

Your Community Voice in the Carson
Re: Draft Supplement to FEIS
Forest Plan Amendments -
Comments

REC'D USDA
REGIONAL FORESTER'S OFFICE
SOUTHWESTERN REGION



OCT 08 2004

Oct. 6, 2004

Carson Forest Watch

Box 15 Llano, NM • 87543 • 505-587-28

Haw Foygen - Region 3 Forester
333 Broadway SE - USDA Forest Service
Albuquerque, N.M. 87102
SW Region

Dear Region 3 Goshawk Supplement Team,

on behalf of Carson Forest Watch the following
are comments on the Supplement to the Plan Amendments.

- 1) We support Alternative D because this alternative will provide the best habitat for recovery of many wildlife species, esp. Goshawk and Mexican Spotted Owl.
- 2) Please note that it is important to recover these forest species to healthy (+ viable) numbers, and not to merely manage for minimums, or to maintain current numbers + habitat.
- 3) The Forest Service's preferred alternative is unfortunately will not provide the large blocks of old and mature forest that Alternative D will provide. Because of this, we do not believe it will contribute adequately to →

CFW-1

CFW-2

CFW-3

The Relationship Between
Humans and Land

Land, then, is not merely soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals. . . . An ethic to supplement and guide the economic relation to land presupposes the existence of some mental image of land as a biotic mechanism. We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in.

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OCT 12 2004

R-3 FORESTRY
FOREST HEALTH

The recovery of goshawk populations across the Southwest.

4) Goshawk are an important indicator of healthy Ponderosa pine forest ecosystems and recovering this keystone species is critical to Ponderosa forest health. CFW-4

5) In northern New Mexico, esp. on the Carson National Forest (where we live adjacent to), goshawks also use mixed conifer & aspen stands as well as Ponderosa. and they also need large un-broken blocks of mature forest and closed canopy cover. CFW-5

Again - we support Alt. D to best provide protection for this old forest habitat. CFW-6

6) we caution that with the on-going drought and beetle kill of trees in the Southwest - any management needs to be very conservative, and to not manage for minimal habitat conditions. CFW-6

7) Too much tree removal forest openings and reduction of canopy and basal area will only further heat up and dry out forest areas. This will increase drought effects and fire risk. Species such as goshawk (+ spotted owl) need cool, dense, old forests for nesting and this is critical to successful fledging of young birds. (+ to fungi + truffles that goshawk prey depend upon) CFW-7

8) Alternative D best provides for this important component - which is critical to the continued survival of these important forest indicator birds of prey. CFW-8

Thank you.
Sincerely, Joe Berke for Carson Forest Watch.

CFW-1

The 1996 “Record of Decision for Amendment of Forest Plans” articulated the rationale for why Alternative G was the chosen alternative (USDA-FS 1996, p 6-7). Among others, Alternative G met the objectives of: incorporating standards and guidelines for Mexican spotted owl and northern goshawk into the Southwestern Region’s forest plans to guide site-specific project design; the standards and guidelines for old growth are compatible with requirements for Mexican spotted owl and northern goshawk and are consistent across the Southwestern Region; and standards and guidelines for the Mexican spotted owl are consistent with the Mexican Spotted Owl Recovery Plan.

In short, “Forest plan standards and guidelines in Alternative G are consistent with the Mexican Spotted Owl Recovery Plan and incorporate the intent of the scientific report known as “Management Recommendations for Northern Goshawk in Southwestern U.S.” Additionally, Alternative G establishes forage utilization standards for grazing ungulates and establishes old-growth management standards and guidelines that are consistent throughout the Southwestern Region” (USDA-FS 1996, p 7).

CFW-2

The MRNG, on which, in part, Alternative G is based, clearly agrees with this comment (Reynolds et al. 1992, p 30-32) and put forward the benefits to forest health, forest productivity, forest protection, and the habitat of many native plants and animals by achieving the desired forest conditions resulting through its implementation.

CFW-3

The desired forest conditions described in the MRNG closely resemble the presettlement Southwestern ponderosa pine forest landscapes. The natural mosaic of groups of young-to-old age classes that was responsible for maintaining old growth in presettlement landscapes is the same mosaic recommended in the MRNG to sustain the older, productive forest ecosystems that support the goshawk and its prey. Thus, the MRNG will provide large landscapes of forests that are visually dominated by mature and old trees and, because of their interlocking crowns, the groups of mature and old trees will have high canopy cover (Reynolds et al. 1992). Thus, implementing the MRNG should result in very large blocks of mature and old forests.

The Goshawk Management Guidelines propose that old-growth forest structure exist over 20-40 percent of the landscape as small one-half to 4-acre patches. Large blocks of “minimally managed” forest will continue to exist in the form of wilderness areas, steep forested slopes, and areas withdrawn due to soil, visual, archeological, and other social values.

Large blocks of old-growth are seldom if ever uniform areas of large, old trees. These blocks of old growth contain stand size or group size areas of various tree ages and sizes. All old-growth forests have at some time in the past been forests of young trees, and they will again support stands of young trees at some time in the future as a result of stand-replacing disturbance.

It is this continually shifting mosaic on the landscape that the authors of the MRNG recognize and want forest management practices to promote; a landscape where 20-40 percent of the area (groups, substands) consists of large, old trees and associated forest structures that qualify it as old growth, intermixed with the younger age classes needed to support continued old growth.

