

**FISHLAKE NATIONAL FOREST
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
Supplemental Information Report (SIR) and Determination**

I. PURPOSE OF THIS SIR

CEQ NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1509.2(c) and FS NEPA procedures) require supplementation of NEPA documents when there are "significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearings on the proposed action or its impacts."

The purpose of this SIR is to determine if the *Conservation Strategy and Agreement for the Management of Northern Goshawk Habitat in Utah* (Utah Conservation Strategy) represents significant new information or changed conditions bearing on current Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) direction or the effects identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for that LRMP.

II. INTRODUCTION

NFMA directs the Secretary of Agriculture to issue regulations for the development and revision of forest plans (16 U.S.C. S 1604(g)). These regulations are codified at 36 C.F.R. S219. A forest plan is a dynamic management plan that guides future decisions. It provides multiple-use goals and objectives that constitute the "vision" (or intentions) of the Forest Service regarding the planning unit. The forest plan describes the desired future condition of the Forest, and how progress toward it will be made through the planning period. In addition to providing multiple-use goals and objectives, the plan has some features of a zoning ordinance in that it permits or prohibits activities, and establishes standards and guidelines that regulate them. Thus, standards and guidelines comprise "sideboards" in achieving goals and objectives.

In response to the regulations cited above, the Fishlake National Forest in Utah developed a forest plan. The Record of Decision (ROD) to implement this Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP or Forest Plan) was signed in June 1986. The six decisions made in the ROD

- established forestwide multiple-use goals and objectives;
- established forestwide standards;
- established forestwide guidelines;
- delineated management areas and associated management prescriptions;
- identified lands not suited for timber production; and
- established monitoring and evaluation requirements.

These six decisions, in part, addressed requirements at 36 C.F.R. S 219.19 that "wildlife habitat shall be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area." This section further specifies that "habitat must be provided to support, at least, a minimum number of reproductive individuals and that habitat must be well distributed so that those individuals can interact with others in the planning area." *Id.* In order to estimate the effects of each alternative on fish and wildlife populations, certain vertebrate and invertebrate species present in the planning area were identified and selected as management indicator species (MIS) whose "population changes are believed to indicate the effects of management activities." 36 C.F.R. S 219.19(a)(1). The northern goshawk is an MIS for the Fishlake National Forest LRMP.

This SIR assesses the need to change (i.e., amend) one or more of the six decision points made in the Fishlake National Forest LRMP due to new information in the Utah Conservation Strategy. This strategy has been developed for use by National Forests in Utah, in part, to further ensure satisfaction of requirements at 36 C.F.R. S 219.19 for the northern goshawk. The strategy is based on information and recommendations found in the *Habitat Assessment and Management Recommendations for the Northern Goshawk (Accipiter gentilis) in Utah* (Graham et al. 1998; in press) and *Management recommendations for the northern goshawk in the southwestern United States* (Reynolds et al. 1992).

At 36 CFR S. 219.10(f) it states "The Forest Supervisor may amend the forest plan. Based on an analysis of the objectives, guidelines, and other contents of the forest plan, the forest supervisor shall determine whether a proposed amendment would result in a significant change in the plan. If the change resulting from the proposed amendment is determined to be significant, the Forest Supervisor shall follow the same procedure as that required for development and approval of a forest plan. If the change resulting from the amendment is determined not to be significant for the purposes of the planning process, the Forest Supervisor may implement the amendment following appropriate public notification and satisfactory completion of NEPA procedures."

Therefore, this SIR will compare the six decision points made in the land and resource management plan to information in the Utah Conservation Strategy to determine if the Strategy can be implemented under the current forest plan, or if amendments are required.

Viability of the Northern Goshawk and the Forest Plan

36 C.F.R. S 219.19 requires that "wildlife habitat shall be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area." It also specifies that "habitat must be provided to support, at least, a minimum number of reproductive individuals and that habitat must be well distributed so that those individuals can interact with others in the planning area." To meet these requirements for a far-ranging, broadly distributed species such as the northern goshawk--where a Population Viability Analysis (PVA), or surrogate analysis, is conducted at scales larger than an individual planning area--it must be clear what role individual planning areas (i.e., forest plan units) play in sustaining population viability at the larger scale. Matching the scale of analysis to the scale of biological processes is key to the success of PVA. Different taxa, and different ecological processes that influence the life histories of those taxa, call for analyses at different scales.

For the goshawk, the planning area managed under a Forest Plan provides an important piece of the total habitat that ensures maintenance of species representation throughout the area which defines a self-sustaining population (i.e., the aggregation of landscapes within the State of Utah). Habitat found on each forest provides connectivity and travel lanes, contributes to genetic diversity, and increases the number of individuals in the larger population.

Though the assessment completed by Graham et al. found that current habitat appears to be capable of supporting a viable population of goshawks at the State spatial scale, it recognized that "habitat deficiencies may be present at the local level" because of the coarse scale of the assessment. The Strategy provides administrative units with the necessary background information and analysis procedures to insure that projects proposed in areas involving goshawk habitat, or potential habitat, are properly designed and implemented to meet habitat goals.

Following the guidance in the Strategy will ensure that the administrative unit sustains habitat for the maintenance of species representation throughout the planning area over time, and contributes to sustaining habitat connectivity among National Forests. Connectivity among habitats is a key element to population viability because it allows juveniles to disperse from natal areas and individuals to emigrate to new areas. Connected habitat makes it possible for individuals to recolonize habitats or emigrate to new breeding territories throughout the State when habitat values change locally.

III. Relationship between species assessments, conservation strategies, and Forest Plan management direction

Species Assessments

The Habitat Assessment and Management Recommendations for the Northern Goshawk (Accipiter gentilis) in Utah (Graham et al. 1998, in press) considered goshawk habitat relationships and needs, historic and current range, demographic features and population trends, and limiting factors, and provided an estimate of long-term persistence considering past, present, and anticipated future conditions. To complete the assessment Graham et al. considered a portion of the species range (the State of Utah) to address management concerns. Within this spatial area, all land ownerships were included in the assessment to evaluate the contribution of National Forest System lands to long-term persistence and viability. This assessment included habitat findings not only for the goshawk, but also for its prey and other associated species. These findings provide the foundation for the Strategy.

Conservation Strategies and Agreements

The *Conservation Strategy and Agreement for the Management of Northern Goshawk Habitat in Utah* (1998) was developed from information in the *Habitat Assessment and Management Recommendations for the Northern Goshawk (Accipiter gentilis) in Utah*. It recommends management approaches to restore or maintain ecological integrity of goshawk habitat; this contributes to species viability. Management recommendations provide the framework for developing management direction in forest plans to meet the needs of the goshawk, its prey, and associated species.

Forest Plan Management Direction

A forest plan is a dynamic management plan for making future decisions. It has some features of a zoning ordinance in that it permits and prohibits activities, and establishes standards and guidelines ("sideboards") that regulate them.

