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Service

**Southwestern  
Region**



# Values, Attitudes and Beliefs Toward National Forest System Lands: The Coronado National Forest

Prepared for:

The Coronado National Forest  
300 W. Congress Street  
Tucson, AZ 85701  
and

USDA Forest Service Region 3  
Southwestern Region  
333 Broadway SE  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Submitted by:

John C. Russell, Ph.D.  
Peggy A. Adams-Russell

Adams-Russell Consulting  
1688 Springvale Road  
Placerville, CA 95667

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Data were collected for this report using focus groups and individual interview. Five focus groups were conducted: two groups were held in Tucson and one each in Douglas, Safford, and Sierra Vista. Additionally, individual interviews were conducted with members of state and local government as well as concerned citizens who were not able to attend the focus groups. The results were analyzed to identify themes about value and beliefs concerning forest resources and management priorities. The results of this analysis are presented by describing the major themes and public assessments regarding management priorities.

The “Sky Islands” is a pervasive concept that identifies the lands of the Coronado National Forest (CNF). These “Sky Islands” are encircled by desert and grasslands which isolate 12 mountain ranges that contain approximately 1.8 million acres of the CNF located in southeastern Arizona and portions of southwestern New Mexico. The CNF is associated with five principal counties in southern Arizona: Cochise, Graham, Pima, Pinal, and Santa Cruz. The U.S. Census 2004 estimated population total for these counties is about 1.3 million persons. Pima County (907,059) has the largest population and contains the Tucson metropolitan area. Pinal (214,359), Cochise (124,013), Santa Cruz (40,784), and Graham (32,993) are the other Arizona counties associated with the CNF. Hidalgo County (5,186) in southwestern New Mexico also contains portions of the CNF.

There are several noteworthy issues associated with the social environment because they influence a wide range of beliefs, values, and assessments of management priorities: (1) the rate and distribution of population growth in southern Arizona; (2) illegal immigration and smuggling along the Arizona-Mexico border; and (3) the pressures for change in ranching and agriculture, especially those associated with grazing on public lands. Population growth is especially important since it appears to influence assessments of recreation values, multiple-use beliefs and values, assessments of the encroachment of development around forest lands, and the ability of the Forest Service to respond to demands from a diversifying public. Similarly, illegal immigration and smuggling influence a wide range of issues including concerns about fire, resource damage, personal safety, and the ability of the Forest Service to adequately maintain valued resources. The breadth and intensity of concerns about illegal immigration and smuggling suggest this is one of the most important influences on public beliefs and values about forest management. Similarly, ranching interests have a strong cultural and historical presence in Arizona. Ranching culture influences assessments of the forest resources and values about the contemporary and future benefits of grazing on public lands. Some of the conflicts about ranching and its future thus frame values and beliefs described in subsequent sections. These characteristics are noteworthy because they influence a range of values and beliefs about forest resources as well as assessments of management priorities for Forest Plan revision.

There are several themes about the values and beliefs associated with particular types of uses and the benefits to communities from the CNF. These themes concern:

- Definitions of multiple-use public lands.
- The identity of the CNF as a “recreation forest” and the need for more recreation resources.
- Declining Forest Service resources and the effects on user experiences.

- Beliefs and values about volunteerism related to forest resources.
- The impacts to the forest and its users from illegal immigration and smuggling.
- The value of grazing and the contribution of ranchers to land management.
- Mixed benefits of special designation areas such as wilderness.

The CNF identified several areas for management consideration in Forest Plan revision: increased population pressure; the impacts of illegal immigration and smuggling; and restoring fire adapted ecosystems. The specific details of these management concerns anticipate most of the public concerns identified in this work. Public priorities for plan revision have four organizing concepts: (1) manage the forest with appreciation of the unique qualities of each Sky Island (2) manage to sustain ecosystem and recreational resources perceived to be declining in quality; (3) develop strategic responses to changes in Forest Service budgets and staffing; and (4) establish collaborative working relationships with publics to assist the Forest Service to complete its missions.

Analysis identified the following themes about management priorities and desired futures:

- The Forest Service should define its mission and provide education about management practices and processes.
- Rights of way issues on private lands are impeding access to public lands. Access to public lands through these private lands is a priority issue.
- Unmanaged roads from illegal immigration and off-road vehicle activity need to be addressed.
- There is a need for the Forest Service to acknowledge and respond to increased demands for a range of recreation opportunities on forest lands.
- Enforcement activities should concentrate on natural resource issues rather than immigration and smuggling.
- Acknowledge and respond to the potential effects on resource use by a growing population in urban and rural areas near the CNF.
- Improve policies and procedures to use volunteer resources.
- Work cooperatively with ranching interests to monitor grazing and incorporate local knowledge about resource conditions.
- Develop a proactive fire management plan to respond to increasing urban interface issues.
- Address invasive and exotic species that are becoming an increasing problem in resource management.
- Timely completion of the Forest Plan will bolster public confidence in the ability of the Agency to effectively manage resources.

Participants expressed a desire for improvement in four areas of the Forest Service relationships with stakeholders and community groups: (1) ensure inclusion of all interested parties on an equal footing in developing community participation and input; (2) work with community groups and stakeholders and partners to build trust and the foundations for better working relationships; (3) conduct more outreach efforts by visiting publics “on their turf” rather than only inviting publics to meetings at Agency offices; and (4) more interaction with Forest Service personnel “on the ground” and a greater presence of Forest Service personnel in the forest.