CFW-4

The northern goshawk is identified as a management indicator species (MIS) on five national forests (Apache-Sitgreaves, Coconino, Kaibab, Prescott, and Tonto) in the Southwestern Region. Management indicator species are selected to reflect the habitat needs for a majority of forest species. An indicator species is a plant or animal whose population change reflects a population change of other species within a group. Indicator species respond to habitat changes early or at low levels of stress and, therefore, are sensors of the effect of management activities that occur in various habitats. Management indicator species were chosen for given vegetation types, seral stages, and the vegetative components of the given habitat. The northern goshawk is but one species that can reflect habitat changes. For the six national forests that do not have the northern goshawk as an MIS, other species were chosen that better reflect changes in populations of other species that use a particular habitat type.

CFW-5

The desired forest conditions in the MRNG for southwestern mixed-conifer forests are very similar to the desired forest conditions for Southwestern ponderosa pine forests. Thus, implementing the MRNG should result in very large blocks of mature and old forests.

CFW-6

There are two schools of thought on how management activities should relate to natural disturbance events. One can either (1) back off from treatments until it can be determined just how much tree mortality might result from disturbance agents (stand-replacement fires, insects, and diseases), or (2) promote and expedite management actions to reduce the impacts of the disturbance agents outside their normal range of variability.

If the disturbance agent has been determined to be outside its natural disturbance levels and can be traced back to a lack of management actions or the wrong management actions, the best approach is to move forward with planned management actions to correct existing conditions; but a very important part of these activities is to closely monitor management actions to ensure the problem is not being made worse (adaptive management).

This same two-pronged approach can be applied in the treatment of wildland-urban interface (WUI). Do we back off from treating WUI until the current drought has ended and take chances with a stand-replacement fire during that time, or do we proceed now with treatments in WUI proactively to reduce the risk and hazard found in many of our WUI areas? Resource managers in the Southwest have decided that a “proactive” approach is better than a “wait-and-see” approach in WUIs. Although insect and disease epidemics alone are certainly not as life threatening as wildfires, the presence of insect and disease epidemics does directly influence fuel hazard conditions several years down the road. Most land managers have decided to take this same proactive approach to land management outside of WUI areas.

CFW-7

Southwest forests have been greatly changed by past forest management prescriptions (e.g., seed-tree, shelter wood, overstory removal harvests) and other management (e.g., fire suppression). Implementation of the MRNG will restore the changed forests, benefiting the goshawk and members (plant and animal species) in its food web (see Salafsky 2004 for the importance of prey

abundance in goshawk reproduction). Once the desired forest conditions are attained (which may take decades depending on differences between existing and desired conditions), 40 percent of landscapes will be in mature and old trees with canopy cover exceeding 40 percent (likely to be > 60 percent given the interlocking crown requirement) (Reynolds et al. 1992). Not implementing the MRNG in these changed forests is more likely to be detrimental to goshawk viability (Reynolds et al. a).

Fire behavior is strongly influenced by stand condition and structure as it relates to dead surface fuel loading, ladder fuels, and canopy fuels. The argument that opening a stand increases wind and drying out the site is a valid one. Fuels managers recognize that this is indeed a consequence of many fuels reduction treatments. However, many resource managers and scientists feel that the reduction in surface fuel loading (slash reduction), the removal of ladder fuels (increased crown base height), and the reductions in canopy fuels (reduced crown bulk density) outweigh the negative effects from increased wind and solar radiation that directly influences burn intensities (heat/unit area).

The Southwest suffers from a lack of moisture, not sunlight. Thinning has been shown to reduce the threat of drought on forest trees. Because water is limiting in the Southwest, reducing tree numbers can provide increased subsurface water to remaining trees. In this way, the remaining trees are better equipped to implement their natural defenses (overall tree vigor and sap production).

Opening a stand of trees to the wind and solar radiation may dry out surface soil layers, but the increased moisture available to tree roots (subsurface moisture) more than offsets the decline in surface moisture. The fact that moisture is limiting in the Southwest is a primary reason why many ponderosa pine stands in the past were more open than pine stands today. Fire exclusion, grazing, and selective logging have allowed for many ponderosa pine forest stands in the Southwest to become much denser than in the past. Because there are far more trees, all trees including the largest ones are placed under environmental stress for moisture, especially during a drought period.

CFW-8

The 1996 “Record of Decision for Amendment of Forest Plans” stated the rationale for why Alternative D was not the chosen alternative (ROD, pg. 6). Alternative D was not selected because it proposed northern goshawk direction that was more conservative than current scientific information warranted. If the need for a more conservative approach becomes apparent from monitoring of the species, some of the ideas generated in the development of Alternative D may become necessary. Contrary to some views, the bulk of monitoring and research data completed since 1996 has not indicated that a shift in management strategies for the northern goshawk is needed.



THE STATE OF ARIZONA
GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

2221 WEST GREENWAY ROAD, PHOENIX, AZ 85023-4399
(602) 942-3000 • AZGFD.COM

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REC'D USDA
REGIONAL FORESTER'S OFFICE
SOUTHWESTERN REGION

November 12, 2004

Mr. Harv Forsgren
Southwestern Regional Forester
Attn: Goshawk SEIS Team
333 Broadway SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102



NOV 18 2004

Re: Draft Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment of Forest Plans in Arizona and New Mexico.

Dear Mr. Forsgren:

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) reviewed the Draft Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for Amendment of Forest Plans in Arizona and New Mexico. We appreciate meeting with the Forest Service on November 2, to discuss the purpose and intent of the SEIS and the future management of the northern goshawk. As you know, the Department provided comments on a number of documents relating to the goshawk management over the last fifteen years and continues to be dedicated to the management of this species.