These sideboards are intentionally broad to accommodate the needs of the many resources; allow for adaptation to the inherent variety of site-specific conditions on a forest; and accommodate adaptation as better science becomes available or policy changes. Plan direction does not provide detailed descriptions of how goals and objectives are to be achieved at the project level. However, the general path defined by the sideboards is narrow enough to insure ecosystem integrity and resiliency are retained, a sustainable level of products and services is provided, and laws and regulations are not violated while project implementation moves the planning area towards its vision.

The Fishlake National Forest must determine if implementation of this conservation strategy

- redefines the forest plan vision, as defined by its goals and objectives; and,
- is consistent with the existing forest plan direction (sideboards).

If implementation is consistent, the Forest must determine whether the stipulations in the Strategy are different than the operational boundaries defined by the sideboards (i.e., standards, guidelines, general direction, management area prescriptions). If they are, operational sideboards must be reconsidered, and the significance of the proposed changes must be assessed (FSH 1909.12 (5.32(3)) based on NFMA planning requirements.

This SIR assesses the ability of the current Fishlake National Forest plan to implement management recommendations of the Strategy across the planning area.

Below, Part IV - *Evaluation of Forest Plan Adequacy for Implementing the Utah Conservation Strategy*, Part V - *Summary and Conclusions*, and Part VI - *Determination of Need to Amend Current Forest Plan* (and if an amendment is needed, significance of the amendment).

FISHLAKE NATIONAL FOREST

The Role of the Fishlake National Forest in Sustaining Viable Populations of Goshawk at the State Scale

36 C.F.R. S 219.19 requires that "wildlife habitat shall be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area." It also specifies that "habitat must be provided to support, at least, a minimum number of reproductive individuals and that habitat must be well distributed so that those individuals can interact with others in the planning area." To meet these requirements for a far-ranging, broadly distributed species such as the northern goshawk--where a Population Viability Analysis (PVA), or surrogate analysis, is conducted at scales larger than an individual planning area--it must be clear what role individual planning areas (i.e., forest plan units) play in sustaining population viability at the larger scale.

The planning area managed under a Forest Plan provides an important piece of the total habitat that ensures maintenance of species representation throughout the area which defines a self-sustaining population (i.e., the aggregation of landscapes within the State of Utah). Habitat found on each forest provides connectivity and travel lanes, contributes to genetic diversity, and increases the number of individuals in the larger population.

Based on Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data compiled in 1995, the State of Utah encompasses over 54 million acres. Roughly 29 percent of the State (15.7 million acres) is forest land (all ownerships). Forest land is made up of 58 percent (9.2 million acres) pinyon-juniper and juniper woodlands; the remaining 42% (6.5 million acres) is timberland (based on forest type classifications). Timberland refers to those lands that are typically dominated by tree species favored for commercial timber harvest (i.e., "timber species" such as ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and Engelmann spruce). This is a land area classification system and is not intended to infer a land use such as timber harvest will occur.

Forested land classed as timberland in the FIA report is most important for goshawk habitat. Though the woodland areas (including pinyon/juniper) have some value as winter foraging habitat, no nesting goshawks have been located in this type. The USDA Forest Service manages 81% of the timberlands in Utah (those lands with forest types or habitat types that may be capable of achieving a goshawk habitat rating of high or optimum as described by Graham et al.).

The Fishlake National Forest encompasses 1,434,592 acres in southwestern Utah (FIA, 1998). It is made up of 971,500 acres of forest land and 463,092 acres of nonforest land or water. Forest land is made up of 43% timberland (421,241 acres) and 57% woodland (550,259 acres), based on FIA forest types. Relative to the State of Utah, the Fishlake National Forest timberland component represents roughly 6% of the land with forest types or habitat types that may be capable of achieving high or optimum value. However, some timberland sites on the Fishlake do not have the productive capability to grow trees of sufficient size and density to meet nest stand characteristics as defined by Graham et al. To achieve an overall habitat rating of high or optimum, a site must be capable of achieving high value for nesting *and* high value for at least one forage/prey species.

Though finer resolution data will be used during project-level landscape assessments to identify "local deficiencies" within a landscape, the coarse scale assessment completed for the State of Utah by Graham et al. provides indicators of habitat conditions on an individual National Forest. The Graham et al.

assessment indicates that the timberland component on the Fishlake is roughly classed as having 23% optimum habitat, 61% high-value habitat, and 16% moderate- to low-value habitat. Optimum and high-value habitat is well distributed throughout the Forest where a timberland component exists. The Fillmore Ranger District has the least amount of optimum and high valued goshawk habitat due to the smaller amount of the forest land component classed as timberland component.

In concert with the statewide assessment, the greatest existing and potential cause of habitat loss on the Fishlake National Forest (all districts) is lack of fire in the ecosystem. Fire exclusion, by altering natural fire disturbance regimes, has dramatically altered forested ecosystems. Ingrowth of shade-tolerant tree species (late seral) and buildup of fuels is an example (local deficiency). This deficiency has resulted in stands becoming unstable and higher risk to stand-replacing wildfire and insect and disease attack.

Integrating principles of the conservation strategy in both landscape and project planning to promote desired habitat attributes (i.e., large trees, snags, etc.) will help ensure that projects are developed in such a way as to maintain existing habitat and restore "local deficiencies". For example, strategy recommendations describe a need to restore and maintain greater proportions of old forest and larger snags than is currently provided for under the Fishlake National Forest Plan (refer to discussions below).

Both fire and mechanical treatments will be needed to restore and maintain desired habitat. For example, in the Graham et al. 1998 assessment it states that "...current management policies provide latitude for improving goshawk habitat if applied within reasonable ecological constraints. For example partial cutting systems are used to maintain or improve stand characteristics for goshawks and their prey, with overall positive effect on goshawk habitat. In addition, timber harvesting has the potential to convert cover types to earlier seral vegetative communities, which is generally good for goshawks. Thus current management policies provide for a wide range of implementation options, with a correspondingly wide range of possible effects on goshawk habitat. The critical decisions are those being made on individual project level analyses, because this is where managers can use the best available information to insure projects are providing for goshawk habitat needs."

In addition to sustaining habitat--including connectivity--within the Fishlake National Forest planning area, it's important to maintain habitat connectivity with adjacent forested landscapes. Based on the statewide assessment, the nearest neighbors with measurable amounts of forest land habitat in Utah are the Dixie, Manti-LaSal and Uinta National Forests.

The Fishlake and Dixie National Forests were recently (March 1998) designated the Southern Utah Ecogroup by the Regional Forester. This is an administrative designation meaning, in part, that the forests will jointly plan landscape activities at the forest planning scale. Accounting for goshawk habitat needs will be a part of normal business operations. In addition, the Southern Utah Ecogroup will continue to coordinate goshawk habitat management with the other four forests in Utah, based on the requirements outlined in the monitoring section of the Strategy. (The Manti-LaSal and Ashley National Forests comprise the Eastern Utah Ecogroup, the Wasatch-Cache and Uinta comprise the Northern Utah Ecogroup.)

The statewide assessment identifies very little forest land in BLM or State ownership that is capable of reaching optimum or high-value habitat that lies within 60 miles of the Fishlake National Forest. Consequently, the Fishlake National Forest will concentrate its available resources on ensuring habitat connectivity with the Dixie, Manti-LaSal and Uinta National Forests.

