

IDAHO PANHANDLE NATIONAL FORESTS INTEGRATED VEGETATION AND FUELS 5 YEAR ACTION PLAN GUIDE

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This guide is intended to help apply 4 components to develop the IPNFs 5 Year Action Plan. The guide will be consistently used by the Forest Leadership Team (FLT) and Zones as they work with their partners and collaborative groups to prioritize projects to propose to the Forest Supervisor.

I. Preliminary Landscape Screens (PLS)**II. Project Evaluation Criteria (PEC)****III. Project Evaluation Sheet****IV. Project Selection Process**

I. Preliminary Landscape Screens: The screens are the foundation to building the Idaho Panhandle National Forests 5 Year Action Plan. The screens were developed collaboratively and identify priority areas on the IPNF to focus restorations efforts. The 4 screens are defined as:

1. Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

Each county has collaboratively identified its WUI. Each county's WUI areas differ from each other, mainly due to geological and population differences, though all have similar themes. For this exercise, the WUI as designated in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) will be used as the screen.

There are also areas outside the WUI that could pose a significant risk to communities due to factors such as frequent fire ignitions, heavy fuel loadings, and topographic/weather patterns that drive fire growth towards communities. The goal is to protect our communities from excessive fuel loads in the forests but not necessarily just within the designated WUI areas. The Project Evaluation Sheet assigns extra points to those projects that are determined to provide increased community protection from the threat of uncontrolled wildland fire, even if those projects are located outside the WUI. These points are assigned in the Social Benefit portion of the evaluation sheet.

2. Restoration Potential:

Watershed Restoration: "Restoration subwatersheds" generally have degraded habitat conditions, but have a higher potential for improvement through management opportunities (see 2015 Forest Plan supporting documents). Restoration activities treat conditions (e.g., unstable roads or poorly located and/or drained roads, certain invasive plants and animals, major obstructions to physical and biological connectivity) that threaten aquatic and riparian ecosystem integrity and achievement of desired conditions. Active restoration subwatersheds are drainages that have native species present; the species' have limited population size or the habitat is present, but the status of the population is unknown. In conjunction with the native species component, the drainage is assumed to have a relatively moderate

or high level of sensitivity to management activities, or a relatively moderate or high level of management impacts, or a combination of both. For purposes of the landscape screen exercise, active restoration sub-watersheds and sub-watersheds without a native species component are assumed to meet the criteria for areas of vegetation management opportunities (i.e. Conservation and Passive Restoration sub-watersheds are not considered).

Vegetation Restoration: Includes areas where there is a departure of forest composition from historical conditions, as analyzed down to the Geographic Area (GA) scale, and areas where there is a departure of forest structure (size class distribution) from historical conditions.

3. Insect and Disease:

Insect and disease risk is determined by using the National Insect and Disease Risk Map, which is “a nationwide, science-based, administrative planning tool that is the product of a process whereby, every five years, the forest health community works together to determine the severity and extent of tree-mortality hazard due to insects and diseases”, and is found at this website:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/technology/nidrm.shtml>

4. Timber Suitability:

These lands are areas that were determined to be suitable for timber production in the 2015 Revised IPNF Land Management Plan (LMP). The process for determining those areas is thoroughly described in the LMP EIS and support documents.

Compared to the 1987 Forest Plan, the most substantial differences are that Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCA) have been removed from the suitable lands, as well as grizzly bear core areas, old growth and roadless areas (those under the 2008 Idaho Roadless Rule)

II. Project Evaluation Criteria:

Once projects have been selected from the PLS they will be evaluated against criteria developed by the collaborative group. These criteria contain elements that represent important issues, concerns, and risks from both the collaborators and Forest Service. They are designed to evaluate the projects consistently on measurable elements such as acres, volume, negative or positive long term impacts, etc. The following are definitions of the criteria, elements, and how they are to be measured.