The Department understands the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Forest Service failed to disclose and discuss responsible scientific opposition to the conclusion upon which the Final EIS was based in accordance with NEPA and its implementing regulations. While the Department continues to have concerns regarding goshawk management implemented by the Forest Service, the point of this letter pertains to the Court decision, and clarification of the debate of which the SEIS addresses. We believe, as currently presented, the SEIS does not adequately describe, and appears to misrepresent the Department's concerns, issues, and viewpoints.

Within the SEIS, the Forest Service consistently states that the input from the Arizona and New Mexico state wildlife agencies and from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is a "slight variation" from recommendations by the Goshawk Interagency Implementation Team (pg 2). We believe the goshawk management guidelines as presented by the Forest Service allow the creation of habitat conditions that may not support a sustainable population of goshawks. We have presented the scientific basis for our belief in previous communications and refer you to those documents.

AGFD-1

Mr. Harv Forsgren
 November 12, 2004
 2

The debate described on page 31 of SEIS maintains that the scientific debate has been stated in terms of degree to which the northern goshawk should be considered a habitat specialist or a habitat generalist. It is stated that only one of 180 documents reviewed by Reynolds (2004) showed the northern goshawk strictly using old-growth forest, therefore maintaining the position that goshawk are generalists. Forest management recommendations assume that the goshawk is a forest habitat generalist because goshawks occur in many different forest types. However, goshawks have evolved physical characteristics that enable them to hunt most efficiently in relatively mature, dense forest structures. Therefore, the Department considers the goshawk a forest habitat specialist that is associated with mature, dense forest structure in many forest types, during key life stages. As a habitat specialist, rather than a habitat generalist, loss of nest sites or suitable foraging habitat may limit goshawk population density and distribution. For clarification on our viewpoint, we synthesize again the main issues of the debate, including the Department's main concerns.

AGFD-1

Tree Density: The principal concern of the debate, now as it was then, is that the lower end of the prescribed tree densities is too low to support a viable population of goshawks, and that maintenance of patches of old trees in foraging areas are needed.

The Department largely agrees with the Forest Service on management of nesting areas and post fledging area (PFA's). We agree these areas are defined by stands of mature trees with tree densities that should support productive goshawk territories within the prescription (i.e., nest stands and PFA's are defined by relatively closed canopy).

AGFD-2

Our continued concerns and the basis of the debate relates to forest management at the foraging area level, which encompasses the great majority of goshawk habitat when compared to nesting areas or PFA's (90% of all managed habitat per pair is deemed foraging habitat). The SEIS as well as the RM-217 suggests that "the management recommendations for the foraging area are similar to the PFA". We disagree that they are similar in the key characteristics of tree density and maintenance of patches of VSS 5 and 6 trees. Our previous letters relative to the Final EIS and the GIIT have reiterated the need to adequately describe the management conditions necessary to maintain productive, sustainable goshawk territories. Forging area prescriptions, as currently proposed, allow management to create conditions in the name of goshawk management, which we do not believe will maintain goshawk use.

AGFD-3

Both Alternatives (D and G) require 20% of the foraging area be composed of mature trees, however Alternative G has no measure of tree density associated with it and allows for management of old growth "patches", "no matter how small". Without a concise definition of a "patch", the statement "no matter how small" can allow managing single old trees to meet requirements for VSS 5 and 6 within goshawk foraging habitat. As we have previously documented, goshawk habitat is not characterized by open stands of widely spaced trees with an occasional old tree, yet the proposed management guidelines allow creating this type of forest condition as goshawk foraging habitat. We have consistently recommended using the proposed PFA requirements for the foraging area prescription as well. We do not agree that this is only a "minor" change from the Forest Service's own recommendations, rather we believe it may be the difference between goshawk populations that persist and the decline of those populations.

Mr. Harv Forsgren
November 12, 2004
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We do recognize a need to relax the requirements to manage areas outside of existing territories as goshawk habitat. The Forest Service has correctly identified a need to increase goshawk habitat. However, a consistent application of the prescriptions has resulted in conflicts with grassland and savanna restoration and with management for open habitat species, such as prairie dogs and pronghorn. We urge the Forest Service to incorporate some provision for avoiding conflicts with appropriate grassland and savanna restoration into the guidelines.

AGFD-4

Forest Management Application: Applying ponderosa pine habitat prescriptions to other vegetation types could result in stand densities outside the probable range of natural variability for those other vegetation types.

The prescription within the goshawk guidelines (RM-217) was developed for ponderosa pine forest type. We know that goshawk habitat incorporates many vegetation types such as mixed conifer, spruce fir, and woodlands. The Department believes that applying a ponderosa pine prescription to other vegetation types is insufficiently analyzed and could result in stand densities outside the probable range of natural variability for those other vegetation types.

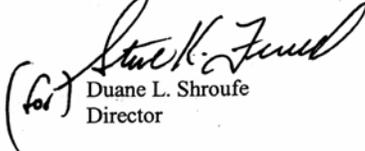
AGFD-5

The Forest Service has incorporated the text of the research cited in the lawsuit into the SEIS, however, we believe the Forest Service should also include our discussion of tree density and forest management application as the basis of the scientific debate within the SEIS. The Department is currently reviewing and compiling additional literature to be included in the Final SEIS, which will be forwarded to you in the near future.

AGFD-6

We appreciate the efforts by the Forest Service to meet with the Department and consider our interests and concerns with the development of the SEIS. If you have questions regarding this letter, please contact me or Bob Broscheid, Habitat Branch Chief, at (602) 789-3605.