Connectivity among habitats is a key element to population viability because it allows juveniles to disperse from natal areas and individuals to emigrate to new areas. Connected habitat makes it possible for individuals to recolonize habitats or emigrate to new breeding territories throughout the State when habitat values change locally.

Implementing the intent of the principles and processes in the Strategy to address possible deficiencies will further ensure that the Fishlake National Forest does its part to sustain goshawk habitat in the planning area and maintains connectivity with neighboring habitat areas. That Strategy applies management recommendations contained in the "Habitat Assessment and Management Recommendations for the Northern Goshawk in Utah" recommending actions that should be taken by Utah National Forests and the Bureau of Land Management to restore and maintain goshawk habitat. These agencies will contribute to sustaining short and long term habitat for goshawks which is important to the Statewide viability of the species.

IV. Evaluation of Forest Plan Adequacy for Implementing the Utah Conservation Strategy

The following table lists Utah Conservation Strategy stipulations and compares them to applicable direction in the Fishlake Land and Resource Management Plan.

a) Comparison of the Utah Conservation Strategy to Current Forest Plan Goals and Objectives

1998 Conservation Strategy	Fishlake National Forest Plan
<p><i>Goal:</i> (Strategy, Page 6) Provide habitat capable of sustaining viable populations of goshawk in the State of Utah.</p>	<p><u><i>Goal (Wildlife and Fish section, 3rd statement).</i></u> Identify and improve habitat for sensitive, threatened and endangered species including participating in recovery efforts for both plant and animals. (LRMP, page IV-4) Note: Goshawk is a Region 4 classified species (sensitive).</p> <p><u><i>Goal (Wildlife and Fish section, 5th statement).</i></u> Determine current status and monitor trends in management indicator species and their habitats. (LRMP, page IV-4) Note: Goshawk is a management indicator species identified in the LRMP.</p>
<p><i>Objective 1:</i> (Strategy, Page 6) Design a proactive approach to habitat management which will result in the long-term conservation and management of habitat for goshawk, its prey and other associated species.</p>	<p><u><i>Goal (Diversity section).</i></u> Integrate vegetation management with resource management to maintain productivity and provide for diversity of plant and animal communities. (LRMP, page IV-3)</p>
<p><i>Objective 2:</i> (Strategy, Page 6) Provide consistency in management of goshawk habitat on National Forest System lands in the State of Utah.</p>	<p><u><i>Goal (Wildlife and Fish section, 2nd statement).</i></u> Coordinate wildlife and fish habitat management with State, other Federal and local agencies. (LRMP, page IV-3)</p>

b) Comparison of Utah Conservation Strategy Desired Habitat Conditions with Current Forest Plan Direction

1998 Conservation Strategy	Fishlake National Forest Plan
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<p>1) Diverse forest cover types with strong representation of early seral tree species dominant the landscape. (Strategy, Page 6)</p>	<p><u>Goal (Diversity section).</u> Integrate vegetation management with resource management to maintain productivity and provide for diversity of plant and animal communities. (LRMP, page IV-3)</p> <p><u>Goal (Timber section, 2nd and 3rd statement) (LRMP, page IV-4).</u> Integrate aspen management into the timber management program to perpetuate the species and improve aspen quality.</p> <p>Improve the timber age class distribution and maintain species diversity.</p> <p><u>General Direction (LRMP, page IV-12, A00(4)):</u> 4. Manage aspen for retention where needed for wildlife, watershed or esthetic purposes.</p> <p><u>General Direction (LRMP, MA 4B (only), page IV-99, E03(1)):</u> 1. Manage forest cover types to provide variety in stand sizes, shape, crown closure, edge contrast, age structure and interspersion.</p>
<p>2) High quality habitat patches that are no more than 60 miles apart, preferably less than 20 miles apart, exist throughout landscapes (connected habitat). (Strategy, Page 6)</p>	<p><u>Goal (Wildlife and fish section).</u> Coordinate wildlife and fish habitat management with State, other Federal and local agencies (LRMP, page IV-3).</p> <p><u>Goal (Wildlife and fish section).</u> Identify and improve habitat for sensitive, threatened and endangered species including participation in recovery efforts for both plants and animals (LRMP, page IV-4).</p> <p><u>General Direction (LRMP, page IV-18, C01(2)):</u> 2. Maintain habitat for viable populations of existing vertebrate wildlife species.</p> <p><u>Standard and Guideline (LRMP, page IV-18, C01(2)(a)):</u> a. Habitat for each species on the forest will be maintained by protecting at least 40 percent of the ecosystems for existing species. Proper juxtaposition of ecosystems must be considered.</p> <p><u>General Direction (LRMP, page IV-19, C01(6)):</u> 4. Do not allow activities or practices that would negatively impact endangered, threatened, or sensitive plant or animal species.</p> <p>.</p>
<p>1998 Conservation Strategy</p>	<p>Fishlake National Forest Plan</p>

<p>3) Forested landscapes have 40% of the area dominated by large trees, well distributed. Large trees are defined relative to the average for the cover type and site potential. (Strategy, Page 6)</p>	<p><u>General Direction (LRMP, page IV-12, A00(1,5)):</u> 1. Maintain structural diversity of vegetation on management areas dominated by forested ecosystems. 5. Manage seral aspen stands for a diversity of age classes.</p> <p><u>General Direction (LRMP, MA 4B (only), page IV-99, E03(1)):</u> 1. Manage forest cover types to provide variety in stand sizes, shape, crown closure, edge contrast, age structure and interspersion.</p>
<p>4) Habitats for prey and other associated species are present to meet needs as described by Reynolds et al. 1992 and Graham et al. 1998, in press (i.e., snags, down woody, cover, etc.) (Strategy, Page 6)</p>	<p><u>Goal (Diversity section).</u> Integrate vegetation management with resource management to maintain productivity and provide for diversity of plant and animal communities. (LRMP, page IV-3)</p> <p><u>General Direction (LRMP, page IV-18, C01(2)):</u> 2. Maintain habitat for viable populations of existing vertebrate wildlife species.</p> <p><u>General Direction (LRMP, MA 4B (only), page IV-99, E03(1)):</u> 1. Manage forest cover types to provide variety in stand sizes, shape, crown closure, edge contrast, age structure and interspersion.</p>
<p>5) A variety of structural stages as recommended by Reynolds et al. 1992 are present. (Strategy, Page 6)</p>	<p><u>General Direction (LRMP, page IV-12, A00(1,5)):</u> 1. Maintain structural diversity of vegetation on management areas dominated by forested ecosystems. 5. Manage seral aspen stands for a diversity of age classes.</p> <p><u>Goal (Timber section, 3rd statement) (LRMP, page IV-4).</u> Improve the timber age class distribution and maintain species diversity.</p> <p><u>General Direction (LRMP, MA 4B (only), page IV-99, E03(1)):</u> 1. Manage forest cover types to provide variety in stand sizes, shape, crown closure, edge contrast, age structure and interspersion.</p>

c) Comparison of the Utah Conservation Strategy Project Stipulations with Current Forest Plan Management Direction, Standards and Guidelines.