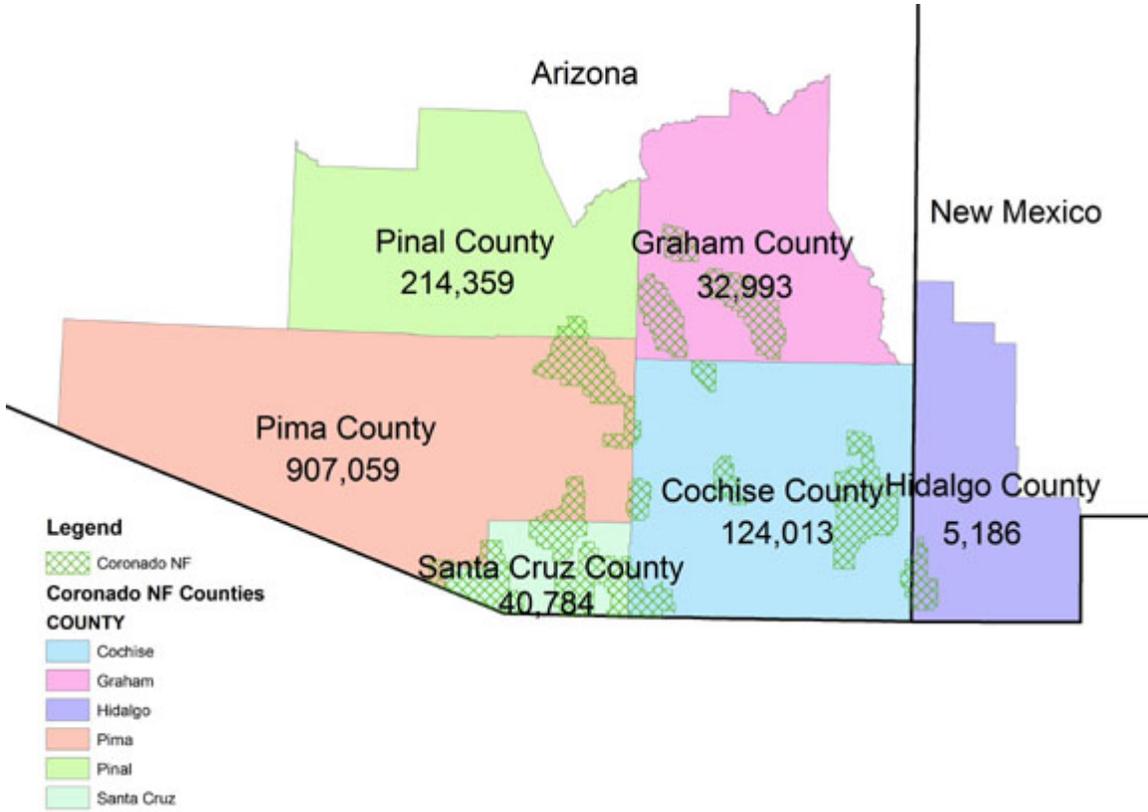
# CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST

The “Sky Islands” is a pervasive concept that identifies the lands of the Coronado National Forest (CNF). These “Sky Islands” are encircled by desert and grasslands which isolate 12 mountain ranges that contain approximately 1.8 million acres of the CNF located in southeastern Arizona and portions of southwestern New Mexico. These mountain ranges are associated with five Ranger Districts. The Santa Catalina District includes Forest Service managed lands in the Santa Catalina and Rincon mountain range. Tucson (521, 605)<sup>1</sup> is the largest community adjacent to this district. The Safford Ranger District incorporates four different mountain ranges, including Mount Graham, which is nearby to the community of Safford (9,440). The Douglas Ranger District includes the Dragoon, Chiricahua, and Peloncillo mountain ranges. Douglas (16,740) and Bisbee (6,390) are communities within to this district. The Sierra Vista Ranger District includes the Whetstone, Hauchuca and Patagonia mountain ranges. Sierra Vista (42,805) is the largest community within this district. The Nogales District contains the San Luis, Tumacacon, Pajanto, and Santa Rita mountain ranges. The community of Nogales (21,375) is the largest in this district.

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<sup>1</sup> These are 2004 population estimates compiled by the State of Arizona Population Statistics Unit available at: [http://www.workforce.az.gov/admin/uploadedPublications/1468\\_EEC04.pdf](http://www.workforce.az.gov/admin/uploadedPublications/1468_EEC04.pdf).

Figure 1: Coronado National Forest Counties



# THE SOCIOECONOMIC CONTEXT

The CNF is associated with five principal counties in southern Arizona: Cochise, Graham, Pima, Pinal, and Santa Cruz. The U.S. Census 2004 estimated population total for these counties is about 1.3 million persons. Pima County (907,059) has the largest population and contains the Tucson metropolitan area. Pinal (214,359), Cochise (124,013), Santa Cruz (40,784), and Graham (32,993) are the other Arizona counties associated with the CNF. Hidalgo County (5,186) in southwestern New Mexico contains the Peloncillo Mountain range in the Douglas Ranger District of the CNF. The following table presents basic demographic information to provide context for the discussion of values, beliefs, and management issues presented in this document. Other work in progress by the University of Arizona is compiling a more comprehensive socioeconomic assessment of the demographic and economic conditions and trends.

There are several noteworthy issues associated with the social environment that provide some relevant context for this discussion: (1) the rate and distribution of population growth in southern Arizona; (2) illegal immigration and smuggling along the Arizona-Mexico border; and (3) the pressures for change in ranching and agriculture, especially those associated with grazing on public lands. There are certainly other socioeconomic issues influencing the interaction of communities and the CNF, especially values and beliefs about the use, resources, and futures for these lands. However, for the purposes of this discussion the three issues identified above are important context for the presentation of results in this document. These issues and their implications for this work are briefly summarized in the following section.

