

**Deputy Team Field Review**  
**Payette NF**  
**June 23 -25, 2009**

**Field Review Team Members**

If you have comments or questions, please contact: Dorothy Mason,  
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**Review Team Members:**

Dorothy Mason	BLM Vale District
Kerry Overton	FS RMRS
Frank Mc Cormick	FS RMRS Deputy Team Rep
Mark Robertson	FWS Boise
Bill Lind	NOAA Boise
Cynthia Tait	R4 Aquatic Program Lead
Lee Jacobson	R4 Acting Deputy Team Rep
Erik Archer	PIBO monitoring lead

**Other Participants:**

Bob Giles	Payette NF Deputy Forest Supervisor
Rodger Nelson	
Pete Grinde	
Dale Olsen	

**General Field Review Objectives From Traditional PIBO Reviews**

1. Determine if the Biological Opinions have been implemented in accordance with the mechanisms, terms and conditions.
2. Determine if on-the-ground management decisions are consistent with the Biological Opinions, and PACFISH and INFISH Goals and Objectives.
3. Determine if PACFISH and INFISH Standards and Guides have been correctly interpreted and implemented on the ground.
4. Determine if grazing implementation monitoring activities have been evaluated to eliminate duplication between the PACFISH/INFISH Grazing Implementation Monitoring Module and other grazing implementation monitoring activities
5. Improve communication and coordination between agencies. Strengthen interagency commitment to watershed management under the management direction of PACFISH/INFISH.

**Review Objectives for Reviews with new LUPS:**

1. Assess implementation of revised Aquatic Conservation Strategy in new LUP
2. Assess continued implementation of PIBO monitoring within the framework of the new LUP
3. Does the ACS address protection of population strongholds for TES aquatic species?

4. How do the revised riparian/aquatic habitat objectives assist in implementing the ACS?
5. How does the new ACS address multi-scale analysis?

### **Findings:**

The Deputy Team Field Review of the Payette National Forest was conducted on June 23-25, 2009. Forest responses to the questions provided by the Deputy Team were prepared by Bob Giles, Rodger Nelson, and Pete Grinde on 6/16/09.

#### **1. How do you address plan-level effectiveness and implementation monitoring? Is the PIBO monitoring strategy used for both effectiveness and implementation monitoring? If not, what method(s) are you using to address livestock grazing and other key ACS issues?**

*Answer: The 2003 Revised Forest Plan (Forest Plan) Chapter IV describes how Implementation and Monitoring will be accomplished. Monitoring Elements are included in Table IV-2. The Following Monitoring Elements relate to our Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS):*

**Riparian Condition** – *Are Forest management activities adequately designed (including delineation of Riparian Conservation Areas [RCAs]) to maintain or improve riparian functions and ecological processes important to furthering Forest Plan goals and objectives?*

**Distribution of aquatic ecosystems** – *Are management actions maintaining or restoring the distribution, abundance, and habitat quality of management indicator and Threatened, Endangered, Proposed/Petitioned, and Candidate (TEPC) species?*

**Watershed restoration and conservation activities** - *Have restoration and conservation activities been focused in priority watersheds identified by the Watershed and Aquatic Recovery Strategy (WARS) process?*

**Landslide prevention** – *Are management actions and forest plan direction effectively preventing management-induced landslides?*

**Aquatic ecosystems stream flows** – *Are forest management actions maintaining or restoring the processes and functions that regulate stream flows and ground water character?*

**Water quality and beneficial use status** – *Are management actions maintaining or restoring water quality to fully support beneficial uses, and native and desired non-native fish species and their habitats over multiple spatial scales?*

**Aquatic ecosystems** – *Are management actions and forest plan direction effectively maintaining Watershed Condition Indicators (WCIs) when currently in the range of desired conditions, and restoring WCIs when outside the range of desired conditions over multiple spatial scales?*

*We are using the PIBO reports to monitor our grazing program, but the PIBO sites are measured infrequently, and no trends can be determined until numerous measurements have been made.*

*Pete will describe what methods we are using to monitor livestock grazing.*

**Review Team Comments/Recommendations.** We acknowledge that the forest has established a program for implementation and effectiveness monitoring in the plan revision. They are collecting the right information and have an effectiveness monitoring program identified in the forest plan revision. Response indicated that the forest is using PIBO reports to monitor the grazing program. It is not clear from the response that PIBO is being used for the fish program. The forest questioned how much the forest is getting for the investment in PIBO habitat monitoring. The answer implies that the forest wants more data for trend. The forest indicated that they are using the same indicators as PIBO, but it is not clear that the procedures for long-term monitoring program are consistent with them.