1998 Conservation Strategy	Fishlake National Forest Plan																												
<p><u>Down logs and tons of woody debris per acre:</u> (Strategy, Page 7)</p> <p>---Ponderosa Pine - at least 3 large downed logs per acre (greater than or equal to 12 inch diameter mid-point, greater than or equal to 8 feet long); 5-7 tons of woody debris per acre.</p> <p>---Mixed species and spruce-fir - at least 5 large downed logs per acre (greater than or equal to 12 inch diameter mid-point, greater than or equal to 8 feet long); 10-15 tons of woody debris per acre.</p>	<p><u>Down logs and woody debris per acre:</u></p> <p><u>Standard and Guideline (LRMP, page IV-11, A00(3)(b):</u> a. Follow direction in FSM 2631, R4 Supplement 26, for down-dead logs. NOTE: Supplement 26 is no longer part of FSM 2631, R4 Supplement series.</p> <p><u>Standard and Guideline (LRMP, page IV-48, P11(1)(a):</u> a. Reduce or otherwise treat all activity fuels so that the total loading of materials less than 6 inches in diameter is less than 25 tons/acre, or Break up continuous activity fuel concentrations exceeding the above standard into manageable units with fuel breaks or fire lands, or Provide additional protection for activity fuel areas exceeding the above standards when such protection will not be required for more than five years.</p>																												
<p><u>Snags/acre:</u> (Strategy, Page 7)</p> <p>---Ponderosa pine - at least 2 large snags per acre (greater than or equal to 18 inch dbh, greater than or equal to 30 feet tall) .</p> <p>---Mixed species and spruce-fir - at least 3 large snags (greater than or equal to 18 inch dbh, greater than or equal to 30 feet tall) .</p>	<p><u>Snags/acre:</u></p> <p><u>General Direction (LRMP, page IV-11, A00(3)):</u> 3. In forested ecosystems, maintain snags well distributed over the ecosystem.</p> <p><u>Standard and Guideline (LRMP, page IV-11, A00(3)(a):</u> a. FSM 2631, Fishlake supplemental No. 1, for snag management. (<i>Refer to Attachment 1</i>)</p>																												
<p><u>Canopy Cover</u> (Strategy, Page 7)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th colspan="3">Canopy Cover</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Nest stand</th> <th>mid-age</th> <th>mature</th> <th>old</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>all forest types</td> <td>NA</td> <td>50-70%</td> <td>50-70%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">Home Range</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ponderosa Pine</td> <td>40-60%</td> <td>40-50+%</td> <td>40-50+%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mixed species</td> <td>40-60+%</td> <td>50-60+%</td> <td>60+%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Spruce-fir</td> <td>40-60+%</td> <td>60-70+%</td> <td>60-70+%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Canopy Cover			Nest stand	mid-age	mature	old	all forest types	NA	50-70%	50-70%	Home Range				Ponderosa Pine	40-60%	40-50+%	40-50+%	Mixed species	40-60+%	50-60+%	60+%	Spruce-fir	40-60+%	60-70+%	60-70+%	<p><u>Canopy Cover</u></p> <p>The LRMP does not specifically address canopy cover in <i>forestwide</i> direction. However, at MD C01(2) it states "Manage habitat for viable populations of existing vertebrate wildlife species."</p> <p><u>MA 4B General Direction (page IV-99, E03(1)):</u> 1. Manage forest cover types to provide variety in stand sizes, shape, crown closure, edge contrast, age structure and interspersion.</p>
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Maintain structural diversity of vegetation on management areas dominated by forested ecosystems. <p><u>Standard and Guideline</u> (LRMP, page IV-11, A00(1)(a,b,c)):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Maintain or establish a minimum of 20 percent of the forested area within a unit to provide vertical diversity. B. Maintain or establish a minimum of 30 percent of the forested area within a unit to provide horizontal diversity. C. In forested areas of a unit, 5 percent or more should be old growth and 5 percent or more should be in grass/forb stages. <p><u>Table II-15 (in part), Present and Future Forest Condition</u> (LRMP, page II-46)</p> <p><i>Age Class Distribution (softwoods or conifers, only)</i></p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Age Class (years)</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Present Forest (1985, acres)</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Future Forest (2035, acres)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>10</td><td style="text-align: center;">1670</td><td style="text-align: center;">18166</td></tr> <tr><td>20</td><td style="text-align: center;">0</td><td style="text-align: center;">10004</td></tr> <tr><td>30</td><td style="text-align: center;">0</td><td style="text-align: center;">11462</td></tr> <tr><td>40</td><td style="text-align: center;">0</td><td style="text-align: center;">3796</td></tr> <tr><td>50</td><td style="text-align: center;">0</td><td style="text-align: center;">1670</td></tr> <tr><td>60</td><td style="text-align: center;">128</td><td style="text-align: center;">0</td></tr> <tr><td>70</td><td style="text-align: center;">0</td><td style="text-align: center;">0</td></tr> <tr><td>80</td><td style="text-align: center;">0</td><td style="text-align: center;">0</td></tr> <tr><td>90</td><td style="text-align: center;">6020</td><td style="text-align: center;">0</td></tr> <tr><td>100</td><td style="text-align: center;">0</td><td style="text-align: center;">128</td></tr> <tr><td>100-140</td><td style="text-align: center;">37796</td><td style="text-align: center;">6020</td></tr> <tr><td>150+</td><td style="text-align: center;">22358</td><td style="text-align: center;">16726</td></tr> <tr><td>Total</td><td style="text-align: center;">67972</td><td style="text-align: center;">67972</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Age Class (years)	Present Forest (1985, acres)	Future Forest (2035, acres)	10	1670	18166	20	0	10004	30	0	11462	40	0	3796	50	0	1670	60	128	0	70	0	0	80	0	0	90	6020	0	100	0	128	100-140	37796	6020	150+	22358	16726	Total	67972	67972
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d) Comparison of Utah Conservation Strategy Requirements with Current Forest Plan Management Areas and Prescriptions

There is nothing in the Utah Conservation Strategy that directs the establishment of specific management areas or management prescriptions. All recommendations in the Utah Conservation Strategy would be covered by forestwide direction, standards and guidelines.

e) Comparison of Utah Conservation Strategy requirements with Current Forest Plan Determination of Lands Not Suited for Timber Production.

1998 Conservation Strategy	Fishlake National Forest Plan
Nothing in the Strategy would affect this decision point. The Strategy does not preclude the use of mechanical treatments to manipulate vegetation to meet resource objectives.	Table II-16 (LRMP, Page II-47) 9. Unsuitable forest land 697,807-Acres 10. Total suitable forest land 79,972-Acres

f) Comparison of Utah Conservation Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Requirements with Current Forest Plan Requirements

Strategy (Strategy, Pages 9 thru 11)

Habitat Monitoring

The Strategy incorporates two types of monitoring: 1) tracking changes in goshawk habitat over time; and 2) evaluating implementation, and effectiveness of the Strategy in maintaining or improving goshawk habitat. Both types of monitoring will occur to some degree at each planning scale (project, Forest, and statewide).