**Table 1: Coronado National Forest**

People QuickFacts	Coronado NF						
	Cochise County, AZ	Graham County, AZ	Pima County, AZ	Pinal County, AZ	Santa Cruz County, AZ	Hidalgo County, NM	Arizona
Population, 2003 estimate	122,161	33,051	892,798	204,148	40,267	5,234	5,580,811
Population, percent change, April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2003	3.7%	-1.3%	5.8%	13.6%	4.9%	-11.8%	8.8%
Population, 2000	117,755	33,489	843,746	179,727	38,381	5,932	5,130,632
Population, percent change, 1990 to 2000	20.6%	26.1%	26.5%	54.4%	29.3%	-0.4%	40.0%
Persons under 18 years old, percent, 2000	26.3%	30.1%	24.6%	25.1%	33.6%	31.7%	26.6%
Persons 65 years old and over, percent, 2000	14.7%	11.9%	14.2%	16.2%	10.7%	13.6%	13.0%
White persons, percent, 2000	76.7%	67.1%	75.1%	70.4%	76.0%	83.8%	75.5%
Black or African American persons, percent, 2000	4.5%	1.9%	3.0%	2.8%	0.4%	0.4%	3.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native persons, percent, 2000	1.1%	14.9%	3.2%	7.8%	0.7%	0.8%	5.0%
White persons, not of Hispanic/Latino origin, percent, 2000	60.1%	55.2%	61.5%	58.8%	17.8%	42.7%	63.8%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, percent, 2000 (b)	30.7%	27.0%	29.3%	29.9%	80.8%	56.0%	25.3%
Language other than English spoken at home, pct age 5+, 2000	29.5%	23.7%	27.5%	25.2%	80.5%	43.6%	25.9%
Median household income, 1999	\$32,105	\$29,668	\$36,758	\$35,856	\$29,710	\$24,819	\$40,558
Per capita money income, 1999	\$15,988	\$12,139	\$19,785	\$16,025	\$13,278	\$12,431	\$20,275
Persons below poverty, percent, 1999	17.7%	23.0%	14.7%	16.9%	24.5%	27.3%	13.9%
Land area, 2000 (square miles)	6,169	4,629	9,186	5,370	1,238	3,446	113,635
Persons per square mile, 2000	19.1	7.2	91.8	33.5	31	1.7	45.2
<b>Agriculture</b>							
Number of Farms 1997 to 2002 % Change	-14.0%	-22.4%	-20.1%	4.2%	-32.4%	-18.2%	-14.3%
Land in farms (acres, 1997 to 2002) % Change	-27.2%	(D)	(D)	-12.1%	-53.5%	1.3%	-2.1%
Average size of farm (acres, 1997 to 2002) % Change	-15.4%	(D)	(D)	-15.7%	-31.1%	23.8%	14.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2002 People Quickfacts and U.S.D.A. 2002 Census of Agriculture

## **Population Growth**

Between 1990 and 2000, southern Arizona counties experienced growth rates ranging from a low of about 20 percent (Cochise County) to a high of more than 54 percent (Pinal County). Some of this growth is centered in Phoenix and Tucson, but there is also growth in the more rural areas of southern Arizona. The urban populations of these counties are users of CNF lands. However, Tucson residents are closer to CNF lands, especially the Santa Catalina Mountains and sites such as Sabino Canyon. Located on the outskirts of Tucson proper and about 116 miles from Phoenix, Sabino Canyon is a popular destination serving more than one million visitors per year. Visitors come for day hikes, birdwatching, wildlife viewing, and other recreational activities. Other locations nearby to Tucson such as Mt. Lemon are also popular destination for area residents to escape the summer heat. The rate of population growth is increasing demands for development near CNF lands and it is also resulting in increased pressure for recreational resources, including those available on USFS managed lands.

## **Illegal Immigration and Smuggling**

Pima, Santa Cruz, and Cochise counties share the international border with Mexico. Illegal immigration and smuggling are ongoing issues for county residents who suggest this is “ground zero” for these problems along the U.S.-Mexico border (Sullivan 2005). Along with other border states, Arizona has experienced a significant increase in the number of illegals crossing the border from Mexico. In 2004 there are reports of about 325,000 individuals and 490,000 apprehensions by Tucson Sector U.S. Border Patrol agents (Winograd 2004). There are a variety of security, economic, and social disruptions associated with the illegal crossing and associated enforcement efforts by federal and local agents. There are also activities by groups such as the Minutemen, the American Patrol, and similar organizations who are attempting volunteer enforcement efforts. There is both support for and opposition against these volunteer efforts, but their existence expresses public frustrations with the scope of the problem in this region of Arizona (Associated Press 2005).

Some of this illegal immigration occurs through CNF managed lands along the U.S.-Mexico border. The Nogales District and the Sierra Vista Ranger District have the most lands directly adjacent to the border; and, there are indications from the Forest Service that illegal activities have a variety of ecological and social consequences for those who visit CNF managed lands (Russell 2005).

## **Ranching Changes**

Agriculture and especially ranching are part of the history and culture of southern Arizona (e.g., Bailey 1994; Wagoner 1952). Ranching culture is prevalent although the total number of ranches appears to be declining. The reasons for this decline are complex, especially in the ecological environment of southern Arizona where limited water and harsh weather presents particular challenges, especially for the numbers of cows that can be kept on an acre of land. Yet, in recent years, increasing population and development of and near rangelands, increased operating costs, and opposition to grazing on public lands has presented challenges to the pursuit of ranching in the west in general (Donahue 1999; Holechek 2003). These types of forces are challenging ranchers in southern Arizona. In this climate of change, ranchers are particularly concerned about continuing their way of life and the financial viability of their operations.