PIBO is designed to answer monitoring questions for status and trends at a different spatial scale than the forest's own implementation and effectiveness monitoring programs. For the forest to achieve better data density for status and trends monitoring and find efficiencies and the overlap between their monitoring efforts, we recommend that they implement a design where their different programs have an integrated sampling design. We understand that the forest has 50 range sites and 75 upland sites for their monitoring by the Range Team. There are separate efforts for monitoring of stream habitat by the fisheries program and perhaps a separate hydrology program effort. We recommend that the different programs identify common metrics that they are collecting.

**2. Do you use the PIBO IM database? If not, how (or where) are your IM data stored? How close do your IM sites overlap or coincide with PIBO EM monitoring sites?**

*Answer: We are not using the PIBO IM database. Pete and Dale will explain what data we collect and where we store it (for monitoring grazing, NEPA documents,...)*

**Team Comments/Recommendations:** Only some of the data appears to have been entered into the database (2008 season). No historical data appears to have been entered. We recommend that the forest develop a timeframe by which they expect to complete migration of data into PIBO IM database. For information, refer to the letters from the Regional Forester (dates). This is especially true of MIM data. Schedule time with Cynthia Tate to get legacy data entered.

**3. How are road-related impacts to TES fish addressed in the ACS?**

*Answer: The ACS has eight components listed below.*

- Goals to Maintain and Restore
- Watershed Condition Indicators (WCIs)
- Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs)

- Objectives, Standards, and Guidelines
- Priority Subwatersheds within Subbasins
- Multi-Scale Analyses
- Appropriate Subwatershed Restoration and Prioritization
- Monitoring and Adaptive Management

The fourth component (Objectives, Standards and Guidelines) addresses roads. The following examples relate to TES fish species:

*TEOB03 – Identify and reduce road-related effects on TEPC species and their habitats using the Watershed and Aquatic Recovery Strategy and other appropriate methodologies.*

*TEGU14 – For watersheds with listed aquatic species, essential fish habitat, or designated critical habitat, transportation system design criteria for fish passage should be coordinated with NMFS or USFWS, as appropriate.*

*SWOB14 – Prioritize improvements to existing culverts, bridges, and stream crossings identified for fish passage and associated bedload and debris problems, based on the WARS Map, fine scale analyses and/or project-level priorities.*

*SWST08 – Fish passage shall be provided at all proposed and reconstructed stream crossings of existing and potential fish-bearing streams unless protection of pure-strain native fish enclaves from competition, genetic contamination, or predation by exotic fishes is determined to be an overriding management concern.*

*Management Area 12 – South Fork Salmon River – Management Prescription Category (MPC)  
3.1 – Passive Restoration and Maintenance of Aquatic, Terrestrial, and Hydrologic Resources.  
Road Standard 1218 – Road Construction or reconstruction may only occur where needed: a) To provide access related to reserved or outstanding rights, or b) To respond to statute or treaty, or c) To address immediate response situations where, if action is not taken, unacceptable impacts to hydrologic, aquatic, riparian or terrestrial resources, or health and safety, would result.*

*Appendix B and the Matrix:*

- WCIs – Reference Conditions*
- Current Conditions*
- Effects of Management Actions*
- Key for making ESA Determinations of Effect*

**Team Comments/recommendations:** We agree that the forest is implementing good standards for addressing the effects of roads on fish populations. They have both forest-wide and area-specific standards and the objectives are well-defined.

#### **4. How are fish habitat restoration and conservation priorities determined?**

*This was not answered in the written response from the forest.*

**Team Comments/Recommendations:** In the course of the field visits, the forest indicated that the WARS strategy was the basis for the prioritization scheme and process, but the budgetary and political realities of planning efforts have necessitated a more opportunistic approach to restoration. We recommend that the forest proceed with the development of the Consultation Framework (CF) for their sub-basins and Section 7 watersheds. The CF would promote prioritization from a resource perspective.

PNF indicates that it needs \$ directed (to flow) to those who would be completing and implementing CF. Target vs framework. If money would flow to projects after the CF is done, it would be more of a priority. NFIM would be the most appropriate budget code.

The Deputy Team should indicate the need for direct funding for the implementation of this process on all three Forests covered by the Southwest Idaho LRMP. As additional funding becomes available (e.g., ARRA 2009), the full implementation of the Consultation Framework would facilitate the ability of the forest to secure these funds.

**6. How does the plan address multi-scale analysis? Do you have a protocol for site-specific analysis? If so, describe.**

*No written response provided from the forest.*

**Team Comments/recommendations:** In the course of the field visit, the Team was briefed on different aspects of the Forest Plan Revision that described elements of multi-scale analysis. The plan (Appendix Page B54) describes the approach with respect to multi-scale analysis.

