

**Supplemental Information Report
and
Determination**

for the

**MANTI-LA SAL NATIONAL FOREST
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Responsible Official

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I. PURPOSE

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 supplemental information report (SIR) is to determine if the *Conservation Strategy and Agreement for the Management of Northern Goshawk Habitat in Utah* (Utah National Forests, 1998) represents significant new information or changed conditions bearing on current Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) direction or the effects identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for that Forest Plan.

This SIR will be aggregated with similar reports of the other five National Forests in Utah, and delivered to the Regional Forester. The Regional Forester will review the findings of the six Forest reports to determine what amendments to the Regional Guide and/or forest plans are warranted. Because the Conservation Strategy may affect current direction in all Forest plans in Utah, the process for completing amendments will be addressed at the Regional level instead of by each individual Forest.

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 Manti-La Sal National Forest in Utah developed a forest plan. The Record of Decision to implement the Forest Plan was signed in November 1986. The Record of Decision

- 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.*

This SIR assesses the need to change (i.e., amend) one or more of the six decision points made in the Manti-La Sal National Forest Forest Plan due to new information presented in the *Conservation Strategy and Agreement for the Management of Northern Goshawk Habitat in Utah* (Conservation Strategy). The Conservation 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 Conservation 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., 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 with information and recommendations outlined in the Conservation Strategy to determine if they can be implemented under the current forest plan, or if an amendment is required. If an amendment is required, this SIR will determine if the amendment is a significant or non-significant amendment.

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. (in press) found 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 Conservation 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 Conservation 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., 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. (in press) 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 Conservation 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. Forest 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 Manti-La Sal National Forest must determine if implementation of the 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 recommendations in the Conservation 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 Manti-La Sal National Forest plan to implement management recommendations of the Conservation Strategy across the planning area.

The Role of the Manti-La Sal National Forest in Sustaining Viable Populations of Goshawk at the State Scale

36 C.F.R. § 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. (in press)).

The Manti-La Sal National Forest encompasses 1,334,565 acres in eastern Utah with about 956,669 acres of forest land and 377,896 acres of nonforest land or water (*Forest Resources of the Manti-La Sal National Forest*, O'Brien and Woudenberg, 1998). Forest land is made up of 63% timberland (606,287 acres) and 37% woodland (350,383 acres), based on FIA forest types. Relative to the State of Utah, the Manti-La Sal National Forest timberland component represents roughly 9% of the land with forest types or habitat types that may be capable of achieving a goshawk habitat rating of high or optimum. However, some timberland sites on the Manti-La Sal 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. (in press). 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. (in press) provides indicators of habitat conditions on an individual National Forest. The Graham et al. (in press) assessment indicates that timberland on the Manti-La Sal is roughly classed as having 34% optimum habitat, 29% high-value habitat, and 37% moderate- to low-value habitat. Optimum and high-value habitat is fairly well distributed throughout the forest. Moderate- and low-value habitat primarily occur within the ponderosa pine and spruce/fir cover types on the Forest.

The primary reason for the moderate and low-value ratings on the Forest is lack of large *mature and old* trees well distributed across the landscape in the ponderosa pine and spruce/fir forest types (local deficiencies as defined in the statewide assessment). The mature and old forest structural class recommended in the Conservation Strategy provides important habitat values for the goshawk that the other structural classes can not (i.e., high valued nesting habitat, habitat for some prey, etc.). Though past management activities such as timber harvest did contribute to the lack of large mature and old trees, bark beetle epidemics currently occurring, or occurred in the early and mid-1900's, are the primary cause.

In concert with the statewide assessment, the greatest existing and potential cause of habitat loss on the Manti-La Sal 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, Conservation Strategy recommendations describe a need to restore and maintain greater proportions of old forest and larger snags than is currently provided for under the Manti-La Sal 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. (in press) 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 Manti-La Sal National Forest planning area, it's important to maintain habitat connectivity with adjacent forested landscapes. Habitat on Manti-La Sal National Forest represents the eastern-most extension of forest land habitat in Utah. Based on the statewide assessment, the nearest neighbor with measurable amounts of forest land habitat in Utah are the Ashley, Fishlake, and Uinta National Forests.

