is a designation used in the *Forest Plan* to identify an approximately 10,000 acre contiguous area to which some management direction is applied. For example, the amount of desired old-growth is identified on a 10K Block basis, which will insure distribution of this forest characteristic across the landscape.

¹⁴ A Section is 640 acres, 1 square mile.

Public Involvement

As described in the background, the need for this action arose in 2001. A proposal to amend the *Coconino National Forest Plan* for the Flagstaff/Lake Mary (FLEA) area was listed in the Notice of Intent to have an Environmental Impact Statement on April 17th, 2002 in the Federal Register. The agency held an Open House on October 22nd, 2001, from 4 till 8 p.m. in the conference room of the Coconino Supervisor's Office in Flagstaff, where people could view larger scale maps and ask team members questions about the Proposed Action. A public service announcement was aired on local TV and Radio stations announcing the availability of the Proposed Action prior to the October 22nd Open House. On Friday, October 19th, a notice appeared in the community news section of the local newspaper, the *Arizona Daily Sun*, announcing the open house and availability of the Proposed Action. During the weeks of October 22 to November 16th, meetings were held with representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Grand Canyon Trust, and Bruce Johnson. These meetings were at the request of these individuals so that they could ask team members questions about the Proposed Action. The DEIS was provided to the public and other agencies for comment August 27th 2002. Another open house was held on October 1st, 2002, to provide opportunity for public to ask questions about the DEIS.

Team members, when developing the Proposed Action reviewed public comment received in response to *Ideas for Change for the Flagstaff/Lake Mary Analysis*. This document was published in May of 1999. Three Open House meetings occurred, one on May 26th at the Flagstaff High School, one on May 27th at the Cromer School in Doney Park, and one on June 3rd at the Highlands Fire Station in Kachina Village. Responses to the *Ideas for Change* included: 150 letters or e-mails, 10 petitions, and 185 open house comment sheets. Organizations that commented included: Friends of Walnut Canyon, Bullhead 4 Wheelers, Inc, Cinder Hills Rough Riders, American Motorcyclist Association, Arizona Snowbowl, Southwest Forest Alliance, and Mountain Mushers. Commenting agencies included Flagstaff Fire Department, Arizona Game and Fish Department, City of Flagstaff, White Mountain Apache, and Navajo Tribes.

There was little comment on a majority of the Proposed Action. In addition, some concerns were not carried forward as significant issues, but are described in the Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail on pages 16 through 21 of the DEIS. Main issues of concern included the following.

Issue 1: Not retaining 30 percent hiding and thermal cover within the FMAZ 1U will affect native species including management indicator species. Wildlife would be impacted in the vicinity of Walnut Canyon if no cover were provided. There are large-sized wildlife that take advantage of the thermal and hiding properties of dense stands along the Walnut Canyon rim, part of which falls within the FMAZ 1U. Wildlife would be impacted in the area of Woody Ridge if no cover were provided.

Issue 2: A SPM setting in the small area adjacent to private land on the south side of Fort Valley and south of A1 Mountain may not be the best setting choice for this area. Fire risk reduction is better achieved with a nonmotorized setting where private lands are located in the path of prevailing winds. Wildlife habitat for elk, deer, fox, coyote, raptors, and prairie dogs is better served by a nonmotorized setting. The area is too small to be useful to motorized travel and many of the current routes dead-end.

Issue 3: ROS setting near Skunk/Fay Canyons and lands north of Fisher Point: A SPM setting surrounding Skunk and Fay Canyons and lands north of Fisher Point may not be the best choice for this area. The type of recreation experience desirable is nonmotorized recreation such as hiking, mountain biking, and horse riding. Absence of vehicles will maintain areas with limited erosion especially in canyon bottoms and steep slopes. Absence or limited vehicles will lessen levels of human disturbance to sensitive wildlife species so that the wildlife are more likely to successfully occupy the canyon and its rim.

Issue 4: The SPNM setting downslope from the Waterline Road (FR 146¹⁵) may not be the best choice for this area. The Proposed Action creates too many SPNM patches on the landscape, limiting opportunity for forest driving experiences especially at high elevations and around the San Francisco Mountain. A nonmotorized setting is not necessary for disturbance sensitive species. Wildlife habitat can still be maintained with a well-designed SPM road system.

Implementation Date

This project will be implemented¹⁶ five business days after the close of the appeal period, if no appeals are filed. In the event of an appeal, implementation may take place 15 days following an appeal decision.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 217. A notice of appeal must be in writing and clearly state that it is a Notice of Appeal being filed in pursuant to 36 CFR 217 Appeals must be filed with Harv Forsgren, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, Regional Office R3, 333 Broadway Boulevard SE, Albuquerque, NM 87103, within 45 days of the date of legal notice of this decision in the Arizona Daily Sun.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Alvin Brown or Debbie Kill, Peaks Ranger District Office, 5075 N Hwy 89, Flagstaff, AZ 86004 or phone 928-526-0866 or e-mail dkill@fs.fed.us.

/s/Jim Golden
JIM GOLDEN
Coconino Forest Supervisor

12/20/02
DATE

¹⁵ FR146 travels along the Kachina Wilderness boundary on the east side of the San Francisco Mountain. It is gated and used as a recreation trail and provides maintenance access to the City of Flagstaff wells in the Inner Basin.

¹⁶ Implementation means that the *Forest Plan* direction will be in place for use in site-specific planning.

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