Sincerely,


(for) Duane L. Shroufe
Director

DLS:rd:rm

cc: Bob Broscheid, Habitat Branch Chief
Ron Sieg, Regional Supervisor, Region II
Jon Cooley, Regional Supervisor, Region I

AGFD-1

The literature shows that, while the goshawk is clearly morphologically and behaviorally adapted to forests, their occurrence and/or reproduction are not limited to mature or old growth forests (Reynolds et al., b). In fact, evidence is increasing that food abundance is more often limiting than nesting habitat (Widen (1989), Reynolds et al. b), and that when food is abundant goshawks can successfully nest in many forest and woodland habitats including open habitats (e.g., riparian cottonwoods in upper Sonoran desert (White *et al.* 1965), and mountain shrub communities (Younk and Bechard 1994)), as long as there is a patch of trees where they can nest. Nonetheless, many important goshawk prey (e.g., jays, woodpeckers, tree squirrels) tend to be more abundant in older forests (Reynolds et al. 1992, Drennen et al. in press), and mature and old forests can also have a suitable structure for goshawks to successfully see, pursue, and capture their prey (Reynolds et al. a). Still, many nesting and wintering goshawks hunt in more open forests (ponderosa pine forests) and woodlands (pinyon-juniper communities) for prey (e.g., jackrabbits, ground squirrels) that occupy open habitats (Reynolds et al. a, b).

A review of the literature clearly shows that the goshawk is not limited to a single habitat, whether one defines that habitat from a compositional or structural viewpoint. On a continuum from habitat generalist to habitat specialist, research shows the goshawk is on the side of habitat generalist.

AGFD-2 & 3

In the MRNG and 1996 amendment, the main difference in the desired forest conditions for the post fledging area and foraging area is canopy cover, a minimum of which is specified only for the mature (VSS 5) and old (VSS 6) forest patches (groups). This difference (higher canopy cover in the post fledging area) can be achieved by managing for one or two more trees per group of VSS 5 and VSS 6. All other desired conditions for the post fledging area and foraging area are the same or nearly the same (Reynolds et al. 1992, p 22-30). Because trees within groups of VSS 5 and 6 in both the post fledging area and foraging area have interlocking crowns, canopy cover in both areas will typically exceed 60 percent (see CBD-16). It is impossible to have interlocking tree crowns (Reynolds et al. 1992) if trees are not in groups. The intent of the MRNG was to manage for groups of trees, not single trees. However, an occasional single tree is not excluded.

AGFD-4

The MRNG and 1996 amendment recognized the importance of maintaining open grassland and savanna areas. To do so, the MRNG clearly states not to include the natural open areas as part of the post fledging area (Reynolds et al. 1992, p 23, 26, and 27). The MRNG also recommended restoring (removing trees from) what used to be open areas around groups of trees. These small openings have been filled in with trees because of fire suppression. Open areas are important habitat for some goshawk prey (rabbits, hares, ground squirrels, grouse) and provide critical openings for the roots of the trees within groups (see CBD-1).

AGFD-5

The MRNG and 1996 amendment actually developed desired forest conditions for three Southwestern forest types: ponderosa pine, mixed-conifer, and spruce-fir. The desired forest conditions for the types differed because the suites of important goshawk prey, and the forest biology and ecology, differed among each of these types (Reynolds et al. a). The desired forest

conditions for each of these forest types are separately described on pages 22-30 in Reynolds et al. (1992).

The following 1998 table, which more accurately displays what was described in the 1996 amendment and MRNG, clearly shows the relationship between tree size and VSS class by cover type. Prior to this 1998 display, VSS 6 was not shown as a separate structural stage, but merely a special condition of VSS 5 that met established minimum old-growth, large tree standards. Note that the size criteria for each VSS class are the same regardless of forest type.

**Vegetative Structural Stages Classes by Forest Cover Types
Diameter and Cover Type Groupings as Modified in 1998**

Cover Types	VSS 1 Grass/Forbs/ Shrubs/ Seedlings	VSS 2 Saplings	VSS 3 Young Forest	VSS 4 Mid-Aged Forest	VSS 5 Mature Forest	VSS 6 Old Forest
1. Ponderosa Pine, Southwestern White Pine, Misc. Softwoods	0 – 0.9"	1.0 – 4.9"	5.0 – 11.9"	12.0 – 17.9"	18.0 – 23.9"	24"+
2. Blue Spruce, Douglas-fir, White Fir, Limber Pine, Bristlecone Pine	0 – 0.9"	1.0 – 4.9"	5.0 – 11.9"	12.0 – 17.9"	18.0 – 23.9"	24"+
3. Engelmann Spruce-Subalpine Fir, Engelmann Spruce	0 – 0.9"	1.0 – 4.9"	5.0 – 11.9"	12.0 – 17.9"	18.0 – 23.9"	24"+
4. Aspen, Cottonwood, Willow, Misc Hardwoods	0 – 0.9"	1.0 – 4.9"	5.0 – 11.9"	12.0 – 17.9"	18.0 – 23.9"	24"+
5. Pinyon-Juniper, Juniper, Rocky Mtn Juniper	0 – 0.9"	1.0 – 4.9"	5.0 – 11.9"	12.0 – 17.9"	18.0 – 23.9"	24"+
6. Gambel Oak, Mesquite	0 – 0.9"	1.0 – 4.9"	5.0 – 11.9"	12.0 – 17.9"	18.0 – 23.9"	24"+

Recognizing that some of the forest cover type species (pinyon-juniper, oak, aspen, hardwoods) were unable to achieve minimum tree diameters for the various VSS categories displayed in the above table, the VSS table was modified in 2000 by the Southwestern Regional Office of the Forest Service. (On February 3, 2000, Bryce Rickel and Keith Fletcher, R3 Wildlife Staff, and John Shafer and Pat Jackson, R3 Forestry Staff, met to discuss changes to the VSS rating system). It was agreed that changes were necessary in order for some of the cover types to be VSS rated properly.

