

**APACHE-SITGREAVES NATIONAL FORESTS
LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
DESCRIPTION OF AMENDMENTS**

Regional Forester Sotero Muniz approved the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land Management Plan (LMP) on October 30, 1987. The Plan (LMP) has been in effect and implemented since November 30, 1987.

AMENDMENT 1 (8/1989)

The Regional Forester's decision to approve the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land Management Plan was appealed by Arizona Cattle Growers' Association, Stone Forest Products, Inc., Sierra Club / Wilderness Society, et al., Arizona Game and Fish Department, Arizona Wildlife Federation, and American Rivers, Inc. In addition, Michael Johns, Arizona Wildlife Society, Arizona Wool Producers, Town of Eagar, Navajo County Cattlegrowers, Greenlee County Cattlegrowers, Apache County Cattlemen's Association, Town of Pinetop, Lawrence Slade, Apache County Board of Supervisors, and the Town of Springerville entered as interveners in one or more of the appeals.

Amendment 1 was completed in August 1989. Amendment 1 adds and clarifies management direction for riparian areas, low intensity prescribed fires, use of integrated resource management and project scheduling, public notification of project schedules and decisions, and cooperation with adjacent landowners and other agencies to solve wildlife conflicts on private lands. It also improves the readability of the Plan and clarifies direction.

AMENDMENT 2 (5/1990)

This amendment deals mainly with changes in recreation facility development and recreation management direction. It adds changes inadvertently left out of Amendment One and changes resulting from a Settlement Agreement reached with Stone Forest Industries, Inc., for an appeal of Amendment One. Another change resulted from discussions with the Arizona Cattlegrowers Association. Another change resulted from errata in the diversity standard in the wrong Management Area description (this errata could not be appealed).

SETTLEMENT DOCUMENT (5/1990)

The "Settlement Document," executed in May 1990, deals with resolution of the annual Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) and the allocation and management of old-growth areas for FY90, '91, and '92. This allows required analysis and monitoring to provide a basis for resolution of remaining key timber related issues in the current plan to be covered in an amendment.

AMENDMENT 3 (5/1990)

This amendment deals mainly with changes originating from the "Settlement Agreement" between Forest Plan Appealants and the Forest Supervisor. This agreement was executed in May, 1990. Included are changes in the Annual Timber Sale Offering Schedule; and new or modified standards and guidelines that pertain to managing uneven-aged stands and old growth.

AMENDMENT 4 (5/1990)

This amendment changes the Annual Timber Sale Offering Schedule to make it more consistent with the schedule included in the "Settlement Agreement" between Forest Plan Appellants and the Forest Supervisor executed in May, 1990.

AMENDMENT 5 (6/1992)

This amendment deals with changes to Chapter Five (The Monitoring Plan) of the Forest Plan and was completed in June, 1992. The intent of this amendment is to update some of the monitored items, reduce the number of unnecessary items, and focus our monitoring efforts on those items that are deemed most critical to the implementation of the Forest Plan. The intent is to also reduce budget costs by monitoring the higher priority items.

AMENDMENT 6 (6/1996)

This amendment resulted from an Environmental Impact Statement which amends all of the Forest Land Management Plans in the Southwestern Region (R-3) in June, 1996. The amendment contains standards and guides that implement the newly developed recovery plan for the Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO) and also standards and guides for the continued protection of the Northern Goshawk.

AMENDMENT 7 (5/24/2002)

This non-significant, site-specific Forest Plan amendment resulted from an Environmental Assessment for the Alpine Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Fuels Reduction Project (Alpine RD). It requires a departure from standards and guidelines for the Mexican spotted owl (MSO) and the northern goshawk. This project is in an area where the habitat needs of these species are in conflict with the treatments needed to create defensible space. It is not feasible to maintain the canopy cover and densities required for the owl and goshawk and still reduce live fuels sufficiently to adequately provide protection from catastrophic fire. This departure is necessary in order to accomplish the overriding objective to reduce the susceptibility to catastrophic fire losses in the Alpine Wildland Urban Interface. This non-significant site specific amendment is as follows:

Page 70 of the Forest Plan incorporates by reference the publications entitled Recovery Plan for the Mexican Spotted Owl (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, Southwestern Region, 1955) and Management Recommendations for the Northern Goshawk in the Southwestern United States (GTR RM-217, 1992) as the Standards and Guidelines for managing all forest types. Treatments of selected stands in the Alpine Wildland Urban Interface Fuels Reduction environmental assessment (EA), as described in Alternative C, are authorized to depart from these guidelines in order to implement defensible space prescriptions to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire in the wildland urban interface. This departure will consist of reducing tree density and canopy cover below these standards. These treatments will be modified within stands comprising the Jackson Springs protected activity center (PAC) to maintain minimum levels of density and canopy cover needed to maintain these stands as MSO nesting habitat as determined by the Alpine District Wildlife Biologist.