- ◆ **Program Delivery:** This is simply to what level does a project contribute to the IPNF vegetation and fuels target? There are three elements under this criteria:

- **Saw log volume:** This is commercial timber harvest and is measured in **MMBF**.
- **Fuels Treated:**

The sum of all **acres** treated that would meet Key Point 3 of the National Fire Plan, which is to reduce hazardous fuels. Acres of fuels treated includes all burning and mechanical treatments (including timber harvest) designed to create and maintain resilient and sustainable landscapes and reduce the quantity or change the arrangement of living or dead fuel so that the intensity, severity, or effects of wildland fire are reduced within acceptable ecological parameters and consistent with land management plan objectives, or activities that maintain desired fuel conditions. Do not double-count acres based on multiple treatments; use only the sum of acres where fuels would be reduced.

- **Vegetation Restoration:**

The 2015 Revised Land Management Plan includes a desired condition and objective of increasing the amount of the Forest dominated by western white pine, western larch, ponderosa pine, whitebark pine and early-seral hardwood species such as aspen, cottonwood and paper birch. These species are generally less common than historically, and are generally more resistant or resilient to droughts, insects and root disease, fire and potential climate change impacts. Therefore, the more a project can increase these species (or maintain their existing dominance) the more desirable it is. The following types of activities could be counted towards meeting this criterion. (1) **Acres** of rust resistant western white pine that would be planted or acres of existing young white pine plantations that would be pruned; (2) **Acres** of larch or ponderosa pine that would be planted or acres of regeneration harvest that would be planned for natural regeneration of larch or ponderosa pine; (3) **Acres** of forest stands that are commercially or non-commercially thinned to favor the desirable early-seral species in the stands OR acres where a “prescribe underburn only” treatment is planned without commercial tree removal for the purpose of favoring the early-seral species; (4) **Acres** of restoration treatments for whitebark pine (e.g. reforestation, Rx burning, pheromone, slashing activities).

◆ **Economic Feasibility:**

This criterion measures the economic viability of the commercial timber sales. Use the work sheet to determine if the project has a high, medium or low

viability then enter the number on the Project Evaluation Sheet.

- **Sawlog Value:**

Definition: Sawlog value will be determined by estimating the average volume per acre to be removed (mbf/ac).

- ≥ 20 mbf/ac = 20 points
- ≥ 15 mbf/ac = 15 points
- ≥ 10 mbf/ac = 10 points
- ≥ 5 mbf/ac = 5 points
- < 5 mbf/ac = 0 points

* Value Added Non-Sawlog and Other Forest Products:

$>10\%$ = 2 Bonus Points $<10\%$ = 0 Bonus Points

Subtotal Sawlog value _____

- **Proximity to market:**

Definition: Predicted haul distance from center of timber sale to nearest mill (in miles)

- .0-50 haul miles = 5 points
- 51-99 haul miles = 3 points
- >100 haul miles = 0 points

Subtotal Proximity to market points: ____

- **Harvest systems:**

Definition: Types of harvest systems predicted to be used on timber sale (Helicopter, skyline, groundbase). Conventional is defined as either skyline or groundbase systems associated with helicopter logging.

- 100% groundbase systems = 5 points
- 75% groundbase/25% skyline systems = 4 points
- 50% groundbase/50% skyline systems = 3 points
- 25% groundbase/70% skyline systems = 2 points
- 100% skyline system = 0 points
- 50% helicopter/50% conventional systems = -15

Subtotal Points for Harvest systems: ____

- **Road construction:**

Definition: Predicted road construction on timber sale (including new or heavy/complex reconstruction)

Sawlog Volume	New Construction and Heavy Reconstruction		
	<1 Mile	1-2.9 Miles	>3 Miles
>15MMBF	5	4	3
10-15 MMBF	3	2	1
5-9.9 MMBF	2	1	0
< 5 MMBF	1	0	0

Subtotal Points for road construction: _____

- **KV/BD costs:**

Definition: Predicted regeneration or site preparation associated with units in timber sale. Regeneration is defined as stocking the stand to the desire species with (planting, surveys and gopher control surveys). Site preparation is defined as underburn, broadcast burn or grapple piling units.