The challenges to grazing on public lands and concerns about continuing a ranching lifestyle is manifested in ongoing dialogue about ranching and its relationship to public lands (e.g., Sayre 2002; Wuerthner and Matteson 2002; Ruyle and Sayre 2001). Ranching is perceived as a contested way of life: some argue it is fundamental to the custom and culture of the west and specifically southern Arizona while others suggest it may not be sustainable (c.f., Sheridan 2001). These diverse views about ranching are important to understand some of the responses of participants in this project. These different perspectives contribute to particular visions of place and the relationship of individuals and ways of life to place (c.f., Yung, Freimund, and Belsky 2003), especially public lands in the CNF that are used for multiple purposes.

## Summary

These three characteristics of this socioeconomic environment are context to understand values and beliefs described in subsequent sections of this report. Population growth is especially important since it appears to influence assessments of recreation values, multiple-use beliefs and values, assessments of the encroachment of development around forest lands, and the ability of the Forest Service to respond to demands from a diversifying public. Similarly, illegal immigration and smuggling influence a wide range of issues including concerns about fire, resource damage, personal safety, and the ability of the Forest Service to adequately maintain valued resources. The breadth and intensity of concerns about illegal immigration and smuggling suggest this is one of the most important influences on public beliefs and values about forest management. Similarly, ranching interests have a strong cultural and historical presence in Arizona. Ranching culture influences assessments of the forest resources and values about the contemporary and future benefits of grazing on public lands. Some of the conflicts about ranching and its future thus frame values and beliefs described in subsequent sections. These three characteristics of this socioeconomic context (population growth, illegal immigration and smuggling, and changes in ranching lifestyles) are noteworthy because they influence a range of values and beliefs about forest resources as well as assessments of management priorities for Forest Plan revision.

# DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Five focus groups were conducted to collect information for this discussion: two groups were held in Tucson and one each in Douglas, Safford, and Sierra Vista. Additionally, individual interviews were conducted with members of state and local government as well as concerned citizens who were not able to attend the focus groups.

The Tucson groups were held at the Sabino Canyon Visitors Center. One group was attended by five persons from the greater Tucson area, including persons from Green Valley in the Nogales Ranger District. OHV, hiking, and other recreational interests were represented in this group. The second group was attended by 8 persons from the Tucson metropolitan area, including representatives from conservation, environmental, and research groups. The Douglas group was attended by six persons from various parts of eastern Cochise County with the majority representing ranching and business interests with direct connections to the CNF. Eight persons attended the Safford group. This group was composed primarily of local government, business, and agricultural interests. The Sierra Vista group was attended by 11 persons. This was the most diverse of all the focus groups with participants representing environmental, business, hiking, ranching, and conservation interests.

The groups had durations ranging from approximately two to three hours, with the average about two hours and fifteen minutes. The Tucson meetings were held on a Saturday in the morning and afternoon. The Douglas meeting was held on a Monday morning and the Safford and Sierra Vista Groups were held on weekday evenings starting at 7pm.

The Discussion Guide was used as the basis for eliciting responses regarding the issues, concerns, values, and beliefs of participants about the CNF as well as discussant assessments of management concerns. The guide topics were a basis to discuss how participants perceive issues rather than to elicit information in pre-determined response categories. This approach is a discovery process to understand the issues from a local perspective. Consequently, the guide outlined a general area for discussion, but the interests and issues of concern to participants structured the information discussed. The guide was sent to participants before the sessions so participants would be aware of the topic areas for discussion.

The focus group sessions were recorded to ensure access to the most detailed information for analysis. Notes were also taken during the groups and key areas of interest were briefly identified as well as the time location within the audio recording. This facilitated subsequent access to the information. The recordings were subsequently coded using a combination of pre-defined and emergent codes. The pre-defined codes correspond to the topic areas in the discussion guide. The emergent codes were based on topics volunteered by participants. The analysis identified themes in the topic and emergent codes as well as participant statements to illustrate the content of the issues. The results of this qualitative analysis (Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1998; Dey 1993) are presented in the following sections.

# RESULTS

The dispersed geography of the Coronado National Forest results in the interface of these public lands with six counties in two states. Lifestyles in the region vary include urban residents in Tucson, the rural ranchers in places such as Graham, Cochise, and Pima counties, and Native Americans and Mexican-Americans who represent lifestyles and a population sub-group throughout the region. The results presented in this discussion include information collected from a wide range of individuals with diverse lifestyles, but the views of Mexican-American and Native American noticeably absent. Other portions of this work will specifically address Native Americans and other work is in progress to incorporate the concerns of Mexican-Americans.

## The Forest and its Social Environment

Participants describe the CNF as fitting the label of “Sky Islands.” The “island” mountain ranges are perceived as each having distinctive traits and characteristics that defies generalization about the CNF as one type of landscape with a common set of conditions. The following participant comments illustrate these characterizations of the CNF:

*There is just nothing else like it. Each of these places, each of these mountain ranges has their own personality, their characteristics. They all bring forward a real multiple interface with nature.*

And,

*Each one of these mountain ranges is unique. Each has its own character, its own resources, and its own relationship to surrounding communities. That is what they need to keep in mind when they are making a Forest Plan. They almost need to have a plan for each area.*

And,

*I grew up elsewhere, so I see this a different way than people who have lived here all their lives. It is so special. It is the Sky Islands. You go through all these layers. You can start out in the grasslands and end up in the big pine forest. You go through so many different layers of how the ecology has developed. It is a special area and we want to keep it that way.*

These views emphasize viewing the CNF as a collection of unique areas that deserve consideration of their ecological differences as well as their commonalities. This public assessment suggests the need for a Forest Plan to address the ecological variability and social context of each “sky island.”

