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Date: February 4, 1999

The Intermountain Region is initiating scoping on a proposal to develop management direction that will maintain or restore functioning forested habitat for the northern goshawk and its prey on National Forest System lands within the Ashley, Dixie, Fishlake, Manti-LaSal, Uinta and Wasatch-Cache National Forests. When implemented, the proposed direction will provide consistency in future project design, implementation and monitoring important to ensuring long-term goshawk habitat sustainability across these National Forests. The proposed management direction will amend current direction in the Land and Resource Management Plans for the aforementioned National Forests and/or Intermountain Regional Guide. It will be in effect until these National Forests revise or suitably amend their current forest plans. The proposed direction would not apply to projects that have been approved prior to the effective date of the amendments.

This letter describes the proposal, and explains how we will use information provided by the public. *We encourage you to comment.*

**Background:** In 1997 and 1998, an assessment covering federal, State, and private lands found that National Forest System lands contain most of the forested habitats important to sustaining viable populations of the northern goshawk in Utah (*Northern Goshawk in Utah: Habitat Assessment and Management Recommendations*, Graham et al. 1999, in press). According to the assessment, habitat elements important to northern goshawk and its prey are still available in sufficient amounts and quality across the State to provide for viable populations of goshawks; however, future habitat conditions could not be predicted because of the great latitude in management allowed by current land management plans/policies on state and federal lands. Current management plans/policies are flexible enough to both permit activities that address habitat needs for the goshawk as well as allow those that do not.

Based on this assessment, an interagency team of biologists developed a strategy that outlines actions that should be taken by land management agencies in Utah to ensure that quantity, quality, and distribution of habitat is maintained for goshawk and its prey. An interagency agreement was signed by the USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service and Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, which stated, "The signatory agencies agree that this strategy represents the best available scientific information on the northern goshawk and its use of habitat in the State of Utah, and recommend that field offices apply the strategy through their own processes with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance where appropriate."

There are four areas that will help you understand this project: purpose and need, desired habitat condition, where the proposed management direction will apply, and the proposed management direction. Each is discussed in-depth in separate enclosures. Enclosure 1, Purpose and Need, describes the "why" of the proposed action; Enclosure 2, the Desired Habitat Condition, is a portrayal of land conditions expected to result from the implementation of the proposed management direction over time; Enclosure 3, Where the Proposed Management Direction Will



and Will Not Apply, is a verbal and map portrayal of where the direction will apply on each of the six National Forests stated above; and Enclosure 4, Proposed Management Direction, is a detailed description of the management direction needed to meet the purpose and need of this project. Also, we've enclosed a glossary of terms (Enclosure 5) to assist you in understanding some of the more technical terms used.

**Alternatives:** A range of alternatives will be considered. One will be the no-action alternative, which would continue management under current forest plan direction. Other alternatives will examine the effects of varying approaches that would maintain and/or restore functioning habitats across these National Forests.

**Geographic Range/Scope:** The proposed management direction will apply to National Forest System lands within the Ashley, Dixie, Fishlake, Manti-LaSal, Uinta and Wasatch-Cache National Forests. New or revised management direction will apply until forest plans are revised or suitably amended (projected to be 2-4 years).

**Schedule:** The environmental document should be available by May 1999, and a final decision articulating the direction to be implemented available in July-August 1999.

**How You Can Be Involved:** During the scoping process, the Forest Service is seeking information and comments from federal, State and local agencies, Native American tribal governments, and other individuals and organizations that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. While your comments and concerns are welcome throughout the process, in order to be most useful in the development of alternatives to the proposed action, **comments must be received by March 10, 1999**. Input will help shape management direction, assess effects of implementation, and provide for more informed decision making. To be most helpful, comments should be specific, provide reasoning, and cite scientific studies where appropriate.

A variety of ways is available to send us your comments:

- On-line through our web site: [www.fs.fed.us/r4/goshawk](http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/goshawk);
- E-mail to: [goshawk3/r4\\_uinta@fs.fed.us](mailto:goshawk3/r4_uinta@fs.fed.us); or
- US mail to: Utah Northern Goshawk Project, c/o Uinta National Forest, PO Box 1428, Provo, UT 84601

Please note, comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27 (d), any person may request the agency to withhold submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under FOIA, confidentiality may be granted only in limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and when the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

Also, a series of open houses will be held throughout Utah to gain a better understanding of public issues and concerns, as follows:

### OPEN HOUSE SCHEDULE

<b>DATE</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>TIME</b>
2/16/99	Provo	Historic County Court House, rm 319 51 South University Avenue	12:00 - 2:00 pm
2/16/99	Richfield	Quality Inn 540 South Main	6:00 - 8:00 pm
2/17/99	Panguitch	Courthouse, Jeep Posse rm 55 East Center	12:00 - 2:00 pm
2/17/99	Cedar City	Sharwan Smith Center, Cedar Breaks SUU	6:00 - 8:00 pm
2/23/99	Vernal	Forest Supervisor's Office 355 N. Vernal Ave.	12:00 - 2:00 pm
2/24/99	Moab	Moab Information Center Center and Main	12:00 - 2:00 pm
2/24/99	Price	Prehistoric Museum, Classroom 155 East Main	6:00 - 8:00 pm
2/25/99	Salt Lake City	Dept. of Natural Resources, Conference Room A-B 1594 West North Temple	12:00 - 2:00 pm 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Information and updates concerning this proposal will be available electronically on the Project's homepage at [www.fs.fed.us/r4/goshawk](http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/goshawk).

If you have any questions, please contact Randall Hayman at 435/865-3700. Or send an e-mail message to [goshawk3/r4\\_uinta@fs.fed.us](mailto:goshawk3/r4_uinta@fs.fed.us).

We have provided a comment sheet with this letter. We hope you will take the time to read and consider the information provided in this letter and send us your comments. Please note, a mailing list update card is also enclosed.

Sincerely,

/s/ Peter W. Karp

**PETER W. KARP**  
**Team Leader**  
**Utah Northern Goshawk Team**

Enclosures (6)