1. Tracking changes in goshawk habitat over time

This type of monitoring will occur on State and federal lands, statewide. Each Forest will monitor its forested landscapes for the attributes described in the desired habitat condition (DHC) statements provided earlier (early seral tree species, habitat connectivity, large trees, stand level characteristics such as snags and down woody debris, and a variety of vegetative structural stages). At the forest level this is accomplished by identifying changes in habitat caused by management activities or natural events. When conditions are trending away from DHCs, appropriate corrective actions will be developed and implemented. Results of forest-level monitoring will also be aggregated to a central repository at the state level in order to monitor quality and connectivity of statewide habitat. Statewide assessments will also be completed during programmatic planning activities such as Land and Resource Management Plan revisions.

2. Implementation and effectiveness monitoring

Monitoring will be conducted to verify that projects are properly implementing the Strategy, and that they are effective in creating desired habitat conditions for the goshawk and its prey. Monitoring will be part of the design of every project affecting goshawk habitat. Time periods and indicators for monitoring will vary depending upon the purpose of the project; they will be documented in individual project

records. At the Forest and statewide levels, monitoring will track the net change in availability and connectivity of high-value goshawk habitat. Monitoring will be reviewed annually at the state level to determine if the Strategy is being successfully implemented or if changes are needed.

An additional indication of the Strategy's effectiveness is provided by territory occupancy (see next section).

Population Monitoring

Concurrent with habitat monitoring, Forests will monitor goshawk territory occupancy. Data will be collected and analyzed at the Forest level and shared with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources for aggregation to larger scales, including the State. A territory is considered occupied if evidence of goshawk use is present. Nesting does not need to occur for a territory to be occupied. Each agency will be responsible for maintaining and updating its respective population databases, and coordinating findings annually.

This is the minimum level of population monitoring required under the Strategy. Such information will help ensure that there is reproductive potential, in the form of adult birds present on every management unit. Occupancy data are strongly influenced by the level of survey, monitoring effort, and observer training and experience. Therefore, when conducting population monitoring, managers should be prepared to invest sufficient field effort to obtain reliable results.

However, occupancy data have limitations which should be considered during interpretation. Because it does not indicate if reproduction is actually occurring, occupancy is not sensitive to the early stages of habitat decline and may not detect population sinks (areas where goshawks are either nesting unsuccessfully or failing to initiate nesting). Whenever possible, occupancy data should be supplemented with nest productivity data in order to provide additional information on habitat quality.

Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures for Territory Occupancy

Population monitoring will be conducted annually using a random sample of at least 20 territories, or 50% of all known territories, whichever is greater. If fewer than 20 territories are known, monitor all of them. Once a territory is identified, it always remains in the pool of known territories. New territories will be included in the sample as they are located and could be analyzed separately.

If monitoring reveals three consecutive years of a 20% or greater decline in territory occupancy, further evaluation must occur to determine the cause and appropriate corrective action. This evaluation would be conducted by an interagency team. Corrective actions will be determined in part based on the scale at which the populations are declining.

There must be a strong commitment to monitoring both habitat and populations. Failure to make this commitment could result in underestimation of territory occupancy, which could unnecessarily limit management activities. Furthermore, it will result in insufficient information to make necessary management changes.

Management Responses to Suspected Occupancy Declines

Declining occupancy at the landscape level requires review; it does not necessarily mean that population viability is at risk. If declines at the landscape level occur, only those activities that would benefit habitat for the goshawk at the landscape area should be implemented. If that is not possible in the landscape, habitat should be developed or maintained in adjacent areas.

Declining occupancy in multiple landscapes is serious. Such declines suggest a widespread or systematic problem that could relate to management strategies rather than individual projects. Such declines

indicate a need to evaluate conditions over a multiple-landscape scale and develop corrective or compensatory strategies.

Declining occupancy at the forest level could affect findings in project-level Biological Evaluations (BEs) and require review of the Habitat Strategy, Forest or Resource Management Plan direction, and standards and guidelines. Forests should identify the most likely cause of the decline and determine actions to reverse the decline in trend. The Habitat Strategy would only be modified if review indicated that the existing strategy had been fully implemented, and yet habitat was still implicated in the decline. When occupancy is declining at the forest level, projects should be specifically designed to enhance habitat rather than to mitigate or be neutral in their effects to goshawks.

Fishlake National Forest Plan

Goal (Wildlife and fish section). Determine current status and monitor trends in management indicator species and their habitats (LRMP, page IV-4). The goshawk is a management indicator species (MIS) for the Fishlake LRMP.

Implementation of the Plan, Monitoring Requirements (pages V-6 and 12).

ACTIVITY, EFFECTS OR EFFECT	MONITORING TECHNIQUES OR DATA SOURCES	PRECISION/RELIABILITY	MEASURE-MENT FREQUENCY	REPORT-ING PERIOD	STANDARDS-ACCEPTABLE LIMITS INDICATING NO NEED FOR FURTHER PLANNING ACTION
Fish and Wildlife	Coordinate Monitoring with	State and other	Federal agencies		
Wildlife Habitat Diversity	vegetation inventories	Low/Moderate	5 years	5 years	Meets standards in Forest direction
Modification of Ecosystem	Acres treated or modified	High/High	Annual	Annual	Meets standards in Forest direction
T&E and Sensitive Animals	Visual reconnaissance	Moderate/Moderate	Annual	Annual	No decrease attributed to management activities.
Snag management	Condition Survey	Moderate/moderate	Annual	Annual	Meets prescribed standard.
Fuel Treatment (P11)	Project analysis, acres treated, management attainment report.	Moderate/Moderate	Semi-annual	Annual	Meets targets and management area standards for activity fuels loading (tons/acre).

g) Comparison of Utah Conservation Strategy-Recommended Management Activities/Actions that Should be Implemented to Maintain or Improve Habitat for Goshawk with Current Forest Plan Direction.

1998 Conservation Strategy	Fishlake National Forest Plan
<p>There are a variety of management activities that could be employed to achieve DHC. These activities should be coordinated at the site-specific level by local land managers. However, there is a guideline that almost always applies:</p> <p>-Protect active nest areas (NAs) and their post-fledgling area (PFA) from disturbance during critical phases of reproduction. The recommended seasonal restriction from the Reynolds et al. 1992 is March 1 through September 30. Seasonal restrictions may vary from this recommendation when site-specific information justifies it.</p> <p>(Strategy, Page 11)</p>	<p><u>Goal (Diversity section).</u> Integrate vegetation management with resource management to maintain productivity and provide for diversity of plant and animal communities. (LRMP, page IV-3)</p> <p><u>General Direction (LRMP, MA 4B (only), page IV-99, E03(1)):</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manage forest cover types to provide variety in stand sizes, shape, crown closure, edge contrast, age structure and interspersion. <p><u>General Direction (LRMP, Page IV-24, E03(2))</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Apply a variety of silviculture systems and harvest methods which best meet resource management objectives. <p><u>General Direction (LRMP, page IV-31, EO3(11))</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Timber management activities may be carried out on unsuitable lands only when compatible with other resource objectives and when they meet one of the attached guidelines. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Salvage or sanitation harvesting of trees or stands that are substantially damaged by fire, windthrow, or other catastrophe, or which are in imminent danger from insect or disease attack. b. Cutting of individual trees or stands to test logging systems, to conduct experiments, or for the purpose of fathering information about tree growth, insect and disease organisms, or determining the effect of such harvesting on other resources. c. Cutting of trees to promote the safety of forest users, such as hazard tree removal in campgrounds and picnic grounds, administrative sites, and along roads open to the public. d. Harvesting to meet habitat objectives for threatened or endangered animal or plant species, or to maintain or improve habitat for other wildlife or fish management indicator species. e. Harvesting to meet forage production objectives for livestock. f. Harvesting to improve the scenic resource by opening scenic vistas or by improving visual variety. g. Harvesting of fuelwood and Christmas trees. h. Harvesting to provide access, such as road construction. <p><u>General Direction (LRMP, page IV-48, P15(1)):</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use prescribed fire from planned and unplanned ignitions to accomplish resource management objectives, such as reducing fuel load buildup, wildlife habitat improvement, etc..