AMENDMENT 8 (8/12/2002)

This non-significant, site-specific Forest Plan amendment resulted from an Environmental Assessment for the Mineral Ecosystem Management Area (EMA) (Springerville RD). It makes the following site-specific changes to the A-S NFs Land Management Plan only for the Mineral EMA in two aspects using the following rationale:

First, the Habitat Capability Index (HCI) is not maintained above 0.400 for all management indicator species for the EMA. The analysis shows eight species below 0.400 post-treatment with five remaining under 0.400 in 20 years. While this is not a desirable situation, the extreme loss of habitat that would result from a catastrophic fire is even worse. The HCI model has been under reconstruction for some time because of the inadequacy of this method in detecting and predicting desired conditions, but until a different or improved process is incorporated into the Forest Plan, it remains a standard of measure. The departures in HCI of the selected alternative from the 0.400 standard is minimal when compared to the No Action Alternative which also has seven species currently under 0.400 with six remaining under 0.400 in 20 years.

Second, is the departure of the selected alternative from guidelines for the northern goshawk. While the 70% portion of the alternative is in compliance with thinning objectives in the goshawk guidelines, and the residual clumps in the 30% portion comply with leave canopy cover guidelines, the degree of openness that results from this treatment exceeds objectives stated by the Plan. The pre-settlement model used as a reference condition for this alternative conflicts with the guidelines for the northern goshawk in this respect. This departure is necessary in order to accomplish the overriding objective to reduce the Mineral EMA's susceptibility to catastrophic fire losses. Treatments comply with National Forest Management Act requirements (paragraph J page 66 of the EA).

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Plan (Forest Plan) is amended for the following specific actions associated with the selected alternative.

1. Page 70 of the Forest Plan incorporates by reference the publication entitled "Management Recommendations for the Northern Goshawk in the Southwestern United States" (GTR RM-217, 1992) as the Standards and Guidelines for managing all forest types outside of Mexican spotted owl habitat. The ponderosa pine treatments of the Mineral EMA Environmental Assessment described in the 30 / 70 treatment alternative are authorized to depart from these guidelines in order to implement a restoration prescription based upon the pre-settlement reference condition. This departure will consist of exceeding the 10% guideline for Vegetative Structural Stage (VSS) 1. Thinning in residual groups of VSS 4 and larger will still conform to the 40% canopy cover guidelines and opening sizes will still conform to the 4-acre maximum.

2. Page 74 of the Forest Plan establishes a standard of managing "...for habitat capability for each Management Indicator Species (MIS) on the forest at least 40% of potential". The Mineral EMA analysis shows that none of the alternatives, including No Action, fully meet this standard currently, post-treatment, or in 20 years. Whether these low HCIs reflect actual conditions, a weakness in the model, or an anomaly of the method used in this analysis is not certain. Regardless, the conclusions of the HCI analysis seem to be logical, reasonable, and in line with known cause-and-effect relationships. This project-specific amendment therefore suspends the 40% minimum requirement for this project because neither the current situation in the Mineral EMA, nor the range of treatment alternatives considered meets it. Relative differences between HCIs for each alternative are still considered valid comparisons, but the selected alternative does not have to show a 0.400 or above for all MIS species.

AMENDMENT 9 (3/2003)

This non-significant, site-specific Forest Plan amendment resulted from a categorical exclusion to install a permanent Forest Service radio repeater on the top of Mitchell Peak (Clifton RD). The repeater will be placed in a rocky area devoid of vegetation on a poured concrete base with a surface area of four feet by two feet. The device will be painted to blend with the mountain and background skyline. The amendment makes a site specific change to the list of electronic sites listed on page 93 of the A-S NFs Land Management Plan.

AMENDMENT 10 (11/22/2004)

This non-significant, site-specific Forest Plan amendment resulted from an Environmental Assessment for the Greer Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Project (Springerville RD) prepared under the authority of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA), is for this project only, and makes the following changes to the A-S NF Land Management Plan:

Analysis indicates the proposed action will maintain viable populations of existing vertebrate wildlife species within the analysis area. However, existing habitat capability is less than 40% of potential habitat capability for some Management Indicator Species (as specified on page 74 of the Forest Land Management Plan (FLMP)). The HCI model indicates that red squirrel will be below 0.4 HCI in 20 years with implementation of the proposed action. This decision therefore requires a project-specific amendment to the Forest Plan to allow for this departure from the HCI minimum standard. This departure is warranted to reduce the risk of high intensity fire to the communities.