- 0-30% regeneration treated or site preparation = 5 points
- 31-60% regeneration treated or site preparation = 2 points
- >61% of regeneration treated or site preparation = 0 points

Subtotal Point for KV/BD costs: _____

Overall Points reflecting the measurement for the project evaluation sheet:

- High = ≥ 30 points = 20 points on project evaluation sheet
- Medium = 25-30 points = 10 points on project evaluation sheet
- Low = 20-25 points = 5 points on project evaluation sheet
- Unfeasible = < 20 points = -15 points on project evaluation sheet

◆ **Other Economic Considerations:**

- **Potential Funding Sources:** Potential funding opportunities that might help fund a timber sale or reduce the cost of NEPA (e.g. CFLRP, Good Neighbor Authority, other). Projects will receive **0-3** points based on the amount of potential funding sources.
- **Opportunities and Authorities:** Opportunities or Authorities that reduce the cost of NEPA (e.g. Farm Bill CE, streamlined EA, EA v. EIS). Projects will receive **0-3** points based on the amount potential savings.
- **Benefits to Counties/Schools:** Will the project provide receipts to counties or schools? Yes=3 points & No = 0 points

- **Improved Future Project Access:** Will the project open access to potential future project areas? Yes=3 points & No = 0 points

◆ **Resource Benefit or Impact:**

Evaluates the long term benefit or impact to the following resource areas that may occur as a result of the project. It is anticipated that most values will receive a value of **0 or 3** as projects are not typically designed with long term resource impacts.

- **T & E Species** – Are there Threatened or Endangered species or their designated critical habitats that could be affected by the project? Long term benefits might include creation of early seral vegetation stages to support grizzly bears and Canada lynx, road management in core habitat for grizzly bear or relocating roads that are in riparian habitats adjacent to bull trout streams.
- **Sensitive Species** – Will there be an effect on sensitive species or their habitats?
- **Water Quality** – What does the project propose, that will have measureable improvements or impacts on water quality? Special attention should be provided to projects occurring in areas with approved Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) allocations. The level of accountability, under the Clean Water Act may be relatively higher than in areas without water quality issues. Long term benefits include road management, or any project that would decrease sedimentation.

◆ **Social Benefit:**

Does the project have elements that could be supported by communities? And more importantly is there community involvement in the proposed project?

- **WUI and Community Infrastructure:** The Wildland-Urban Interface is defined in each county's Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Answer 'Yes' if any portion of the project area is within the WUI, or if there is community infrastructure within your project area, and the project is intended to reduce fuels over the landscape in some manner. Answer 'No' if there is no WUI or community infrastructure within your project area, or if the project's objectives have no benefit to the WUI or its values. Infrastructure includes utility sites or/and single residents.
- **Increased Community Protection:** The project has benefits to protecting

communities from large, uncontrolled wildfires even though it may be outside the WUI. Must include rationale relating to historic fire spread patterns, ignition history/potential or local weather, topographic and fuel conditions that justify a score ranging from 0-5 points. The project must also have fuel reduction objectives.

- **Community/Municipal Watershed:** If there is a community or municipal watershed within the project area, answer ‘Yes’. If there is no community or municipal watershed within your project area, answer ‘No’. Include a short description in the rationale column of how the project activities would protect or improve the watershed.
- **Municipal Watersheds** - Watersheds that have received special designation under 36 CFR 251.9, in which municipalities may request special protective measures for a watershed that serves their constituents. These agreements may allow for requirements, restrictions, or authorizations under a special use permits. An example of a municipal watershed on the IPNFs is Myrtle Creek for Bonners Ferry.
- **Community Water Supply** - A public water system (PWS) is a system for the provision to the public of water for human consumption through pipes or other constructed conveyances, if such system has at least fifteen service connections or regularly serves at least twenty-five individuals.
- **Partnerships and Collaborative Involvement:** Public involvement in a project above and beyond the minimum scoping and public meetings. In order to answer ‘Yes’, you must be able to demonstrate a higher level of involvement from partners, collaborative groups, interested parties, or citizens. Give a short description of collaborators and/or partnerships in the rationale column.

◆ **Other Considerations:**

This criterion is not scored and is for informational purposes. This takes into account things that are important to communities like unemployment, keeping mills from closing, protecting community infrastructure from wildfire, but are hard to measure and score. This could be used as a tie breaker or a reason to move a project up or down.

- **Infrastructure critical to survival of communities:** In the event of a catastrophic wildfire does the project protect community infrastructure

such as power lines and power stations, mills, and other important organizations that keep a community functioning.