V. Summary and Conclusions

Implementation of the Utah Conservation Strategy provides reasonable assurance that each National Forest will contribute to the maintenance of high-value, connected goshawk habitat throughout the State of Utah sufficient to promote species viability. The question evaluated by this SIR is the need to amend the existing forest plan in order to apply the recommendations of the Utah Conservation Strategy across the planning area. Section IV of this report compares the recommendations of the Strategy with the six decisions of the forest plan.

The following conclusions are reached as a result of the comparisons:

1. Do forestwide goals and objectives in the current plan embody the spirit and intent of the goals and objectives found in the Utah Conservation Strategy, and to what extent do they complement or conflict with each other in achieving sustainable goshawk habitat?

A comparison of the goals and objectives in both documents shows a strong intent to maintain sufficient habitat to ensure viability of the northern goshawk. Because the goshawk is a classified (Region 4 sensitive) species, the current forest plan requires maintenance or enhancement of its status through habitat improvement. In addition, the status of the goshawk as a management indicator species in the Fishlake National Forest Plan requires that sufficient habitat be maintained to protect viability of the species. This is also the specific intent of the Utah Conservation Strategy, demonstrating good alignment between the two documents.

There is no need for additional goals and objectives in the current forest plan to ensure that the Fishlake National Forest contributes to the maintenance of high-value, connected goshawk habitat throughout the State of Utah. During forest plan revision efforts (presently in progress), terminology will be updated and clarity in goal and objective statements concerning goshawk, MIS species, and sensitive species will be improved. Forest plan revision is projected to be completed in 2001.

2. To what extent do the forestwide standards in the current forest plan encourage, prohibit or have a neutral effect on implementation of the Utah Conservation Strategy?

and

3. To what extent do the forestwide guidelines in the current forest plan encourage, prohibit or have a neutral effect on implementation of the Utah Conservation Strategy?

The Fishlake National Forest Plan (Plan) does not typically differentiate between standards and guidelines; therefore they will be discussed together. In addition, this section will address forestwide general direction since, in many cases, it provides requirements similar to standards and guidelines.

Diversity

The Utah Conservation Strategy emphasizes the need for diversity of forest cover types, with strong representation of early seral tree species that dominate the landscape. Similarly, the Plan emphasizes integration of vegetation management with resource management to maintain productivity and provide for diversity of plant and animal communities (LRMP, page IV-3, Goal (Diversity section)). It gives special emphasis to endangered, threatened, or sensitive plant and animal species habitat (LRMP, page IV-19, C01(6)). The northern goshawk is a designated sensitive species in Region 4.

Habitat Connectivity

The Utah Conservation Strategy emphasizes the need to have high-quality habitat patches not more than 60 miles apart (preferably less than 20 miles apart) throughout the landscape. This is important to maintain connectivity of habitat. The Plan addresses connectivity by stating that "Habitat for each species on the forest will be maintained by protecting at least 40 percent of the ecosystems for existing species. Proper juxtaposition of ecosystems must be considered." (LRMP, page IV-18, C01(2)(a).) The intent of the Forest to coordinate habitat connectivity needs with adjacent ownerships and Federal lands is provided for through a forestwide goal which states "Coordinate wildlife and fish habitat management with State, other federal and local agencies (LRMP, page IV-3). Though meeting the intent of the strategy, guidance clarification of how to assess connectivity could be added during revision or an amendment process.

Structural Diversity, Including Having 40% of the Landscape Area in Large Trees

The Utah Conservation Strategy requires structural diversity in forest types, including sustaining large trees on approximately 40% of the forested landscapes. The Plan addresses structural diversity, but varies slightly from that prescribed in the Strategy.

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Notes: Based on the latest FIA data (1998), forested land with commercial timber species on them comprises 421,241 acres (FIA timberland) of the 1,434,592 acre planning area (Fishlake NF). The FIA data varies from the 1980 inventory data used in development of the Forest Plan; these data estimated 777,779 acres of forested land (equivalent to FIA timberland). This figure includes all forested land, both suitable and unsuitable for timber harvest, in all management areas on the Fishlake National Forest. The Plan estimated that approximately 79,972 acres of the total forested land was suitable for timber harvest (19% of the FIA, or 10% of the Plan's total estimated acres of forested timberland). The remainder is unsuitable.

Old forest in the Strategy is not equivalent to "old growth" as defined in the Plan. The Old forest structural stage represents a size and age class of trees that dominate the overstory. Old growth forests are ecosystems, not just a size class structural stage. Old growth encompasses later stages of stand development that typically differ from earlier stages in a variety of characteristics; these may include tree size, accumulation of large dead woody material, number of canopy layers, species composition, and ecosystem function. Old growth would typically occur in the mid-age to oldest part of the Strategy's Old forest structural class. In other words, all of this class is not old growth.

Age of Old Forest

The age of the old forest component under the Strategy and the Plan vary. The Strategy refers to the *mid-age* of old forest as being 200+ years; the Plan refers only to a rotation age of 90-180 years for conifer and 80-120 years for aspen. The plan references that 5% or more of forested areas within a unit should be old growth; however, there is no specific discussion of what old growth is in terms of age class.

Snags and Down Woody Material

The Strategy provides requirements for management of prey habitat such as snags and down woody material.

- Page 7: *Ponderosa pine* - at least 2 large snags per acre (greater than or equal to 18 inch dbh, greater than or equal to 30 feet tall). *Mixed species and spruce-fir* - at least 3 large snags (greater than or equal to 18 inch dbh, greater than or equal to 30 feet tall).
- Page 7: *Ponderosa pine* - at least 3 large downed logs per acre (greater than or equal to 12 inch diameter mid-point, greater than or equal to 8 feet long); 5-7 tons of woody debris per acre. *Mixed species and spruce-fir* - at least 5 large downed logs per acre (greater than or equal to 12 inch diameter mid-point, greater than or equal to 8 feet long); 10-15 tons of woody debris per acre.