We recommend that the forest complete the Consultation Framework because it is linked directly to the requirements of the Biological Opinion and is a key component of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy. The Consultation Framework entails the development and updates of sub-basin/watershed documents that describe conditions within the SWIE, analyzing limiting factors for listed species and other physical and biological components, and providing recommendations. It is structured to provide the same sort of information that sub-basin assessments and watershed analyses would provide. It can be tailored to focus on key fish habitat related issues (e.g., roads or ECA) within a watershed.

**6. Do you use riparian conservation areas where riparian dependent resources are emphasized? If so, how do you address entry for timber harvest, grazing, and other activities affecting the riparian dependent resources?**

*Answer: We use riparian conservation areas (RCAs). RCA delineation guidance is provided in Appendix B of the Forest Plan. As an example – we often use two tree heights (240 feet to delineate the RCA around a perennial fish bearing stream. The Forest Plan has many standards and guides and DFC statements that basically say you need to improve the conditions for fish (move from functioning at risk to functioning acceptably) or maintain the status quo. From a practical standpoint, we have not been entering RCAs for fuel reduction or timber harvest even though it may be desirable from a fuels reduction perspective, because the analyses required to permit this would cost too much in time and money.*

**Team Comments/Recommendations:** We agree that the plan contains provisions for RCAs. This was well-demonstrated by the site visits for the range, fisheries and timber (fuels) management examples. At the Round Valley WUI site, the forest expressed concerns that they are not fully able to meet their specific project goals when they used the plan guidelines from the old Land Use Plan. We observe that they are not taking advantage of the options available to them under the plan and that would be available under the Conservation Framework. We encourage the forest to use the full flexibility available to them to maximize the benefits of their projects. The current plan allows them to manage within RCAs. However, the impetus is on the Forest to explain how that management action will maintain riparian functions and processes.

**7. Do you have quantified riparian/aquatic habitat objectives? If so, how do you deal with the spatial and temporal variability inherent in riparian/aquatic indicators?**

*No written response provided by the forest.*

**Team Comments/Recommendations:** The Plan (Appendix B) contains quantified pathways and watershed condition indicators (as found in the matrix) in temporary (< 3 yrs), short (up to 15 yrs), and long-term (> 15 yrs) temporal scales. Through the implementation of the SWI matrix, they can account for effects at both spatial and temporal scales. For example, if a new project or a new special use permit involved an action on a fifth field HUC, PNF would first evaluate the effect at the 5<sup>th</sup> field HUC, then might consider the effect at the fourth field spatial scale as well, depending on the determination of the effect. Actions may be undertaken that have temporary or short-term deleterious effects as long as the short- or long-term benefits demonstrably outweigh the negative impacts. *This is the most important standard in the plan.*

**8. Do you have standards and guidelines (or other form of management direction) associated with the riparian conservation areas? If so, what issues have resulted from implementation? (Many of the PACFISH/INFISH field reviews have focused on such issues - and this field review could do the same)**

*Answer: Yes.*

**Team Comments/Recommendations:** We did not hear any issues described with implementation of the plan. However, we did hear that by implementing the RCA standards under the option the forest chose, they were unable to fully achieve their objectives for fuels treatment in the WUI. While constrained under the old plan, we were told that they would not have chosen an alternative to the site potential tree height standard. To achieve more flexibility in project development, the forest needs to take full advantage of the options available to them in their plan.

Treatments could have been done fairly well through a low level consultation and fairly succinctly. This flexibility seems to be built into the plan revision. Regulatory and consulting agencies are not looking to be an obstacle, so bring level 1 and level 2 teams to site planning meeting and discuss how to approach the project.

**9. Does the ACS address protection of population strongholds for TES aquatic species? If so, what conservation measures are applied? Have there been issues related to implementation of the conservation measures?**

*Answer: Yes.*

**Team Comments/Recommendations:** In the course of the field visit, we were told that the plan and the WARS Strategy addresses these questions. We did not hear about any specific *conservation* measures associated with the ACS. We were told about restoration efforts to maximize connectivity among fish populations and habitats. The focus is on road obliteration and culvert removal or replacement. We also heard that when in management areas with high road density and new roads are proposed, there must be concomitant reductions in road length elsewhere in the watershed. We did not hear about any issues related to implementation of conservation measures.