The Manti-La Sal and Ashley National Forests were designated the Eastern Utah Ecogroup by the Regional Forester March, 1998. This is an administrative designation meaning that the forests will, in part, 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 Eastern Utah Ecogroup will continue to coordinate goshawk habitat management with the other four forests in Utah, based on the recommendations outlined in the monitoring section of the Conservation Strategy. (The Dixie and Fishlake National Forests comprise the Southern 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 Manti-La Sal National Forest. Consequently, the Manti-La Sal National Forest will concentrate its available resources on ensuring habitat connectivity with the Ashley, Fishlake, and Uinta National Forests in Utah and the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, Gunnison, and San Juan National Forests in Colorado.

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 Conservation Strategy to address possible deficiencies will further ensure that the Manti-La Sal National Forest does its part to sustain goshawk habitat in the planning area and maintains connectivity with neighboring habitat areas. That Conservation 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 CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The following table lists Conservation Strategy recommendations and compares them to applicable direction in the Manti-La Sal Land and Resource Management Plan.

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

1998 Conservation Strategy	Manti-La Sal National Forest Plan
<p><i>Goal:</i> (Conservation 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).</i></u> Provide habitat for viable populations of existing vertebrate and invertebrate species found on the Forest. (Forest Plan, page III-3)</p> <p><u><i>Desired Future Condition (Wildlife and fish section).</i></u> Appropriate habitat management would maintain viable populations of existing vertebrate species. (Forest Plan, page III-10)</p>
<p><i>Objective 1:</i> (Conservation 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 (wildlife and fish section).</i></u> Maintain or improve wildlife habitat diversity. (Forest Plan, page III-3)</p> <p><u><i>Goal (wildlife and fish section).</i></u> Protect, maintain, and/or improve habitat for threatened or endangered and sensitive species plants and animals. (Forest Plan, page III-3) NOTE: The northern goshawk is a R4 sensitive species (1991).</p> <p><u><i>Desired Future Condition (wildlife and fish section).</i></u> Habitats of threatened and endangered species would be maintained. Habitat would be surveyed and appropriate action taken. Habitats for sensitive species would be managed to reduce the potential of these species becoming threatened or endangered.</p>
<p><i>Objective 2:</i> (Conservation 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).</i></u> Cooperate with the State in keeping wildlife populations within habitat capacity. (Forest Plan, page III-3)</p>

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

1998 Conservation Strategy	Manti-La Sal National Forest Plan
<p>1) Diverse forest cover types with strong representation of early seral tree species dominant the landscape. (Conservation Strategy, Page 6)</p>	<p><i>Goal (vegetation section).</i> Certain vegetation types are to be managed such that varying successional stages will be present to provide for a high level of vegetative diversity and productivity. (Forest Plan, page III-2)</p> <p><i>Goal (vegetation section).</i> Aspen is to be managed, with commercial or noncommercial treatments, with the goal of maintaining 13 percent of the Forest in the aspen type or increasing the aspen type toward the 19 percent it represented in 1915. (Forest Plan, page III-2) NOTE: aspen is a early seral species in all forest types related to the goshawk.</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). (Conservation Strategy, Page 6)</p>	<p><i>Goal (wildlife and fish section).</i> Maintain or improve wildlife habitat diversity. (Forest Plan, page III-3)</p> <p><i>Goal (wildlife and fish section).</i> Protect, maintain, and/or improve habitat for threatened or endangered and sensitive species plants and animals. (Forest Plan, page III-3) NOTE: The northern goshawk is a R4 sensitive species (1991).</p> <p><i>Desired Future Condition (wildlife and fish section).</i> Habitats of threatened and endangered species would be maintained. Habitat would be surveyed and appropriate action taken. Habitats for sensitive species would be managed to reduce the potential of these species becoming threatened or endangered. (Forest Plan, page III-10)</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. (Conservation Strategy, Page 6)</p>	<p><i>Goal (vegetation section).</i> Certain vegetation types are to be managed such that varying successional stages will be present to provide for a high level of vegetative diversity and productivity. (Forest Plan, page III-2)</p> <p><i>Desired Future Condition (wildlife and fish section).</i> Appropriate habitat management would maintain viable populations of existing vertebrate species. (Forest Plan, page III-10)</p>