The Fishlake National Forest Plan references direction in FSM 2631, R4 Supplement 26, for dead down logs. However, this supplement is not longer included with FSM 2631. The only direction in the current Fishlake LRMP that relates to down woody material is in the fuels management section. Standard and Guideline P11(1)(a) states:

- a. Reduce or otherwise treat all activity fuels so that the total loading of materials less than 6 inches in diameter is less than 25 tons/acre,
 - or
 - Break up continuous activity fuel concentrations exceeding the above standard into manageable units with fuel breaks or fire lands,
 - or
 - Provide additional protection for activity fuel areas exceeding the above standards when such protection will not be required for more than five years.

This fuels standard and guideline provides no direction concerning retention of larger logs.

The Fishlake National Forest Plan references direction in FSM 2631, Fishlake Supplement 1, for snag management. This supplement is attached to this document as attachment 1. The minimum size and number of snags stated in this supplement is less than that required under the strategy.

At the project level, increasing the size and number of snags over the minimums stated in the Plan would not conflict with Plan direction. However, because the minimum requirements in the Strategy exceed those in the plan it would further constrict the Plan's operating "sideboards" as defined in current management direction; that is, retention of snags of 18 inch dbh (where site capability permits) has become the new minimum where goshawk habitat is involved.

Canopy Cover

The Strategy outlines specific canopy cover requirements on page 7. The Forest Plan, though recognizing the need to manage habitat for viable populations of existing vertebrate wildlife species (LRMP, IV-18, C01(2)), does not specifically define any standards and guidelines concerning canopy cover. As with snags, using the Strategy defined canopy cover would be consistent with plan direction to manage habitat for viable populations of wildlife species. However, the defined requirements in the Strategy constrict the current Plan's operating "sideboards". That is, canopy cover requirements defined in the Strategy provide clear sideboards on how this aspect of wildlife habitat will be achieved forest-wide.

Management Activities/Actions that Should be Implemented

The Utah Conservation Strategy states that "there are a variety of management activities that could be employed to achieve DHC. These activities should be coordinated at site-specific level by local land managers." Similarly, the Fishlake National Forest Plan provides direction to "Apply a variety of silviculture systems and harvest methods which best meet resource needs." (LRMP, page IV-24, E03(2)) and "Integrate vegetation management with resource management to maintain productivity and provide for diversity of plant and animal communities." (LRMP, page IV-3,).

The Strategy requires that managers "protect active nests and their post-fledgling area (PFA) from disturbance during critical phases on reproduction. The recommended seasonal restriction from the Reynolds et al. 1992 is March 1 through September 30. Seasonal restrictions may vary from this recommendation when site-specific information justifies it." The Plan provides direction to "manage habitat for viable populations of existing vertebrate wildlife species (LRMP, IV-18, C01(2)). To comply with this direction, active nests and post-fledgling areas associated with a specific project would be protected as outlined in the project Biological Evaluation.

Conclusions for Standards and Guidelines

The Reynolds et al. recommendations (the foundation of the Strategy) were developed for the Southwestern Region (Region 3) of the Forest Service. On October 13, 1992 the Intermountain (R-4) Regional Forester sent a memo to all Forest Supervisors stating that "Forests should use the Scientific Committee's recommendations as important new information to be considered along with other goshawk and ecosystem management information that may be available for their specific habitat types."

As recommended by the Regional Forester, the Fishlake National Forest has been drawing from the intent of the Reynolds et al. recommendations when designing projects involving goshawk habitat since 1992. Drawing from the intent of these recommendations during project design was intended to be in effect until such time that a strategy was developed specifically for habitats in Intermountain Region (Region 4).

Current forest plan direction, standards, and guidelines do not prohibit adherence to Strategy stipulations at the project level; Strategy requirements are consistent with current forest plan direction. The Forest Plan guideline for maintaining 5% old growth in forested areas of a unit does not prohibit retention of additional large trees on a site-specific basis to meet project objectives. This is particularly true for projects involving Forest Plan MIS species such as the goshawk: forestwide direction requires us to "maintain habitat for viable populations of existing vertebrate wildlife species," and this is accomplished through the management of habitat for MIS species.

Moreover, management of habitat to maintain viable populations is founded in federal regulation (CFR 219.19). This requirement must be accomplished. Thus, at the project level, use of the Reynolds et al. recommendations is consistent with the Plan.

Strategy requirements related to diversity and management activities/actions are consistent with current Plan direction; moreover, they do not alter the Plan's vision, and do not change operational sideboards. Any adjustments in terminology to improve clarity of management direction can be accomplished during forest plan revision efforts presently under way. Revision of the Forest Plan is projected to be completed in 2001.

Strategy requirements related to structural diversity (specifically 20% old forest and related age), down woody material, snags, canopy cover and habitat connectivity are consistent with Plan direction when applied at the project level (a small area of the total Forest). However, because implementing the Strategy requires application of its requirements across *all forested acres in the planning area* (not just an individual project area), the vision for the structural distribution of forest on landscapes has changed in favor of greater retention of old forest. Also, although the 18" minimum DBH snag requirement in the Strategy is consistent with the 12" minimum DBH snag requirement in the Plan insofar as project level application goes, the Strategy requirement has changed the operational sideboards a deciding officer has to work within. In potential goshawk habitat areas (all forested acres on the Fishlake National Forest), the minimum snag DBH is now 18". A line officer can no longer elect to leave snags between 12" and 17" DBH when 18" DBH snags are available or can be recruited in the future. This constriction of operational sideboards is true for numbers of snags, down woody material and canopy cover as well. These changes in vision and operational sideboards will require a forest plan amendment. In addition, better guidance on how to assess habitat connectivity will also be required.

These amendments should account for the ecological differences in vegetation types (i.e., one landscape scale for assessment of attributes will not necessarily fit all vegetative communities) and the variability in productive potential of sites (i.e., some sites can produce larger trees than other sites, both within and among vegetative communities).

4. To what extent do current forest plan management areas and prescriptions permit or prohibit implementation of the Utah Conservation Strategy?

There is nothing in the Utah Conservation Strategy which directs the establishment of specific management areas or specific management prescriptions. Management of habitat for Forest Plan MIS species such as the goshawk is provided through forestwide direction that applies to all management areas; it requires us to "maintain habitat for viable populations of existing vertebrate wildlife species." Thus, the Plan prescribes management of habitat for the goshawk sufficient to maintain viable populations, other direction or standards notwithstanding. Meeting this Plan requirement is further assured through the project NEPA decision and associated Biological Evaluation.

Moreover, management of habitat to maintain viable populations is founded in federal regulation (CFR 219.19). This requirement must be accomplished.

5. Would implementation of the Utah Conservation Strategy affect the decision made in the Forest Plan for lands not suited for timber production?

The requirement to identify and make decisions for lands not suited for timber production is found in C.F.R. 219.14 (timber resource land suitability). This requirement has been addressed in the Fishlake National Forest Plan at LRMP, page II-47 and IV-31,E03(11).