The uniqueness of each portion of the CNF Sky Islands is exemplified in the following comment by a participant:

*Climate, vistas, and quality of life are the values. But if you want more specifics than that, then the people who live in the Huachuca ... and elsewhere have to speak to that. I use the Whetstones and can speak to that.*

This statement expresses the general values of “climate, vistas, and quality of life” that apply throughout the region, including the CNF, but each “island” is perceived to have particular characteristics and conditions.

Among these Sky Islands there are portions which have “front country” that is accessible to the urban populations of Tucson and elsewhere, but there are also remote and less accessible locations such as the Whetstones and Peloncillos. Sabino Canyon exemplifies a type of “urban forest” trail head that is used heavily. This is also the type of usage participants perceive needs to be contained in the future. However, participants express strong concern about population increases resulting in heavier usage spilling over into areas that have not traditionally received much pressure. While there is a large and dispersed landscape, a public perception is that the CNF should be managed to fit the current social environment of the region, including the recreational demands resulting from population growth. For example:

*Are there enough resources? Based on the growth here in Arizona, there isn't enough of the resource to go around. ... It is exactly like water here. As an example, there is a four wheel drive road that gets heavy use by hikers, mountain bikers, and occasionally horses. It is one of the very few designated OHV routes in the Tucson area that is challenging, yet safe. It has too much use and that is the big problem. It has too much use. If there were more choices, then you would spread that use out and by doing that there is less damage to the environment. ... The same holds true for hiking. There are places that are over-used and you have to rest them so the environment can come back.*

And,

*Given the population growth, we probably have not developed new resources for any of the constituencies that use the forest. There isn't much new going on. ... We are loving our resources to death here on the Coronado National Forest.*

Population growth is described as an “explosion.” In addition to increased pressure for more resources, this population explosion is placing pressure on development of lands adjacent to the CNF. For example, one participant observed:

*If it was not for the reservation land around Green Valley, it would be just one big blob from Tucson to Nogales. There is just tremendous growth going on next to the forest.*

Another participant who resides near the Dragoons commented:

*There is an impact of civilization coming out to the forest and the ranches nearby. People from all around (the urban areas) are spilling out and trying to get away on their forty acre parcels. ... it means that people will be increasing their demands on the resource and changing the character of the place from how it is not. ... I have not had a paved road all the time I have lived here and they are going to build a golf course not that far away and pave ten miles of road!*

The components of this growth are also resulting in a change in the relationship of some communities, especially the more urban areas, with the CNF:

*There are a lot of retirement people moving here who have lived in or around cities all their lives. They don't know a lot about the desert and our mountains. These are people with urban values*

## Results

*and urban frames of mind and they bring those urban ideas with them to this place and they don't always work.*

Ranching participants expressed a related concern about values and beliefs among urban residents:

*There are more urban people living here now. They are more removed from the land than the people who have lived here a long time and understand how things work. They are prone to make snap judgments about how things should be based on what they know. ... My family has lived here a hundred years or so and I have learned it takes a long time to understand the cycles and how things work. But, the urban folks bring a different set of paradigms and they don't always appreciate the fine points that can be the turning points in this type of place.*

And, another rancher observed:

*For a good part of the country, migration is a way of life and they do not necessarily know the details of a place well. If they don't like it here, they go some place else, or they get a second home. But when you establish yourself in a place, then your whole life is based on where you are. You just don't pick up your way of life and go somewhere else with it. It is not like you can live where ever you want to and have this way of life. It means a different way of looking at things.*

This assessment suggests the “long-term” perspective of those with generations of experience on the land is perceived to be under-valued by the Forest Service; and, the “short term” perspectives of the more populous urban residents may be over-shadowing the voices of those with historical attachments to the land.

There is also a perception that the newcomer population is resulting in an increase in the types of uses associated with a diversifying population. As one participant noted:

*There is a lot more of the same old kind of uses like camping and hiking, but there are lots of new uses like OHV, and more shooting, and mountain bikers, rock climbers, and all sorts of uses that come with just a wider range of people. Are they (USFS) ready for that?*

Participants suggest there is often a strong effort by some newcomers to appreciate local values and traditions associated with forest lands, but there is a perceived need for the CNF to provide more information and education about the incentives and constraints of this particular ecological environment.

Another strong theme expressed by a range of participants is the “self-limiting” nature of the landscape. The substance of this theme is that the terrain, location, and other features of portions of the CNF constrain what can be done and what visitors are willing to do. For example:

*This is country that defines its uses. ... For example, there are trail heads where it is so steep that ATVs couldn't go there and it is the only reason they didn't go there.*

Some participant suggest this self-limiting feature of the landscape restricts the need for detailed planning throughout the forest; and, it implies that planning decisions should be focused on those areas that are not necessarily evaluated as “self limiting.”

## Beliefs and Values about Forest Lands

There are several themes about the values and beliefs associated with particular types of uses and the benefits to communities from the CNF. These themes concern:

- Definitions of multiple-use public lands.
- The identity of the CNF as a “recreation forest” and the need for more recreation resources.
- Declining Forest Service resources and the effects on user experiences.
- Beliefs and values about volunteerism related to forest resources.
- The impacts to the forest and its users from illegal immigration and smuggling.
- The value of grazing and the contribution of ranchers to land management.
- Mixed benefits of special designation areas such as Wilderness.

Each of these points is briefly summarized and illustrated with comments by participants.