Alternative 2 (Proposed Action) departs from management direction of the FLMP as amended in 1996 (USDA 1996, page 91) by not following the "Management Recommendations for the Northern Goshawk in the Southwestern United States" in three ways: 1) Proposed density reductions may not meet the canopy cover requirements specified for Northern Goshawk outside of PFAs, in treatment areas both within and beyond ½ mile of private land. 2) Openings designed for creation of VSS 1 may fall short of the recommended amount due to the 16" diameter cap. 3) VSS 3 falls below the recommended 20% of the area immediately after harvest. This decision therefore requires a project-specific amendment to the Forest Plan to allow for this departure. This departure is warranted in order to reduce the risk of high intensity fire near the communities.

The proposed action does not meet the Visual Quality Objectives for Foreground Retention areas as specified in the Forest Plan and so a site-specific Forest Plan Amendment is needed. The proposed treatments may create a decreased visual quality rating to some people for a period of time. However, with no treatment, a stand replacement fire could occur on larger portions of, or the entire area, thus reducing the visual quality and experience for the foreseeable future.

Portions of the geographic area affected by this decision for Greer WUI are located within Management Area 17, East and West Forks Little Colorado River of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land Management Plan. This area possesses high quality semi-primitive non-motorized water based recreation opportunities adjacent to the popular community of Greer. Portions of the management area are proposed for treatment under Alternative 2. Proposed treatments conform to the management emphasis for the area which is to provide semi-primitive recreation opportunities while protecting the unique botanical qualities. However, the A-S NFs Land Management Plan states "No vegetative management practices are planned in this management area." Therefore, this decision requires a project specific amendment to the Forest Plan to allow for treatments within Management Area 17.

AMENDMENT 11 (06/14/2006)

This non-significant, site-specific Forest Plan amendment resulted from an Environmental Assessment for the Nutrioso Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Project (Alpine and Springerville Ranger Districts) prepared under authority of the Healthy Forest Restoration Action of 2003 (HFRA). This site-specific amendment is for the Nutrioso Wildland Urban Interface Project only.

The proposed action was consistent with the standards and guidelines of the FLMP as amended, except as follows:

- The Modified Proposed Action departs from management direction of the FLMP by not fully following the "Management Recommendations for the Northern Goshawk in the Southwestern United States" such that proposed density reductions may not meet the canopy cover requirements (high canopy closure and interlocking crowns in PFAs) specified for Northern Goshawk in treatment areas both within and beyond one-half mile of private lands; and
- The Modified Proposed Action departs from management direction of the FLMP by not fully following the Mexican Spotted Owl Recovery Plan direction in maintaining a high enough basal area in mixed-conifer and pine-oak stands that currently meet the Recovery Plan definition of target threshold.

This departure is warranted because immediate treatments are needed to help reduce the risk of high intensity fires to provide protection for the at-risk community of Nutrioso, AZ, other adjacent private and State lands, and forest resources.

AMENDMENT 12 (08/10/2006)

This non-significant, site-specific Forest Plan amendment resulted from an Environmental Assessment for the Eagar South Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Project (Springerville RD) prepared under the authority of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA). This site-specific amendment is for the Eagar South Wildland Urban Interface Project only.

The proposed action was consistent with the standards and guidelines of the FLMP as amended, except as follows:

- Alternative 2 (Proposed Action) departs from management direction of the FLMP as amended in 1996 (USDA 1996, page 91) by not following the "Management Recommendations for the Northern Goshawk in the Southwestern United States" as follows: Proposed density reductions will not meet the canopy cover recommendations specified for Northern Goshawk outside of Post Fledging Family areas (PFAs). The decision document for Alternative 2 (if selected) will therefore require a project-specific amendment to the Forest Plan to allow for this departure. This departure is warranted in order to reduce the risk of high intensity fire near the communities. Reducing hazardous forest fuels on the analysis area will improve firefighting response capabilities and protect watersheds near the communities from adverse effects of large-scale wildfire.

AMENDMENT 13 (02/22/2008)

This non-significant, Forest Plan amendment resulted from the Wildland Fire Use Forest Plan Amendment Environmental Assessment. The Record of Decision was signed by Elaine J. Zieroth, Forest Supervisor on December 17, 2007.

This amendment makes technical corrections to the current forest plan (terminology used for

previously authorized management activities is now consistent with national and regional direction). In addition, it allows managers to determine acreages that may be affected by natural fire to be determined at the time of fire occurrence using a defined set of criteria, not by an acreage limit as currently stated in the Forest Plan.