1998 Conservation Strategy	Manti-La Sal National Forest Plan
<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. (in press) (i.e., snags, down woody, cover, etc.) (Conservation Strategy, Page 6)</p>	<p><u>Goal (wildlife and fish section).</u> Maintain or improve wildlife habitat diversity. (Forest Plan, page III-3)</p> <p><u>Desired Future Condition (wildlife and fish section).</u> Appropriate habitat management would maintain viable populations of existing vertebrate species. (Forest Plan, page III-10)</p>
<p>5) A variety of structural stages as recommended by Reynolds et al. 1992 are present. (Conservation Strategy, Page 6)</p>	<p><u>Goal (vegetation section).</u> Certain vegetation types are to be managed such that varying successional stages will be present to provide for a high level of vegetative diversity and productivity. (Forest Plan, page III-2)</p>

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

1998 Conservation Strategy	Manti-La Sal National Forest Plan
<p><u>Down logs and tons of woody debris per acre:</u> (Conservation 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>General Direction (Forest Plan, page III-22 (C01)(07)): 07. Manage down timber to provide habitat for wildlife.</p> <p>Standard and Guideline (Forest Plan, page III-22 (C01)(07)(a)(b)): a. Retain slash an at least 10 percent of timber stand areas and pinyon-juniper control projects. b. Manage to provide at least two logs per acre in timber habitat types.</p> <p>General Direction (Forest Plan, page III-43 (P11 to 14)(01)): 01. Maintain fuel conditions which permit fire suppression forces to meet protection objectives for the Management Unit.</p> <p>Standard and Guideline (Forest Plan, page III -43, PF11 to 14(a)): a. Reduce or otherwise treat fuels, or break up continuous fuel concentrations, or provide added protection for areas.</p>

1998 Conservation Strategy	Manti-La Sal National Forest Plan																												
<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>General Direction (Forest Plan, page III-22 (C01)(06)): 06. Provide for habitat needs of cavity nesting birds, raptors, and small mammals by: (a) Through coordination with project work or resource uses, insure the appropriate density of snags are available and protected in vegetative types (b) Selecting and utilizing live trees to create snags.</p> <p>Standard and Guideline (Forest Plan, page III-22 (C01(06)(a)(b)(c)): a. A snag is defined as a completely or partially dead standing tree at least 4 inches DBH and at least 6 feet in height. b. Maintain various size classes of standing snags with the appropriate density per 100 acres based on broad vegetative types.</p> <table data-bbox="857 827 1247 1031"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">No./100 acres</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(1) Ponderosa Pine</td> <td style="text-align: right;">110</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(2) Mixed Conifer (Spruce/Fir/Douglas)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">90</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(3) Aspen</td> <td style="text-align: right;">120</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(4) Pinyon/Juniper</td> <td style="text-align: right;">15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(5) Riparian</td> <td style="text-align: right;">120</td> </tr> </table> <p>c. R-4 Supplement 26 to FSM 2631.</p>		No./100 acres	(1) Ponderosa Pine	110	(2) Mixed Conifer (Spruce/Fir/Douglas)	90	(3) Aspen	120	(4) Pinyon/Juniper	15	(5) Riparian	120																
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<p><u>Canopy Cover</u> (Conservation Strategy, Page 7)</p> <table data-bbox="115 1157 743 1394"> <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>Home Range</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></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 Forest Plan does not specifically address canopy cover.</p> <p>General Direction (Forest Plan, page III-21 (C01)(04)): 04. Manage habitat of sensitive species to keep them from becoming threatened or endangered.</p> <p>Standard and Guideline (Forest Plan, page III-21 (C01(04)(a)): a. FSM 2670.</p> <p>General Direction (Forest Plan, page III-22 (C01)(05)): 05. Maintain and/or improve habitat and habitat diversity for minimum viable populations of existing vertebrate wildlife species.</p> <p>Standard and Guideline (Forest Plan, page III-22 (C01(05)(a)): a. Manage vegetative composition so as to maintain at least 50 percent of current (1980) habitat for existing and approved introduced wildlife species.</p>
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1998 Conservation Strategy	Manti-La Sal 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 style="padding-left: 40px;">-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>(Conservation Strategy, Page 11)</p>	<p>General Direction (Forest Plan, page III-21 (C01)(04)): 04. Manage habitat of sensitive species to keep them from becoming threatened or endangered.</p> <p>Standard and Guideline (Forest Plan, page III-21 (C01)(04)(a)): a. FSM 2670.</p> <p>General Direction (Forest Plan, page III-22 (C01)(05)): 05. Maintain and/or improve habitat and habitat diversity for minimum viable populations of existing vertebrate wildlife species.</p> <p>Standard and Guideline (Forest Plan, page III-22 (C01)(05)(a)(b)): a. Manage vegetative composition so as to maintain at least 50 percent of current (1980) habitat for existing and approved introduced wildlife species. b. Maintain at least 5 percent of forested areas in mature timber stands.</p> <p>General Direction (Forest Plan, page III-23 (C02)(01)): 01. Maintain or improve habitat capability through direct treatment of vegetation, soil, and/or water.</p> <p>General Direction (Forest Plan, page III-23 (C02)(04)): 04. Use both commercial and non-commercial silvicultural practices to accomplish wildlife habitat objectives.</p> <p>General Direction (Forest Plan, III-25, Timber Resource Management (E00)(03)): 03. Manage timberlands not suitable for commercial harvest to maintain forest cover species, but emphasis should be on production of other forest resources and uses.</p> <p>General Direction (Forest Plan, page III-29 (E03)(05)): 05. Perpetuate Aspen communities through silvicultural treatments: (a) Stands suitable for commercial harvest should be managed for aspen timber production. (b) Stands not suitable for commercial harvest should be managed for range forage and/or wildlife habitat.</p>