### Concepts of Multiple-Use and User Conflicts

A prominent theme in the discussion data is “multiple-use” and how it can be achieved on CNF lands. One perspective is that there are areas in which all users should be able to coexist, but in other places there are “self-limiting” geographic or social characteristics that will define the types of coexisting uses. For example:

*There are certain areas that can be used by all groups, or at least most of them. That is probably the vast majority of the forest. ... But, there are going to be certain areas that by their nature will limit their use. For example, a riparian area ... probably is perfectly for birding and walking type activities, but probably should be limited otherwise. ... In the areas a lot of groups use, I think lots of groups can get along. For instance, hiking and mountain biking and four wheel drive, in many places I go, people can get along fine. As long as people are courteous, there is no reason we cannot all use the same trails together. ... If an area or a trail can support it, then most users can share an area. But, there aren't enough of the easily accessible resources.*

The last sentence of this statement suggests that part of the coexistence issue is the limited amount of resource available; consequently, there may be a need for users to coexist in an environment of limited opportunities.

A contrasting perspective views fewer portions of the forest as supporting all types of uses simultaneously:

*There are very few acres of this forest where you can do everything. ... There may be a few. There are a bunch of acres where you can do a lot of things. And, there are some very special places that should have limitations on what can be done there. Those don't necessarily have to be formally designated.*

Similarly, a hiking enthusiast observed:

*We have two major trailheads at the top of Madera Canyon. Those trails do not support ATVs. Physically and geographically they do not support that. We have lots of birders and hikers, but*

*you would not want ATVs there, we could not physically handle them. There are places like that. They are almost self-determined.*

And an OHV enthusiast commented:

*If a trail is heavily used by one population, like hikers, it means it is not going to support other things. Likewise, if it is a horse trail, most people are not going to want to walk through all the horse crap. ... On some trails, as long as everyone knows you are there, then that is the big thing so you don't surprise anyone. It seems to work in those places.*

The diverse views about multiple-use appeared as a prominent theme in comments about off-highway vehicles (OHV). Some participants believe this type of activity needs to be limited because it both disturbs other users and it has the potential to be more destructive than non-motorized uses. Supporters of OHV note that heavily used hiking or horseback trails can also exhibit erosion and other damage. There was some limited agreement that in some places these uses can coexist. The following points illustrate some of the specific beliefs about OHV use as a component of multiple-use:

- There are different types of OHV activity such as single-track motorized riders, and all-terrain-vehicle (ATV) riders, and four wheel drive vehicles. A “one size fits all” approach to OHV management will not address the needs of specific types of OHV riders.
- OHV activity can be problematic because: *The ATV people will go anywhere they can go. The potential for conflicts with other users and environmental damage are perceived to be associated with this problematic characteristic of OHV use: There are always individuals who will push the limits and cross the boundaries. Unfortunately, these are the ones who lift the bar. Once they have gone into an area and there is a set of tracks there, then the next group may not have gone there in the first place because there was no road or trail or tracks. But because there is a trail, they will follow it. We have had problems with ATVs driving in the washes. If they stayed on the road, there is no conflict, but where you have terrain they can go, then it becomes a conflict, not with hikers, but with the environment.*
- A theme about OHV use is the desirability of identifying specific areas for OHV. This is perceived as a solution to conflict with other users, but it is also recognized as having the potential to “trash” any area identified for exclusive OHV use.
- OHV enthusiasts emphasize that most of the problems associated with OHV activity are because of a few irresponsible users and not the majority of riders. For example, *Irresponsible people are of all types. There are hikers, hunters, campers, and bicyclists. So, it is unfortunate. Some of the irresponsible ATV people are more visible. Our group does not want to be associated with them, but we are because we have a motor.*

A strong theme among OHV riders and other users is the need for education about appropriate use of these vehicles on public lands.

## **The Recreation Forest**

A strong theme in the data identifies the Coronado National Forest as a “recreation” forest. Commodity production is described as limited primarily to grazing by ranchers who live in the

communities adjacent to forest lands. One participant noted that there may be some small local saw mills, but: ... *The last saw mill I know of closed ten or so years ago.* One long term observer of the CNF noted that after the mid 1980's the forest became known as a "recreation forest" because of the decline in commodity production activity. This same participant also observed,

*There is no timber, no mining, and little grazing now. It still has watershed and wildlife value, but it was declared a recreation forest a while ago. ... There is a lot of recreation use and they are going to have an uphill effort to make a plan that works to manage that.*

Although the CNF is identified as a "recreation forest" participants suggest several beliefs about the nature of recreational opportunities:

- Recreational opportunities are decreasing because of increased pressure from ongoing population growth and the spill-over from urban areas such as Tucson and Phoenix.
- The maintenance of trails and other facilities is declining at a time when demands for resource use are increasing.
- The quality of the recreational experience is degraded by problems of trash, safety concerns, environmental pollutions, and habitat degradation related to illegal immigration and smuggling.
- The Forest Service is providing insufficient funds to support the maintenance and needs for new facilities.
- Recreation activities such as bird watching and wildlife viewing are important uses with economic benefits to nearby communities, especially in the more rural areas where economic options are limited.

Hiking, off-road riding, bird watching, hunting, and other recreational activities are recognized as an important uses of these lands. Yet, participants perceive this use is under-appreciated, under-managed, and especially under-funded. Some recreation users perceive there is a volunteer solution to some of the maintenance issues associated with trails and campgrounds, but there is also frustration about how the forest mobilizes and under-uses volunteers as well. This topic is developed in more detail below.