*SWST08 – Fish passage shall be provided at all proposed and reconstructed stream crossings of existing and potential fish-bearing streams unless protection of pure-strain native fish enclaves from competition, genetic contamination, or predation by exotic fishes is determined to be an overriding management concern.*

**10. The Deputy Team has agreed to establish a monitoring coordinator at each unit. Do you have a person designated? If so, give name and title.**

*Answer: No, the default would be the NR Staff Officer, Bob Giles. Our new Fisheries Biologist, Chris James will be the monitoring coordinator beginning in August 2009. Chris is the Forest Fisheries Biologist.*

## Site Visits

1. Brush Creek (Range – Pete Grinde)

The photographs from the EM team are very different from those taken in October after grazing. The allotment runs 220 cow-calf pairs and usually allows grazing on the site from August 1 to the end of September.

- Visual inspection of the site by the review team (6.24.2009) is consistent with the conditions identified by the EM field data. There appeared to be good recruitment of woody vegetation in the riparian zone.  
**Recommendation:** Ensure that the key species selected for the site be consistent with what cattle are likely to use.
- The shift in monitoring protocols from Winward to MIM appears to have resulted in a reduction in reported condition. This is not an issue or perceived as a problem. The movement to the new protocol is mandated by the Region. Appropriate attributes are being collected.

**Recommendation:** If there is concern about continuity of data, the Range Team may elect to do methods comparisons on multiple allotments to establish a basis for linking the new MIM methods to the old data. This would facilitate calibration of the new MIM protocols to the historical data collected by the range program.

- DMA Audit recognized good overlap for EM and IM locations. However, the forest is encouraged to develop better documentation of DMA location, to insure further monitoring occurs at the same location. The site needs to be better documented for all sites. The site needs to be better documented for all sites.

**Recommendation:** Use IM guidance and monument or remonument all reaches. Specifically, documentation of all sites should include top and bottom GPS coordinates with a know projection (datum), and preferably accurate photo-documentation of the upstream and downstream segments with the bank orientation noted in the documentation.

## 2. Boulder Creek (Fisheries – Dale Olson)

We observed the effort to better manage dispersed camping in the watershed, designed to reduce impacts within the RHCAs. This is a good example of recognizing a problem and adjusting practices in an application of the ACS. The forest recognizes that there may be enforcement issues related to the new program.

The culvert replacement on Coldspring Creek was well designed.

## 3. Round Valley WUI

We observed that from a riparian or fisheries standpoint, that more fuel treatment could have been done within the RCA that would not have had a detrimental effect. The portion of the RCA located on a high terrace could have been managed to a different prescription than the rest of the RCA had the Forest worked within the guidance of the new Forest Plan (documenting how this treatment in the RCA would not affect overall riparian function and processes). This relates to the flexible definition of the RCA as provided for in the plan.

- Given the vegetation and ecosystem type, it was unclear from a WUI standpoint that the extent of the treatment in the RCA was even necessary.

At the site, the forest expressed concerns that they are not fully able to meet their specific project goals when they use the old land use plan guidelines. We reiterate that they are not taking advantage of the options available to them under the plan and that would be available under the Conservation Framework. We encourage the forest to use the full flexibility available to them to maximize the benefits of their projects. The current plan allows them to manage within RCAs. However, the impetus is on the Forest to explain how that management action will maintain riparian functions and processes.

- The hand piling is no longer mandated by the revised plan.

#### 4. Mud Creek

We observed that the conditions in the DMA are generally good. The upper ( ) site had woody reproduction and high stability. From a functional perspective, the stream channel appeared to be in good condition.

- At the lower (integrator) site, there was evidence of ongoing cattle trespass. This has contributed to degraded conditions in the past (as evinced by the width-depth ratio and bank stability data).  
Recommendation: The cattle trespass needs to be addressed.
- In contrast to Brush Creek, Mud Creek is a sheep allotment (with cattle trespass in the lower end). A band had just gone through the allotment prior to our arrival. While their activity was evident, the impact did not seem high.
- The high concentration of False Hellebore seems to indicate a fairly high degree of heavy disturbance by grazing, though this may have been a remnant effect of prior grazing practices.

#### **Summary.**

#### **Commendations:**

- We appreciate the involvement of staff (and acting line) officers in the coordination and implementation of the field review. The forest arranged a very effective tour of the field sites.
- The Payette National Forest has demonstrated that it is possible to develop a forest plan revision that meets the intent of and crosswalks with PacFish/InFish and more than adequately addresses a long-term Aquatic Conservation Strategy.
- The Streamlining Team appears to be working very well.
- The project implementation was very well done despite limited resources available.