**Vegetative Structural Stages Classes by Forest Cover Types
Diameter and Cover Type Groupings as Modified 3/2000**

Cover Types	1	2	3	4	5***	6
1. Ponderosa Pine, Southwestern White Pine, Misc. Softwoods, Douglas-fir, White Fir, Limber Pine, Engelmann Spruce-Sub-	0 – 0.9"	1.0 – 4.9"	5.0 – 11.9"	12.0 – 17.9"	18.0 – 23.9"	24"+

Cover Types	1	2	3	4	5***	6
alpine Fir, Engelmann Spruce, Blue Spruce, Bristlecone Pine, Corkbark Fir, Aspen						
2. Cottonwood, Arizona Cypress, Gambel Oak (tree form*)	0 – 0.9"	1.0 – 4.9"	5.0 – 9.9"	10.0 – 14.9"	15"+	N/A
3. Willow, Misc Hardwoods, Gambel Oak (shrub form**)	0 – 0.9"	1.0 – 2.9"	3.0 – 4.9"	5.0 – 6.9"	7"+	N/A
4. Pinyon-Juniper, Juniper, Rocky Mtn Juniper	0 – 0.9"	1.0 – 2.9"	3.0 – 4.9"	5.0 – 10.9"	11"+	N/A

<p>* Gambel Oak tree form exists on the following Forests in R3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apache-Sitgreaves • Cibola (Magdalena & Mt Taylor districts) • Coconino • Coronado • Gila • Kaibab (south districts) • Lincoln • Prescott • Tonto 	<p>** Gambel Oak shrub form exists on the following Forests in R3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carson • Cibola (except the Magdalena and Mt Taylor districts) • Kaibab (North Kaibab) • Santa Fe 	<p>*** For Forest Cover Type Groups 2, 3 and 4, there are only 5 VSS classes.</p>
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Recognizing that VSS was developed to primarily classify even-aged stands, a slight change was made in 2003 (Cassidy and Jackson) to the VSS output results. These changes did not alter the criteria outlined in the VSS table above for VSS classification. The change was as follows:

Stands that fail to achieve 60 percent+ of the total stand basal area within a floating 8" size class, are identified as uneven-aged (UNEV) in the stand database (FSVeg). The program first looks to see if 60 percent+ of the basal area falls within the 1-8" size class. If not, it next looks at the 2-9" size class, the 3-10", and so on. If no 8" class can achieve a minimum of 60 percent of the stand's basal area, the UNEV descriptor is applied.

Because many of the wildlife models used by the Forest Service require a VSS classification, an average VSS value for all stands is still generated. The uneven-aged "flag" in the stand database serves as a "heads up" that the stand average VSS may not reflect existing multistoried stand conditions on the ground.

Recognizing that a stand-average-VSS class in a multistoried stand may fail to display true stand structure, many silviculturists in the region have decided that it is more accurate to analyze VSS based on plot data rather than based on stand-average data. In some cases, VSS plot level data are used in determining the VSS percentages on an entire analysis area, not just in multistoried stands within the analysis area.

The MRNG (Reynolds et al. 1992, Table 1, p 7) provides recommended home range attributes for goshawk by three forest associations: (1) ponderosa pine, (2) mixed species, and (3) spruce-fir.

The home-range habitat is broken out by post fledging family area and foraging area. Stand attributes described under post fledging family area and foraging area include (a) VSS distribution, (b) canopy cover, (c) years to mid-age VSS 6, (d) opening size, (e) reserve trees, (f) snags, (g) down logs, and (h) woody debris.

The MRNG (Reynolds et al. 1992, Table 5, p 14) displays structural attributes by forest type for goshawk nest/roost habitat. Each forest association has its own unique set of minimum forest conditions that quantify stands as nest/roost habitat. The contention that ponderosa pine prescriptions are being applied to all forest types is not supported by management direction outlined in the MRNG and incorporated into the forest plans for the Southwestern Region via the 1996 amendment.

AGFD-6

Together with the MRNG (Reynolds et al. 1992), the original “Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment of Forest Plans,” and this “Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment of Forest Plans,” the Agency has reviewed over 450 northern goshawk related materials that include peer reviewed scientific papers, published journal articles, masters’ theses, unpublished non-peer reviewed scientific papers, correspondence, and alternative views and scientific perspectives. Many of these documents include discussion and analysis of silvicultural practices and including tree density and forest management applications.



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

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SOUTHWESTERN REGION

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NOV 26 2004
EAP/WSA STAFF

November 12, 2004

Harv Forsgren, Regional Forester
c/o Goshawk Supplement Team
USDA Forest Service, Southwestern Region
333 Broadway SE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

Subject: EPA Comments on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Southwestern Region Amendment of Forest Plans, Implementation, Updated Information, Standards and Guidelines for Northern Goshawk and Mexican Spotted Owl, AZ and NM (CEQ # 040457)

Dear Mr. Forsgren,

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced draft supplemental environmental impact statement (DSEIS) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

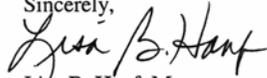
EPA supports the beneficial updates of Land Management Plans to ensure consistency with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Recovery Plan for the Mexican Spotted Owl. This document serves as a supplement to the Final EIS for the Southwestern Region Amendment of Forest Plans and includes information on the opposing science regarding northern goshawks habitat preferences, including foraging area needs. While Alternative G remains the preferred alternative, the standards and guidelines will be amended to ensure consistency with new information that may become available. We have rated the preferred alternative, as Lack of Objections (LO). Please see the enclosed Rating Factors for a description of EPA's rating system.

