



FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT Update



July 2003

In This Issue

*What We Have
Done*

*Current and Future
Activities*

Phase II Amendment is progressing...

Working with contractors and cooperating agencies, the Forest has been using your comments, forest data, and best science available to produce the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and proposed Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), collectively known as the draft Phase II Amendment. Our rigorous work schedule this summer is designed to place a draft Phase II Amendment in your hands by fall.

This newsletter provides an overview of the work completed, as well as an update of current and future activities.

A 90-day public comment period will follow the release of the draft Phase II Amendment. Your involvement during that comment period is crucial in creating a final Phase II Amendment that best reflects good science and all interests.

The next newsletter will be published just



John C. Twiss, Forest Supervisor

before the draft Phase II Amendment is released and will cover how to provide significant comments on the draft.

Thanks for all your input thus far!

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "John".

John C. Twiss, *Forest Supervisor*
Black Hills National Forest



The Mickelson Trail

Phase II Amendment

of the Black Hills National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan



What We Have Done

Below is an overview of our accomplishments:

- A *Notice of Intent* (NOI), published in November 2001, announced the Forest Service's intent to amend the 1997 Revised LRMP and prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS).
- The Forest went through a *Scoping Period*, during which you provided over 400 responses, from which we identified six decision areas that are being used to develop the draft Phase II Amendment. Those areas are as follows: species viability direction; research natural areas (RNAs); fire hazard and insect and disease risk; timber land suitability; HABCAP (habitat capability model) direction for deer and elk; and output objectives.
- The Black Hills National Forest, working with cooperating agencies in South Dakota and Wyoming and public input from a series of open houses, identified *five alternatives* to consider for the direction of the Black Hills National Forest. Those alternatives are as follows:
 - ⇒ *Alternative #1, The 1997 Revised LRMP*
 - ⇒ *Alternative #2, Phase I Amendment* – The 1997 Plan as modified by the Phase I Amendment adopted in 2001.
 - ⇒ *Alternative #3, Diversity Across the Landscape* – Focuses on vegetative diversity designed to address species viability concerns with some elements of the landscape closer to the vegetative diversity that once existed.
 - ⇒ *Alternative #4, Phase I With Additional Mature Forest* – Retains more areas for mature forest and has more of the forest condition determined

by natural processes.

- ⇒ *Alternative #6, Reduce Fire Hazard and Risks of Insects and Disease* – Emphasizes vegetative management to reduce the occurrence of insect and disease epidemics and catastrophic fire.

Alternative #5, Harvest Equal to Growth, is no longer considered in detail, as it would require many changes in management areas, which is outside the scope of the Phase II decision. Instead, the alternative will serve as a benchmark to compare key issues with other alternatives.



The Mystic Ranger District Office, Hill City, SD

The Forest has also been analyzing the vast body of information about the Black Hills National Forest to write the *effects analysis* for the EIS. This analysis predicts how each of the proposed alternatives will affect forest resources over the next 150 years and people in the next decade.

We have set the foundation for the creation of an LRMP Amendment based on forest data, best science available, effective collaboration with cooperating agencies, and your involvement.



Fall 2001
NOI



Winter 2002
Scoping Comments
Received



Winter 2002
Alternatives Developed





Current and Future Activities

Over the next few months, the Forest, cooperating agencies, and contractors will complete the draft Phase II Amendment. We will use the effects analysis from the DEIS and public input in selecting the preferred alternative for the draft Phase II Amendment. Once the Forest has chosen a preferred alternative, the alternative will be incorporated into the proposed LRMP portion of the draft Phase II Amendment. The LRMP is a series of goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines, based on the preferred alternative, providing umbrella direction for all future Black Hills National Forest projects requiring environmental analysis.

It is very important for the reader to understand that the preferred alternative in the draft Phase II Amendment is a draft decision. Its purpose is to show people what selecting an alternative means and what the Forest considers the best of the five alternatives at the draft stage of the Phase II Amendment process (identifying a preferred alternative during the draft stage of the Phase II Amendment is an agency requirement [36 CFR 219.8 c]). It also helps reviewers focus their comments during the 90-day comment period that will follow.

Upon its completion, the draft Phase II Amendment will be released for a 90-day comment period. The next newsletter will provide information on how to get a copy and provide your comments. In addition,



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tion, the newsletter will explain how to submit significant comments, and the difference between significant comments and those that are not. Significant comments will be used in transforming the draft Phase II Amendment into the Final Phase II Amendment.

Once the draft Phase II Amendment is released, the Forest will host a series of public meetings during the 90-day comment period. The meetings are designed to clarify the information in the draft Phase II Amendment and to assist reviewers in submitting significant comments that will help the Forest produce the final Phase II Amendment.

Fall 2003
Draft EIS Available
for Public Review

Winter 2003/2004
End of Public
Comment Period

Spring 2004
Final EIS Complete

Spring 2004
Record of Decision





The Website

Go to the Internet website at http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills/projects/planning/amend_2001/ to view the Black Hills National Forest Plan Amendment documents.

Mailing List

Individuals and groups that have traditionally received this type of information in the mail will continue to be on the mailing list. Anyone wishing to be added to or deleted from the list may do so by contacting Peggy Woodward at 605-673-9263.

Those on the mailing list will automatically receive a copy of the draft Phase II Amendment summary and CD.

The goal of the Black Hills National Forest Phase II Amendment is to establish a Forest Plan that allows the public to use Forest resources in ways that provide for resource conservation and a healthy ecosystem.

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