To determine whether the Strategy would affect the decision made in the Plan for lands not suited for timber production, the four factors found at C.F.R. 219.14 were assessed:

1. The land is not forest land as defined by the CFR.
The Strategy does not change forest land to non-forest land.
2. Technology is not available to assure timber production without irreversible resource damage.
The Strategy does not require actions that cause irreversible resource damage.
3. There is not reasonable assurance that such lands can be adequately restocked.
The Strategy does not require actions that affect ability to restock lands.
4. The land has withdrawn from timber production by act an Act of Congress, the Secretary of Agriculture or the Chief of the Forest Service.
The Strategy does not withdraw lands from timber production.

Implementation of the Utah Conservation Strategy would not change the decision concerning lands classified as not suited for timber production in the Fishlake National Forest Plan.

6. Are current forest plan monitoring and evaluation requirements sufficient if the Utah Conservation Strategy is implemented?

The Strategy identifies the need to monitor and evaluate habitat, as well as population trends. It prescribes general methodology to accomplish monitoring, and actions if deficiencies are found. Fishlake National Forest Plan also specifies monitoring and evaluation procedures for elements that affect goshawk habitat and numbers. The Plan monitors habitat diversity by requiring vegetative inventories, field measurements of down woody debris after activities or fuel treatments, and snag inventories. To address population trends, the Plan requires monitoring (visual reconnaissance) and identifies the need for further evaluation if declines are attributed to management activities.

While both the Strategy and the Plan require monitoring, the Strategy specifies that population trends and viability determinations be made at the State rather than the Forest level. It reinforces the importance of population surveys at the Forest level so that each Forest(s) contribution to maintaining statewide habitat can be identified. This is not contrary to the monitoring requirements in the Plan which use visual reconnaissance of T,E and S species as a measure of habitat adequacy to sustain viable populations. However, the monitoring plan in the Forest Plan is not as specific as that found in the Strategy.

The Strategy outlines management response to suspected population declines at the landscape, multiple landscape, and Forest levels. The Plan states that we will evaluate when a decline is observed, but it does not describe management response to population declines at different landscape levels. Use of the Strategy's management response requirements is consistent with the Plan requirement for further evaluations and decisions to change management direction.

VI. Determination of Need to Amend Current Forest Plan

Based on the above comparisons, assessments, and conclusions, I have determined that implementation of the Conservation Strategy and Agreement for the Management of Northern Goshawk Habitat in Utah is consistent with the six decisions made in the existing Fishlake National Forest Plan. However, Strategy requirements for greater retention of old forest will change the "vision" of forested lands depicted in the Plan for the planning horizon (50+ years). In addition, the Strategy changes the operational sideboards of standards in the Forest Plan for snags, down woody material and canopy cover. A forest plan amendment should be completed to address structural diversity (age of mid-age old forest would be accounted for here), snag management, down woody material and canopy cover recommendations for forest types found in the Utah Conservation Strategy. As part of the amendment process, guidance on how to assess habitat connectivity for goshawk and more specific monitoring requirements as outlined in the Strategy should be added .

Significance of proposed forest plan amendments

1) Timing

Implementation of the Strategy at the project level is consistent with current Forest Plan direction for reasons previously described. However, Strategy recommendations change the long-term vision of forest structure, and operational sideboards for snags, down woody material and canopy cover. In addition, guidance on how to assess habitat connectivity for the goshawk should be provided and more specific monitoring requirements added as described above. The Plan should be amended as soon as it is practical from a personnel and budget perspective.

2) Location and Scale

The proposed amendments would affect all forested acres within the planning area. This scale of affected area (planning area) considered over an entire planning horizon (50+ years) suggests a significant effect. However, the type of assessment needed to determine these effects is best handled during forest plan revision (projected to be completed in 2001).

Determination of the need for an immediate interim amendment to the Plan is based on the scale of disturbance activities anticipated, between now and when a revised plan is implemented, that may affect habitat for the goshawk. The Fishlake National Forest treats less than 3,000 acres of timberland a year; in the 3 years remaining before projected completion of forest plan revision, that would represent approximately 2 percent of total timberland on the Fishlake National Forest. This is not considered a significant amount of the planning area. However, to preserve options for revision, an interim amendment should be completed that reflects the new "vision" for the forest and provides greater assurance of adequate monitoring, canopy cover, snag and down woody material retention, sufficient old forest tree ages, and provides clear guidance on how to assess habitat connectivity for the goshawk.

3) Goals, Objectives and Outputs

Based on discussion above there is no need to change Plan's goals and objectives except as needed to reflect the desire to have a forest with a greater old forest component. Updating terminology and clarifying other existing goals and objectives could occur either during the amendment process (if related) or through forest plan revision.

Of the outputs and services provided for under the current forest plan, the only one that was identified as a potential concern prior to forest plan revision was forest ASQ. There is no indication that other

outputs and services provided for under the current plan (i.e., recreation, range forage, other wildlife habitat, etc.) would be noticeably affected by the proposed *interim* amendments prior to forest plan revision.

Based on reviews of annual harvest records on the Fishlake National Forest, there is no indication that use of the Reynolds et al. recommendations from 1992 to 1998 has substantially changed the volume of timber outputs compared to outputs in the first part of the planning period (1991-2000). Also, ASQ is a *ceiling*, not a *requirement* in the Forest Plan.

We believe the proposed *interim* amendments would not result in a measurable change in outputs and services over the remainder of this planning period. Effects to outputs over the longer planning horizon (50+ years) are most appropriately evaluated, and adjustments made, during the revision process, when all resource factors are considered concurrently. Revision of the Forest Plan is projected to be completed in 2001.

4) Management Prescriptions

There is nothing in the Utah Conservation Strategy that directs establishment of specific management areas or specific management prescriptions. Management of habitat for Forest Plan MIS species such as the goshawk is provided through forest-wide direction that applies to all management areas; it is an inherent part of their associated prescriptions.

CONCLUSION

Interim amendments to the current Fishlake National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan will be completed to address the recommended change in long-term vision of forest structure (a greater amount of old forest), operational sideboards for snags, down woody material and canopy closure, meet Strategy monitoring requirements and to provide guidance on how to assess habitat connectivity for the goshawk. Based on the finding that these *interim* amendments would not have a significant effect on the Forest Plan outputs and services prior to forest plan revision and that use of the Strategy at the project level is consistent with current Forest Plan direction, use of the strategy at the project level should continue during the amendment process. The *interim amendment* process is projected to be completed during the summer of 1999. These amendments will be incorporated into current forest plan direction, as well as into direction in the revised Forest Plan projected to be completed by 2001.

This assessment will be aggregated with the assessments of the other five National Forests in Utah, and delivered to the Regional Forester. The Regional Forester will review the findings of each Forest assessment to determine what immediate interim amendments to the Regional Guide and/or forest plans are warranted. Because the Strategy may affect current direction in all Forest plans in Utah, the process for completing *interim amendments* will be handled at the Regional level instead of by each individual Forest. The *interim amendments* will preserve options for the future that will be considered during the Forest Plan revision process conducted by all Forests in Utah over the next 2 to 4 years.

/s/Rob Mrowka

ROB D. MROWKA

Forest Supervisor, Fishlake National Forest

DATE: 12/16/98