EPA-1

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We appreciate the opportunity to review this DEIS. When the final EIS (FEIS) is released for public review, please send two copies to the address above (mail code: CMD-2). If you have any questions, please contact me or Summer Allen, the lead reviewer for this project. Summer can be reached at 415-972-3847 or allen.summer@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



Lisa B. Hanf, Manager
Federal Activities Office
Cross Media Division

Main ID# 004463

Enclosures:
Summary of EPA Rating Definitions

SUMMARY OF EPA RATING DEFINITIONS

This rating system was developed as a means to summarize EPA's level of concern with a proposed action. The ratings are a combination of alphabetical categories for evaluation of the environmental impacts of the proposal and numerical categories for evaluation of the adequacy of the EIS.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE ACTION

"LO" (Lack of Objections)

The EPA review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

"EC" (Environmental Concerns)

The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impact. EPA would like to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

"EO" (Environmental Objections)

The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that must be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

"EU" (Environmentally Unsatisfactory)

The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potentially unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the CEQ.

ADEQUACY OF THE IMPACT STATEMENT

Category 1" (Adequate)

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

"Category 2" (Insufficient Information)

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analysed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

"Category 3" (Inadequate)

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analysed in the draft EIS, which should be analysed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the NEPA and/or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

*From EPA Manual 1640, "Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment."

EPA-1

The Agency agrees with the Environmental Protection Agency's rating in that the supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement ensures that the standards and guidelines remain consistent with new information as it becomes available.

Polly Lovato/R3/USDAFS
11/02/2004 11:51 AM

To Peter T Gaulke/R3/USDAFS@FSNOTES
cc
bcc
Subject Fw: [Hellbenders] Documents Reveal Timber Industry Influence

Looks like this was also sent to the comments-southwester-regional-office@fs.fed.us inbox. But here it is just in case it was never received



----- Forwarded by Polly Lovato/R3/USDAFS on 11/02/2004 11:50 AM -----



Bk1492@aol.com
10/31/2004 03:33 AM

To: r3_webmaster@fs.fed.us,
comments-southwester-regional-office@fs.fed.us
cc: rodney.frelinghuysen@mail.house.gov
Subject: Fwd: [Hellbenders] Documents Reveal Timber Industry Influence

public comment on draft supplement to the final environmental impact statement for amendment of forest plans for arizona and new mexico

i note a letter dated 9/21/04 sent to me file no 1950-3 with a book about 300 pages long with a forest plan. I have read through it and have many comments for the record on these plans, including the comment forwarded below on the influence of rich lumber barons on the destruction planned for the nation's forests, which is deplorable.

I note that all this forest seems to be subject to being cut down for lumber company profits. the goshawks will all die. when will greed die? I note Bush taking down old growth snags, which hurts birds who dwell in cavities who eat insects. I note that the national park service too has published an extensive document by scientists who claim the bush administration has no regard for environmental protection. Have you seen that document by an esteemed scientist?

I favor a 300 year rotation age for lumber management. 300 years.

SA-1

comment on page 22 - i do not believe the statement that "enough is known of the 14 prey species biology to define and manage for their habitats." I do not believe that for one minute. Self proclaimed biologists have been making far too many mistakes since they have assumed charge since not only biology is involved in bird/animal life. things like global warming, acid rain, chemically altered air water and soil, excess carbon dioxide, fragmented habitat all alter these alleged self proclaimed expert claims of "managing".

SA-2

comment on page 33 - i also note that "none of the scientific information directly answers the question of how much old forest is needed in goshawk foraging". To me that says we should be leaving these forests alone. Cutting them down is an insult to the NATIONAL POPULATION.

SA-3

I THINK ALL STUDIES FROM BEFORE 1990 ARE EXTREMELY OUTDATED AND SHOULD BE THROWN IN THE TRASHCAN. THE WORLD IS NOT WHAT IT WAS IN 1990. IT IS BEING

SA-4

SA-4

DESTROYED EVERY SINGLE DAY BY PROFITEERS SO EVERY DAY LESS IS LEFT.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE LEAVE THESE FORESTS ALONE. I STAND SQUARELY ON THAT PLATFORM AND AGAINST BUSH AND HIS CRONIES INTENT TO DESTROY THESE FORESTS. I ALSO THINK USDA IS EXTREMELY FOCUSED ON PROFITS AND SHOULD NOT BE IN CHARGE OF NATIONAL FORESTS. USDA IS A VERY VERY POORLY RUN AGENCY.

I WANT TO PROTECT EVERY SINGLE BIRD, ANIMAL OR TREE, BUSH THAT IS PRESENTLY IN THAT FOREST. ANY OTHER PROGRAM IS ANATHEMA.

B. SACHAU
15 ELM ST
FLORHAM PARK NJ 07932

THIS IS MY COMMENT FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD.

----- Message from James Kleissler <jkleissler@allegghenydefense.org> on Thu, 28 Oct 2004 14:25:49 -0400 -----

To: Hellbenders Listserv <hellbenders@allegghenydefense.org>

Subject: [Hellbenders] Documents Reveal Timber Industry Influence
http://www.allegghenydefense.org/press/release_041028.shtml

October 29, 2004

For Immediate Release
Jim Kleissler/Ryan Talbott, Allegheny Defense Project (814) 223-4996
Tammy Belinsky, Wildlaw, (540) 929-4222

Documents Reveal Timber Industry, Congressman Peterson Dictating
Management in Allegheny National Forest
Freedom of Information Act Records Reveal Plan to Illegally "Subdivide"
Logging Projects

CLARION, PA - Conservationists today released records that support previous allegations that the Bush Administration had "subdivided" logging projects in the Allegheny National Forest in order to avoid environmental review. The new records, which include e-mails, faxes, memorandums, and project maps, also reveal for the first time the access the timber industry had to Administration officials responsible for management decisions.