#### **Recommendations:**

The pre-work was not completed and the preparation for the visit was not sufficiently coordinated with the Deputy Team. Coordination of these reviews includes field-level coordinators and technical experts. For future reviews, we would like you to follow the specific directions about the conduct of these reviews, specifically with respect to deadlines. The tour was effective, we had the right people, and we got the information that was being sought. However, the Review team could have provided input, prepared differently for the field tour, and had better expectations of the review if early and more complete coordination would have occurred.

It is not clear that the technical experts were available in the preparation of the answers to the Deputy Team questions. Were it not for the presence of individuals on the Deputy Review Team who were intimately familiar with the Forest Plan Revision, the teams understanding of the ACS and multi-scale analysis would not have been adequate to complete the review.

The forest should recognize the requirements of the Implementation Module by monitoring the existing 12 DMAs in the appropriate year and establishes new DMAs in the 13 watersheds (currently not established) that were selected by EM for monitoring.

Forest needs to take advantage of ability to identify spatially explicit descriptions of the projects in high priority drainages as well as regional knowledge of opportunities to exploit available funding for implementation. This refers to the Consultation Framework process.

Considerable economies may be achieved by development or adoption of consistent sampling protocols and implementation of common design (overlapping sites with subsets of PIBO, Range, Fish). Crews from Range, Fisheries and Hydrology would not need to “cross-train” and do each others’ jobs, but integration of sites (where range allotments are monitored for veg effectiveness monitoring but streams are monitored for impacts of grazing on in-stream features and responses of fish populations). Ensure that the number and distribution of sites is consistent with meeting the requirements established with the level one team. Also significant is an investment in the appropriate number of sites for visits/revisits.

We are concerned that there is a need for “succession planning” in order to ensure continuity of interpretation and understanding of the Plan. As key forest personnel move on to other positions, it is incumbent upon the forest leadership to maintain consistency in the interpretation of the plan’s content.

We strongly recommend that the forest increase its efforts to increase the collective and individual understanding of the elements of the plan so that the different staffs can more effectively communicate about the key components of the plan that contribute to a comprehensive aquatic conservation strategy. The resource staff directors would benefit from knowledge of the objectives of the plan components from other programs so that they can more effectively integrate their projects to achieve conservation objectives.

- Need to identify and coordinate indicators and metrics being used and those under consideration. Is there another program that may be collecting the data of interest that would reduce any duplication of effort? How might protocols and monitoring design be arranged to be complementary?
  - E.g., Range Effectiveness Monitoring is collecting data on bank alteration, or bank stability, non-vegetated bank (% cover).
  - “FISH” Sites don’t overlap with range sites = collection of habitat (substrate, embeddedness, temperature – not fish).
- Identify process for prioritizing actions (restoration, recreation) in the landscape.
  - Include how these actions relate to the ACS.

- Plan has opportunity and ability to drive how actions relate to restoration of listed fish populations.
- Relate other projects to primary objective.
- Eg how does timber sale in section 7 watershed relate to other opportunities for restoration. Take advantage of restoration opportunities that might exist with the equipment on-site for the sale.

Closeout with the Payette National Forest.

### **What obstacles are you encountering with implementation of the ACS?**

Forest response: WARS – would change the plan to include more stressors. TES species trump everything else. Wildlife conservation strategy may take some of the pressure off this. It's hard to do work in the most severely impacted watersheds because the TES species tip the balance in favor of other watersheds that are not as severely impacted.

The Forest described the difficulties between the westside and eastside forest communities. There could be arguments regarding which ones is more severely impacted (westside is roads and timber but little T&E, eastside is fire but with T&E focus), but the point is that work needs to be done (more active management) on the west, and it is often difficult to do this.

The completion of the Framework may help with this, too. The PNF could use the framework to adjust priorities to favor or include watersheds that don't have TES but do have other species or resource concerns that are important.

### **If you could go back in time, what would you change about the ACS or FP?**

Forest response: “retard attainment” is a confusing holdover from Pacfish/Infish. Either they need to understand it better or change the language. A clear definition is needed for this. Generally, PNF is very satisfied with the ACS.

### **Would you change some of the requirements to complete the Framework?**

Forest response: Don't think we had the option. Watershed analysis was really big. In order to complete the plan, had to go forward with the framework. Plan completion is not being looked at as “funding”. PIBO IM is still required.

### **How would the questions be better framed?**

Forest response: Thought that the questions were very good.

Feedback for DT. PNF thinks it is really important, to make implementation of the Framework a budget item.

### **Recommendations to the Deputy Team:**

The Payette National Forest has demonstrated that it is possible to develop a forest plan revision that meets the intent of, and crosswalks with, Pacfish/Infish and can serve as a long-term Aquatic Conservation Strategy. The review team recommends that the Deputy Team examine the approach taken by the Payette National Forest as a model for future plan revisions.