d) Comparison of Conservation Strategy Recommendations with Current Forest Plan Management Areas and Prescriptions

There is nothing in the Conservation Strategy that directs the establishment of specific management areas or management prescriptions. All recommendations in the Conservation Strategy could be addressed by forestwide direction, standards and guidelines. Management Areas and their prescriptions need not be changed to satisfy these recommendations.

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

1998 Conservation Strategy	Manti-La Sal National Forest Plan
<p>Nothing in the Conservation Strategy would affect this decision point. The Conservation Strategy does not preclude the use of mechanical treatments to manipulate vegetation to meet resource objectives.</p>	<p>Table II-21 (Forest Plan, Page II-41)</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">9. Unsuitable forest land 557.1 M-Acres 10. Total suitable forest land 132.7 M-Acres</p> <p>General Direction (Forest Plan, III-25, Timber Resource Management (E00(01)(02)):</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">01. Manage timberlands suitable for commercial harvest for timber or wood fiber production. 02. Provide for timber stand improvement, reforestation in sale area improvement plans, and wildlife habitat improvement.</p> <p>Standard and Guideline (Forest Plan, page III-25 (E00(02)(a)):</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a. Timber stands suitable for harvest:</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">1. Produce 20 cu.ft. or more per acre per year. 2. Are capable of being restocked within five years. 3. Can be harvested within the General Direction, Standards and Guidelines for the site of the stand. 4. Generally include ponderosa pine, mixed conifer, aspen and spruce fir types, and rarely oak and pinon-juniper.</p> <p>General Direction (Forest Plan, III-25, Timber Resource Management (E00(03)):</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">03. Manage timberlands not suitable for commercial harvest to maintain forest cover species, but emphasis should be on production of other forest resources and uses.</p>

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

Habitat Monitoring

The Conservation Strategy (pages 9-11) incorporates two types of monitoring: 1) tracking changes in goshawk habitat over time; and 2) evaluating implementation, and effectiveness of the Conservation 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 Conservation 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 Conservation Strategy is being successfully implemented or if changes are needed.

An additional indication of the Conservation 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 Conservation 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 recommendations in the Conservation 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 Conservation Strategy would only be modified if review indicated that the existing Conservation Strategy recommendations 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.

Manti-La Sal National Forest Plan (pages IV-6 and IV-11)

MIH Reference code	Activity, Practice and/or effect to be measured.	Data source and/or Monitoring technique	Expected Percision/Reliability.	Measure-ment Frequency	Reporting period	Variation which would cause further evaluation and/or change in management direction
C01	Habitat Improvement and accomplishment	Attainment and wildlife report.	H	Annual	Annual	Twenty percent
P11	Fuel treatment program	On-site inspection, accomplishment reports, management attainment reports.	M/M	25 percent of sites.	Annual	Failure to treat at least 90 percent of activity fuels created during the year.
P12	Vegetation treated by burning	On-site inspection and visual estimates of effects and objective accomplishment	M/M	At completion of each project	5 year	± 25 percent of resource objectives.

V. DETERMINATION OF THE NEED TO CHANGE THE FOREST PLAN

Implementation of the 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 Conservation Strategy across the planning area. This section of the report compares the recommendations of the Conservation Strategy with the six decisions of the forest plan.