- Economic development: How does a project affect unemployment in a community?
- Timing: Is this project especially time-sensitive (insect/disease etc.) that it needs to be prioritized to occur earlier during the 5-year time frame?
- Level of Information: How much information exists on the project?
- Does the project have risk or controversial elements? (For example: Does the project have 303d-listed streams, old growth units, threatened and endangered species and their habitats, and/or viewsheds potentially affected by proposed activities? Will there be road construction? Could the project potentially affect the stability of Superfund areas, especially in case of future fire?)
- Endangered Species affected by proposed activities.

III. Project Evaluation Sheet:

This sheet individually evaluates each project against the criteria listed above. The elements in the criteria are prioritized and weighted appropriately by the 5 YAP Committee. Each project will have a final score and be evaluated against the rest of the projects to fill out the 5 Year Action Plan for the Forest.

IV. Project Selection Process:

This is the procedure the Zones will follow when selecting projects from the 4 Preliminary Landscape Screen (PLS). The PLS will be used as the filter to create new vegetation and fuels projects. The highest priority areas for developing projects are where all four screens intersect. Suitability is the primary screen; projects that fall outside of the suitability screen need to have justification, such as WUI areas outside of the suitability layer, and will be the exception and not the rule.

The screens are the foundation of the process; the Forest Service and local collaborators have agreed that these are areas of high priority for commercial harvesting.

- 1) Working with partners, each zone will develop 4-5 potential project area boundaries. Zones will evaluate each proposed project area using the evaluation criteria described in this Guide.
- 2) IPNF staff will develop a DRAFT 5 Year Action Plan (Map and Sale Schedule) and

present it to the group at a future meeting. Zones will be present to answer questions or concerns related to how projects were ranked.

- 3) The Forest Supervisor approves the 5 Year Action Plan.

**Idaho Panhandle National Forests
Project Evaluation Sheet**

Project Name _____ PLS%: WUI _____ I & D _____ Suit _____ Rest _____

What Counties is this project in? _____

Other comments and rationale

Criteria Measurement Points Score				Rationale
Program Delivery				
Saw Log Volume	>10	MMBF	15	
	6-9	MMBF	10	
	< 5	MMBF	5	
Fuels Treated	>5000	Acres	10	
	500-4999	Acres	5	
	< 499	Acres	2	
Vegetation Restoration	>1000	Acres	10	
	500- 999	Acres	5	
	< 499	Acres	2	

Sale Feasibility			
Project Feasibility	High	20	
Saw log Value	Medium	10	
Proximity to market	Low	5	
Harvest systems	Unfeasible	-15	
New road const. BD/KV			
Other Economic Considerations			
Potential funding sources –	Lots, Some, none	3, 2, 0	
Opportunities and Authorities	Lots, Some, none	3, 2, 0	
Benefits to Counties - Schools	Yes or No	3 or 0	
Improved future project access	Yes or No	3 or 0	

Resource Benefit or Impact – Based on Long Term			
T & E Species Terra ___ Aquatics ___	Benefit or Impact	B=3, I=-3, NA=0 Terra ___ Aquatics ___	
Sensitive and Management Indicator Species Terra ___ Aquatics ___	Benefit or Impact	B=3, I=-3, NA=0 Terra ___ Aquatics ___	
Water Quality and TMDL	Benefit or Impact	B=3, I=-3, NA=0	

Social Benefit			
WUI and Community Infra.	Yes or No	Y=10, N=0	
Increased community protection?	High, Med, Low, None	5, 3, 1, 0 pts	
Community/Municipal Watershed	Yes or No	Y=3, N=0	
Partnerships and Collaborative Involvement	Yes or No	Y=3, N=0	
TOTAL SCORE			

Other Considerations	Yes or No
Is there infrastructure critical to the survival of the community?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there economic development opportunities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Timing: Is this project time sensitive? Please Explain	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Level of Information: How much information exists currently on the project?	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
Risk or Controversy: Does the project have risk or controversial elements? Explain below in comments if you have one of the following: Road construction, Bear Management Units, Listed 303d, old growth units affected by proposed activities, or Threatened and Endangered Species affected by proposed activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No