"Instead of scientists, the timber industry is dictating how the Allegheny National Forest is going to be managed," explained Ryan Talbott, Forest Watch Coordinator with the Allegheny Defense Project. "Conservationists were kept completely in the dark about these logging proposals while the timber industry had unfettered access to all levels of the Bush Administration."

Conservationists have charged that the logging projects being implemented under the Bush Administration's "Healthy Forests Initiative" are illegal and contrary to good forest management. Conservationists contend that the nation's environmental laws require that the 4,600-acre logging project undergo scientific environmental analysis and involve meaningful public participation. The 4,600-acre tree cutting project was proposed after a windstorm hit the Allegheny National Forest last summer. Controversy erupted over the logging

project when a top Bush Official highlighted the logging as part of its Earth Day promotions. The conservation group Allegheny Defense Project filed a lawsuit against the projects on September 23.

Conservationists allege that the 4,600-acre "salvage" logging project had been broken up into smaller projects to evade legally mandated environmental review and public comment processes. Instead of including the 4,600-acre project into a single environmental impact statement as they have done in the past the Forest Service has decided to implement this logging effort as parts of 25 separate projects. Most of these projects will not undergo environmental assessments and in many cases logging has already been initiated.

The Administration had previously denied allegations that the projects were carved up. However, a newly released memo dated February 12, 2004, states that "Project areas will be evaluated now to determine potential for being subdivided in smaller proposals that could be addressed in a CE." The same February 12 memo recommends 1,800 acres of logging be approved without environmental assessments even though a previous version of the same memo dated February 5 had proposed only 50 acres of logging be approved without environmental analysis.

"The Bush Administration has made a mockery of the national forest system by handing over public lands management decisions to private timber companies," explained Ron Cook, a landscaper from Jamestown, New York.

The new documents also appear to contradict earlier claims from Congressman Peterson that "...these decisions are made by professional scientists and land managers at the Forest Service and not by the timber industry." Conservationists contend the documents demonstrate that these projects were the direct result of pressures from the timber industry. In a February 9 e-mail, Allegheny National Forest Supervisor noted that, "progress on salvage efforts of the July storm salvage his had considerable media play along with attention from Congressman Peterson's office, the under Secretary's office (Mark Rey), and local timber industry. ... We will be working on those EA's this year, but the volume is not likely to actually be offered for sale until the first part of 2005. Hence, industry's frustration which has been conveyed to the Congressman and the Under Secretary." Three weeks later the environmental analyses planned for 1,800 acres were dropped.

"The proposal to log the Allegheny National Forest for special timber interests is outrageous," proclaimed Tim Reim, a volunteer with the Allegheny Defense Project and school teacher in Erie, PA. "Now we know what we got when George Bush appointed a timber industry lobbyist as the Undersecretary of Agriculture."

"These new documents released by the US Fish and Wildlife Service demonstrate that hundreds of documents relating to this controversial logging project were previously withheld without explanation or acknowledgement," explained Ryan Talbott, Forest Watch Coordinator for the Allegheny Defense Project. "Now we know that the administration was trying to hide the fact that the timber industry is dictating national forest policies."

Conservationists pointed out that the documents released provide additional important information. Documents suggest that efforts to expedite logging in the Allegheny National Forest may have interfered with conservation work conducted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service on

...half of the endangered bog turtle in southeastern Pennsylvania.

See documents at
http://www.alleghenydefense.org/press/release_041028.shtml
##

James Kleissler, Forest Watch Director
Allegheny Defense Project
P.O. Box 245
Clarion, PA 16214
814-223-4996
814-223-4997 fax
jkleissler@alleghenydefense.org
<http://www.alleghenydefense.org>

Allegheny Wild!
<http://www.alleghenywild.org/>
A Citizen's Vision for the Allegheny National Forest

The Hellbender Chronicles
<http://www.alleghenydefense.org/chronicles/>
Defending the Allegheny National Forest

Hellbenders mailing list
Hellbenders@lists.alleghenydefense.org
<http://lists.alleghenydefense.org/listinfo.cgi/hellbenders-alleghenydefense.org>

SA-1

A 300-year rotation will certainly allow for those tree species that live that long to approach biological maturity. Average ages for ponderosa pine in the Southwest place the species in the 250-300 year range. Average age can be considerably less than the oldest age, which for ponderosa pine has been as long as 500-600 years. Beyond 250-300 years, most ponderosa pine trees in the Southwest begin to lose physiological vigor and become increasingly susceptible to lightning, diseases, and other damage (Pearson 1950).

The term “rotation age” technically applies to even-aged management. It is the time between harvest treatments designed to promote stand-wide regeneration. Under uneven-aged management, a small amount of regeneration is desired following each harvest entry. The time between harvest entries under uneven-aged management is referred to as the “cutting cycle.”

A term that can be used to describe the fact that management should allow for and promote trees to reach 300 years might be “target age.” Because of the relation between tree size and tree age, the term “target size” can also be used, but the “target size” established must be based on some average growth rate over a finite period of time—in this case approximately 300 years.

SA-2

In development of Alternative G, a tremendous body of literature has been compiled, reviewed and assessed on the prey species associated with the northern goshawk. Many of the 450 northern goshawk related materials that include peer-reviewed scientific papers, published journal articles, masters’ theses, unpublished non-peer reviewed scientific papers, correspondence, and alternative views and scientific perspectives involved in the development of the MRNG (Reynolds et al. 1992), the original “Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment of Forest Plans” and this “Final Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment of Forest Plans” address prey species and their habitats.