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

There is no need for additional goals and objectives in the current forest plan to ensure that the Manti-La Sal National Forest contributes to the maintenance of high-value, connected goshawk habitat throughout the State of Utah. However, terminology could be updated and clarity in goal and objective statements concerning goshawk and sensitive species could be improved either in an amendment or during revision. For example, goals related to desired habitat conditions.

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

The Manti-La Sal National Forest Plan does not differentiate between standards and guidelines; therefore they will be discussed together. Current forest plan direction, standards, and guidelines do not

prohibit adherence to Conservation Strategy recommendations at the project level; Conservation Strategy recommendations are consistent with current forest plan direction. However, terminology could be updated and clarity in standards and guideline statements concerning goshawk and sensitive species should be improved either in an amendment or during revision.

The Reynolds et al. recommendations (the foundation of the Conservation 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 Manti-La Sal 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).

Conservation Strategy recommendations related to diversity and management activities/actions are consistent with current Forest Plan direction; moreover, they do not alter the Forest Plan's vision, and do not change operational sideboards.

The guideline for maintaining at least 5% mature timber stands does not prohibit retention of additional large trees on a site-specific basis to meet project objectives. This is particularly true for projects involving R4 sensitive species such as the goshawk: forestwide direction requires us to "Manage habitat of sensitive species to keep them from becoming threatened or endangered". Management of habitat to maintain viable populations is founded in federal regulation (36 CFR 219.19). This requirement must be accomplished. Thus, at the project level, use of the Reynolds et al. recommendations is consistent with the Forest Plan.

Conservation Strategy recommendations related to structural diversity (specifically 20% old forest and related age), down woody material, snags, canopy cover and habitat connectivity are consistent with Forest Plan direction when applied at the project level (a small area of the total Forest). However, because implementing the Conservation Strategy requires application of its recommendations 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 Conservation Strategy is consistent with the minimum DBH snag requirement in the Forest Plan insofar as project level application goes, the Conservation Strategy requirement has changed the operational sideboards a deciding officer has to work within. In potential goshawk habitat areas (all forested acres on the Manti-La Sal National Forest), the minimum snag DBH is now 18". A line officer can no longer elect to leave snags between 4" 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 Conservation Strategy?

There is nothing in the Conservation Strategy which directs the establishment of specific management areas or specific management prescriptions. Management of habitat for R4 sensitive species such as the goshawk is provided through forestwide direction that applies to all management areas; it requires us to "Manage habitat of sensitive species to keep them from becoming threatened or endangered" and to "Maintain and/or improve habitat and habitat diversity for minimum viable populations of existing vertebrate wildlife species". Thus, the Forest Plan prescribes management of habitat for the goshawk sufficient to maintain viable populations, other direction or standards notwithstanding. Meeting this Forest 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 (36 CFR 219.19). This requirement must be accomplished.

As a result, there is no need to change management area allocation or direction requirements related to meeting the Conservation Strategy.

5. Would implementation of the 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 36 C.F.R. 219.14 (timber resource land suitability). This requirement has been addressed in the Manti-La Sal National Forest Plan at Forest Plan page II-21 and III-25.

To determine whether the Conservation Strategy would affect the decision made in the Forest Plan for lands not suited for timber production the four factors found at 36 C.F.R. 219.14 were assessed. The four factors are: 1) The land is not forest land as defined by the CFR.; 2) Technology is not available to assure timber production without irreversible resource damage.; 3) There is not reasonable assurance that such lands can be adequately restocked.; and 4) The land has been withdrawn from timber production by an Act of Congress, the Secretary of Agriculture, or the Chief of the Forest Service.

The Conservation Strategy does not change forest land to non-forest land, require actions that cause irreversible resource damage, require actions that affect ability to restock lands, or withdraw lands from timber production. Implementation of the Conservation Strategy would not change the decision concerning lands classified as not suited for timber production in the Manti-La Sal National Forest Plan.

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

The Conservation 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. The Manti-La Sal National Forest Plan also specifies monitoring and evaluation procedures for some elements that affect goshawk habitat and numbers by monitoring MIS population trends. The Forest Plan monitors habitat improvement work and field measurements of down woody debris after activities or fuel treatments. The Forest Plan does not require monitoring of population trends or territory occupancy.