A sub-theme expressed by several participants is the notion that overall increased use and especially recreation use is also contributing to a decline in the quality of forest resources. For example:

*What people are valuing now is the pristine quality of the Sky Islands. That is what these people (new residents) are looking for. But, that pristine quality is being affected by population growth and increased pressure on the resources. You will lose what people value when there is over-use. That is what is happening as Sierra Vista grows.*

Another participant expressed a similar sentiment:

*Maybe timber and grazing will go away in the future. They just may not be here on this forest, but you can be sure they will never take away recreation. ... The recreation users do their share of damage to the forest. They can do more destruction than grazing. Off-road vehicles are driving three hundred yards off the road and then you have a new road that is a problem. The rock climber, the hikers, the horseback riders; they all do their share of damage. The people use is*

*more destructive than the animal use and they don't have a handle on it. That is the type of use that is increasing and that is where they need to focus.*

These statements express a theme about both the effects of increased demand for recreation and the particular consequences of unmanaged and under-managed recreation activities.

## **Declining Forest Service Resources**

Declining Forest Service fiscal resources and personnel “on the ground” was a prominent topic in the five focus groups and in most of individual interviews. Several themes are expressed about this topic:

- Participants attribute the decline in the maintenance of forest trails, roads, and facilities to a reduction in fiscal resources; and, this is reinforced by statements from Forest Service personnel to participants about declining budgets. A strong public perception is the Forest Service has “decreased its financial commitment” to maintaining resources publics use for recreation and other purposes.
- There is a perceived need for more personnel in the field and “in touch” with the resources than currently exists. Participants suggest there are too many personnel in the Regional Office and in the Forest Supervisors Office. The comment of one participant expresses the essence of the theme of a need for more expertise and presence “on the ground”:

*They have been cutting too many Indians and not enough Chiefs. Every time a budget cut happens they lose people in the District and not in the Supervisor's Office. They need people out on the ground and out of their offices so they can manage the resource. The resource is suffering because they are not out here. They ought to empty out the Regional Office and the Supervisor's Office and put those people out where they can do some good.*

Another participant expressed a similar assessment of a perceived need for more presence in at the District level:

*The people at the Ranger District level, there are just not enough of them on the ground and there has been a trend that way for a long time on this forest. At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of people in the Forest Supervisors office, the Regional office, and the Washington office. It has just become too top heavy. The problem is that there are not enough feet on the trails. They are just not there. You have to go through many layers of bureaucracy before you find someone who knows what is happening on the ground.*

- There is a loss of knowledge and expertise about forest resources and their management that some participants attribute to a change in Forest Service personnel and a change in priorities. The effect is misunderstanding about resource issues and the management of forest resources. As one participant noted,  
*They (Forest Service) have lost their way about what the objectives are and how to achieve them. Maybe they just don't have the depth of expertise they need nowadays. Look at what they are doing with the Red Squirrel on Mt. Graham. They don't have the right objective there and they are going to shoot themselves in the foot.*

Another participant expressed another belief about the loss of expertise within the Agency:

*There is just a big void in knowledge, especially when the current professionals retire. There isn't the same type of knowledge group behind that group because of the hiring freezes and other things that have happened... So there, hasn't been a period from 1980 to today when the resource agencies have hired many people. And, in the 1980's there were big cuts in resource agencies. The Indians got cut, the chiefs didn't. ... Those Indians is where the knowledge is. The fears we have is that they have to reinvent the wheel. There has just been a loss of knowledge and you can't blame it on the people here ....*

- CNF resources that should be allocated to resource development and maintenance are engaged in responding to illegal immigration and smuggling. Some participants suggest the CNF's mission is to maintain and enhance the resources and not to respond to immigration and "home land security" issues. Participants recognize the problems caused by these illegal activities, but the perception is that the Agency needs to allocate its resources and focus to its core mission.
- Without funds to perform maintenance and develop new resources, various stakeholders such as ranchers, hikers, off-road vehicle enthusiasts, and casual users are frustrated by forest conditions.
- Limited funding also presents difficulties for permittees who rely on the Forest Service to monitor compliance with the terms of their permits. Inadequate funding and insufficient personnel can therefore invite lawsuits or other challenges to existing and future permittees. For example:

*If they don't have the funding to do the monitoring, then that puts your allotment ... in jeopardy because the forest does not do what they say they are going to do because they say they don't have the money. If you are trying to make a living off the land, then ... your allotment and permit can be in danger. The forest is lacking, it is not the permittee. So, then we have to pick up the pieces for the Forest Service to protect your way of life. This isn't about recreation; this is about getting food on the table and sending your kids to college. It is the jeopardy the ranchers face ... because of inadequate funding.*

- Another theme expressed by some participants is the effect of limited resources and personnel on how management is conducted. The belief is that both culture and limited resources contribute to inflexible "management by the book." As one participant noted:

*There are things that look good on paper that don't look good on the ground. If they cannot take on the intricacies that are necessary to properly manage, then they should give it up.*

These themes illustrate some of the core beliefs and concerns of participants about the perceived effects of resource allocations on the CNF. Participants perceive the potential for an accelerated decline in forest conditions if the Agency does not address these types of issues in ongoing planning efforts. Ranching participants also note their permits may be problematic if the Forest Services fails to conduct monitoring because of inadequate funding or personnel.