SA-3

The “Final Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment of Forest Plans in Arizona and New Mexico” is being prepared to display, discuss, and disclose scientific arguments and information which is in opposition to the findings in the original EIS which are based on the Reynolds et al., 1992, GTR-RM-217, “Management Recommendations for the Northern Goshawk in the Southwestern United States.” The harvesting of old growth per se is not included in our assessment.

SA-4

Science, research, and biology specifically are evolving with time. Each new piece of science is based and built upon the literature which came before it. Understanding the historic and existing conditions documented in the scientific literature is essential to the development and documentation of new science. In this light, the MRNG (Reynolds et al. 1992), the original “Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment of Forest Plans,” and this “Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment of Forest Plans” are based on a lineage of science up to the literature published in the current year.



"Helen Snyder"
<noelsnyder@vtc.net>
11/15/2004 04:26 PM

To: <comments-southwestern-regional-office@fs.fed.us>
cc:
Subject: FEIS comments/Helen Snyder

Harv Forsgren
Southwestern Regional Forester
Attn: Goshawk SEIS Team
333 Broadway Blvd., S.E.
Albuquerque NM 87102

Nov. 14, 2004

Dear Mr. Forsgren,

I have reviewed the draft supplement to the FEIS for Amendment of Forest Plans. My research experience is with the purported 'Apache' race of the Northern Goshawks (NOGO) on the Coronado National Forest (CNF). I base my comments on my 10+ years of work on this bird on the CNF.

I agree with the conclusion that NOGO are not dependent on large undisturbed tracts of mature forest based on the following:

- On the CNF I was able to locate 25-30 active nest areas in most years, and of these there are four recently-active nest areas on old mining townsites, areas that 80-100 years ago were active human settlements.
- Many NOGO nest areas on the CNF are in stringers of trees no more than 35 meters across, surrounded by habitat consisting of grasslands, waist-high manzanita with occasional pinons and junipers – hardly "closed-canopy" forest.
- NOGO use Madrean Oak Woodland for nesting and foraging, a habitat type neither defined as old-growth or closed-canopy, nor is it considered in current management recommendations.
- Much of the diet of NOGO on the CNF consists of doves, pigeons and quail, birds that are hardly old-growth dependent.

SN-1

In the ten years since my report (Snyder, 1994) several important changes have occurred on the CNF that have had and will have a negative impact on the NOGO population here:

- Several stand-replacing fires (Bullock, Rattlesnake, Aspen) have burned through a dozen or more recently-active NOGO territories. It is unknown whether the nest areas remain and whether NOGO continue to use them.
- Developments on private land adjacent to CNF lands at the mouths of canyons have resulted in increased risk to nesting and wintering local NOGO that hunt around bird feeders. Two instances of window-strikes by hunting NOGO have occurred here where I

SN-2

- live.
- The explosion of illegal-alien and drug-smuggling traffic has created new, well-used north-south foot trails through previously isolated nesting areas in all the mountain ranges between the Mexican border and I-10. Several of these trails go within yards of previously undisturbed NOGO nest trees.
- Oak fuelwood cutting has severely altered some groves of mature oaks used by nesting NOGO. It is my understanding that cutting of live fuelwood has stopped, but there could be pressure to resume it under current energy conditions.

SN-2

While the draft supplement seems to have addressed most of the concerns about NOGO on other forests, NOGO diet (95% birds, very different from the North Kaibab) and nesting habitat use (fragmented patches of large trees; nest areas often less than 10 acres) on the CNF is sufficiently different from that in other forest that I agree with the recommendation by the Northern Goshawk Scientific Committee that “[t]he different forest types and suite of prey (suggested by the Mearns’s Quail) on the Coronado National Forest argue for developing a unique set of management recommendations for that forest using the MRNG as a template.”

SN-3

In conclusion, I support Alternative G as far as it goes but would also like to see you add to the supplement to the FEIS the recommendation that the Coronado National Forest develop its own Northern Goshawk Management Guidelines.

Thanks for allowing me to comment on this,

Sincerely,

Helen Snyder
PO Box 16426
Portal AZ 85632
520-558-2413

SN-1

The Agency acknowledges this comment. We have implemented the MRNG for over a decade now and our research shows that trends in territory occupancy are stable.

SN-2

The “Final Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment of Forest Plans in Arizona and New Mexico” was prepared to display, discuss and disclose scientific arguments and information which are in opposition to the findings in the original EIS which are based on the MRNG (Reynolds et al. 1992). Activities on private lands and border crossing issues are outside the scope of our assessment.

From 1985 to 2002, wildfires burned a total of approximately 1,678,000 acres in the Southwestern Region. These acres include all vegetation types such as alpine tundra, subalpine forest, mixed conifer forest, ponderosa pine forest, several woodland types, and mountain and desert grasslands. Of the approximately 1.7 million acres burned, 6 percent burned at high intensity. Implementing the MRNG (Reynolds et al. 1992) at the landscape level helps to lessen the effect of wildfire by widening the canopy in foraging areas and protecting nesting territories.

SN-3

There are some differences in northern goshawk habitat on the Coronado National Forest from the rest of the USDA Forest Service’s Southwestern Region. However, the current MRNG are comprehensive enough to provide guidance for management of northern goshawk habitat on the Coronado National Forest. For example, nesting in small fragmented stands would still require the establishment of a post family fledgling area and require that any management benefit the northern goshawk.