Species and Habitats Desired Conditions
Version 4.1

Introduction

The abundance and distribution of wildlife and fish found on the Dixie and Fishlake National Forests have sufficient populations and distributions to ensure their long-term persistence. Wildlife and fish species contribute to biodiversity of ecosystems, recognizing that there are inherent limitations for restoring historic conditions.

Native and desired non-native wildlife and fish populations are healthy; meaning that populations exist within habitat capabilities, exhibit predator/prey and food chain relationships, and are resilient to disturbances of various sizes and intensities. Disturbed habitats recover over time restoring disturbed lands to desired conditions or at least to conditions present prior to the disturbance. Time needed for restoring conditions varies depending on the site potential. Disturbance regimes such as fire, beetle infestations, and floods occur at frequencies and magnitudes that maintain the mosaic of structural and age variances over time, supporting disturbance-dependent species. Natural processes shape the vegetative composition and structure where possible. Management activities, such as prescribed fire, wildland fire use for resource benefit, and mechanical treatments emulate natural processes. Age classes that are presently low (primarily mature and old age classes) increase over time to move the age classes over the landscape toward desired vegetative conditions (see Vegetation Desired Conditions).

Species of Concern

Declining population trends of terrestrial and aquatic species are halted and/or reversed, thereby preventing species from becoming listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act, or listed as sensitive by the State or Regional Forester. Habitats are suitable and distributed as described in Recovery Plans, Conservation Strategies and Agreements, recommendations, and current scientific knowledge. No additional species demonstrate declining population trends related to Forest practices.

Habitats

Terrestrial Species

- Terrestrial wildlife habitats are diverse with native plant communities dominating the landscape. They contain a mosaic of plant communities that vary in age, structure, patch size, and components considered important to sustaining wildlife populations (e.g. snags, mast, down logs, understory vegetation) (see Vegetation Desired Conditions).
- Landscape patterns provide connectivity between un-fragmented habitat patches of varying sizes and allow movement of species between these patches. Different vegetation types are connected, especially riparian and adjacent upland vegetation. These habitats, along with non-vegetative habitats (such as lava fields) support a diversity of species.
- Areas of varying sizes provide refugia and security for a variety of wildlife species.

- Unique habitat types, such as riparian areas, natural springs, wetlands[1], organic bogs, seeps, meadows, bristlecone pine, and tall forb communities provide habitat for wildlife species that use these habitats.
- Riparian habitats provide a variety of vegetative vertical structure and patch sizes commensurate with site capabilities that are determined by stream gradient, channel and floodplain width, elevation, and soil (see Watershed Desired Conditions).
- Wildlife are generally not disturbed during time periods such as nesting, brooding, and wintering when the disturbance could cause reproductive failure, or inordinate stress.
- Vertebrate and invertebrate interactions (such as pollination, parasitism, and symbiosis) occur within appropriate vegetation and aquatic habitats.

Aquatic and Semi-Aquatic Species

- Water bodies and adjacent vegetation provide habitats for self-sustaining native and desired non-native aquatic communities, including fish, amphibians, invertebrates, plants, and other semi-aquatic species.
- Aquatic habitats are diverse, with channel characteristics and water quality reflective of the climate, geology, and natural vegetation of the area (see Hydrology desired conditions). No loss of such habitat occurs resulting from human activities.
- Stream connectivity provides for processes such as re-colonization and/or gene flow, and for life history function (e.g. movement from summer holding to fall spawning areas).
- Stream barriers provide protection to species that are vulnerable to competition from other species, particularly from non-native fish.

Game Species

The roles of big game management and conservation are important biologically and socio-economically. Big game summer, winter, and transition ranges are a mix of forage, cover, water, and security areas (at least 250 non-linear acres of cover that is at least ½ mile from a road or motorized trail). Open road and motorized trail densities are generally low in forested habitats with a low amount of hiding cover and security areas. Mule deer winter ranges contain cover and high quality forage, including a mix of seral stages and age classes of sagebrush, oak, and other winter forage species (see Vegetation Desired Conditions). These habitats contribute toward meeting population objectives approved by the Utah Wildlife Board. Access for hunting and fishing consists of a variety of difficulty and convenience opportunities, including easy access by motor vehicle to opportunities where horse or foot travel is necessary.

Migratory Birds

Terrestrial and aquatic habitats provide nesting, migration and wintering habitats for migratory and resident birds. Habitats for migratory birds carry out guidelines established for or through the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, Executive Order 13186 (2001), and Utah Partners in Flight Conservation Strategy, and North American Landbird Conservation Plan (2004).

[1] For regulatory purposes under the Clean Water Act, the term wetlands means "those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas."

Wildlife Viewing and Education

Unique ecosystems and restored habitats, particularly for listed and sensitive species, are interpreted with signing and through other education media.