While both the Conservation Strategy and the Forest Plan require monitoring, the Conservation 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. It outlines management response to suspected population declines at the landscape, multiple landscape, and Forest levels. The monitoring plan in the Forest Plan does not meet these recommendations. Monitoring and evaluation statements concerning goshawk and sensitive species should be improved either in an amendment or during revision.

Determination

Based on the comparisons, assessments, and conclusions discussed in this section, 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 Manti-La Sal National Forest Plan.

However, Conservation Strategy recommendations for greater retention of old forest will change the "vision" of forested lands depicted in the Forest Plan for the planning horizon (50+ years). In addition, the Conservation 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 Conservation Strategy. As part of the amendment process, guidance on how to assess habitat connectivity for goshawk and more specific monitoring recommendations as outlined in the Conservation Strategy should also be added .

To preserve options for revision, an amendment will 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. The Forest Plan should be amended as soon as it is practical from a personnel and budget perspective.

VI. DETERMINATION OF AMENDMENT SIGNIFICANCE

A determination regarding the significance of the change to the Forest Plan is required under 16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f), and FSM 1922.5. This determination does not address the significance of potential environmental impacts defined by 40 CFR 1500 to 1508. The following four factors are to be used when determining whether a proposed change to a Forest Plan is significant or not significant, based on NFMA planning requirements (FSH 1909.12 (5.32)).

1) Timing

Revision of the Manti-La Sal Forest Plan is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2001, in about two years. The need to change the plan and the rationale for making the changes now was discussed in the previous section (Section V). The proposed changes are expected to be non-significant because two years should not result in changes to the land and uses of the forest that were predicted for the entire 15 year planning period (1986-2001). Effects over the longer planning horizon (50+ years) to the overall vision and outputs predicted in the 1986 plan are most appropriately evaluated, and adjustments made, during the revision process, when all resource factors are considered concurrently.

2) Location and Scale

The proposed amendments could affect all 606,287 acres of timberland within the planning area. The Manti-La Sal National Forest treats less than 3,000 acres of timberland a year. In the 2 years remaining before projected completion of forest plan revision, that would represent approximately 1 percent of total timberland on the Manti-La Sal National Forest. One percent is considered a non-significant amount of the planning area. The temporal scale of the proposed action is 2 years and should not result in changes to the land and uses of the forest that were predicted across the 15 year planning period (1986-2001). Therefore, the location and scale of the amendment is anticipated to be non-significant.

3) Goals, Objectives and Outputs

The goals, objectives, and outputs provided for in the 1986 plan were compared to the proposed changes. The allowable sale quantity (ASQ) provided for under the current forest plan was identified as a potential concern. Based on reviews of annual harvest records on the Manti-La Sal National Forest, there is no indication that use of the Reynolds et al. recommendations from 1992 through 1998 has substantially changed the volume of timber outputs compared to outputs in the first part of the planning period (1991-2000). Therefore, the volume of timber produced in the remaining 2 years is not expected to vary measurably from the prior 13 years. There is no indication that other outputs and services provided for under the 1986 plan (i.e., recreation, minerals, range forage, other wildlife habitat, etc.) would be noticeably affected by the proposed amendment prior to forest plan revision.

The proposed amendment is not expected to result in a measurable change in outputs and services over the remainder of this planning period. The 2 years remaining in the planning period is not sufficient time to measurably impact the "vision" and "outputs" projected in the 1986 plan. Therefore, the proposed changes to goals, objectives, and outputs are expected to be non-significant.

4) Management Prescriptions

Nothing in the Conservation Strategy directs establishment of specific management areas or specific management prescriptions. Management of habitat for R4 sensitive 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. Therefore, the proposed amendment is expected to be non-significant with respect to management prescriptions.

VII. CONCLUSION

The Manti-La Sal National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan will be amended to address the recommended changes of forest structure (a greater amount of old forest), operational sideboards for snags, down woody material and canopy closure, address Conservation Strategy monitoring recommendations and to provide guidance on how to assess habitat connectivity for the goshawk.

Based on the finding that the amendment is expected to be a non-significant amendment and that use of the Conservation Strategy at the project level is consistent with current Forest Plan direction, use of the Conservation Strategy at the project level should continue during the amendment process.

The amendment process is projected to be completed during the summer of 1999.

The amendment will be incorporated into forest plan direction. The amendment 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/ Janette S. Kaiser

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