However, participants also express a belief that despite some of the funding and personnel limitations, there is some guarded hope if some of the core issues are addressed in future management plans:

*It is a can-do organization. Even with the decreases in funding, the Agency is still doing the job. Maybe they are not doing it as well as they should be doing it, but they are out tending the resource as best they given, given the resource they can devote. But we have this population explosion going on and they are going to get caught. One of these days, the wheel will break....*

## Volunteerism

A range of users from each of the five focus groups and several individual interviews suggest a strong value about volunteering to assist with CNF trail maintenance and other needs. This is among the most prominent themes in the data collected. It is directly related to beliefs about the condition of forest resources and the ability of the Forest Service to respond to a perceived decline in existing conditions. Furthermore, participants anticipate an accelerated decline as population grows and the “illegal immigration explosion” continues. Beliefs and values about volunteerism appear are thus directly related to a perceived need to respond to maintaining a resource valued by a range of users. The substance of the beliefs and values expressed by participants are summarized in the following bullet points:

- The decline in forest resources concurrent with a decreased presence of Forest Service personnel “on the ground” and decreased financial resources results in a need for volunteers to assist with maintenance of resources of importance to them. Hikers suggest they perceive the need to pick up trash and do trail maintenance. Off-highway vehicle users describe the need to assist in trail development and maintenance. Other participants also suggest a need to assist with a range of maintenance and development issues related to their particular use or interest in forest resources. For example, one OHV user observed:

*There was a group of motor cyclists from Raytheon that helped the Forest Service build some trails in Reddington Pass. They are fifty inches wide for use by motor cycles and ATVs. The Forest Service obviously did not have the resources to make the trails. The group worked with them and created the trails and signed them and we have helped the Forest Service maintain them. We fixed signs and locks and cleared brush. That may be part of the answer to the problem: getting different groups together to assist the Forest Service.*

- Participants stress their willingness to assist, but perceive there is a range of bureaucratic and personnel issues inhibiting effective use of volunteers. For example, *Part of the issue is to get the Forest Service to respond. They are so preoccupied with illegals and other things going on. Even when you say we have a cadre of volunteers that are just willing to go to work and trim those bushes and whatever. It is hard to get their attention.... Even then, when you get their attention you have to go through the rules of the Forest Service. You have to get your volunteers trained. You have to go through safety training, so to get the one fellow on the Coronado who does safety training. To get him to train the volunteers ... it is an ongoing battle to get that. After a year of being the squeaky wheel we are getting that, but there are lots of other*

*groups who would do the same thing. They just don't seem to have the resources to respond and it is difficult.*

Other participants describe frustrations regarding efforts to contribute as volunteers:

*It is hard because of the way they are organized. Sometimes you have to work with the people in Nogales, sometimes the people in Sierra Vista, and sometimes you need to call Tucson. The right hand does not always know what the left hand is doing. They have so few (people) .... There are people with really good intentions chasing the bureaucracy.*

- Some participants suggest that although they are willing to provide volunteer labor and other resources, they do not see this as a compliment to and not a replacement of responsibility for the resource. For example:

*I think you want to leverage your volunteer resources. But, the volunteer resources can't be all of it. I refuse to believe you can supplement everything with volunteers. This has to be an operational organization that has legitimacy in managing the forest. They need to step up and be organized and have the resources to be able to do that. The volunteers should be the cream on top.*

- Participants also suggest there is a strong need to have knowledgeable personnel working with volunteers who can effectively direct their activity. The following statement expresses this theme as well as some skepticism about “out-sourcing” some of the essential aspects of forest maintenance:

*Unless the (Agency) has help, the job is not going to get done. There have been mixed results in having the commercial side of things help. It (out-sourcing and contracting) has worked in other places where, commercial operators did a lot of the work. But, you need this core of people who love the land. A contracting officer, a bean counter, cannot be a District Ranger. ... You have to have a love of the land, and that is what it takes. Until you have someone in management that has that love of the land, it will not work. You will not be able to use volunteers and all the different opportunities you can think of.*

Volunteerism is a part of “giving back” when users consume forest resources. And, participants suggest there is a “deep pool” of potential volunteers because of the size and composition of the population of this region. However, there is significant frustration with what is perceived as the inability of the Forest Service to effectively mobilize volunteers; and, to provide District-level personnel who can be the interface with willing groups and individuals.

## **The Impacts of Illegal Immigration and Smuggling**

In Tucson, Douglas, and Sierra Vista participants were especially concerned about the effects on forest resources and user experiences from illegal immigration and smuggling. This topic evoked some of the most affectively laden responses by participants. The following represent some of the strongest themes in the data:

- The effects from the scope and scale of illegal immigration and smuggling are under-appreciated by those who have not observed these consequences first hand.
- A wide range of effects were identified including:

- o “Mountains” of trash that contradict the expectations of recreational and other users about the quality of experiences available on national forest lands.
- o Safety concerns about the potential dangers of encountering smugglers and some sub-groups among the illegal immigrants. As one participant noted,  
*When I first moved here I used to go hiking all the time and never thought about it. The problem is just worse and worse. I don't even think about going hiking now without a weapon.*

Another participant noted that birdwatchers who travel from out of the area to visit the region's well know birding spots sometimes find their cars burglarized:

*They come back to the parking area and they find their windows smashed and their expensive binoculars are still there, but their food is missing. These people (the illegal immigrants) are just trying to survive, but the effect on the tourists is very negative.*

Participants also note there appears to be an increase in smugglers crossing the border through Forest Service lands and these individuals are perceived as posing a more serious threat.

- o Damage to property. Ranchers note there is often damage to stock tanks, fences, cattle, and other personal property from illegal activity. The effect is increased costs and additional time required to maintain and repair personal property damaged by illegal activity.
- o Environmental pollution from human waste deposited in streams and alongside trails.
- o Disruption of the safe havens for wildlife in the back country and more remote areas used by wildlife.
- o Fire danger resulting from warming and cooking fires used by illegal immigrants and smugglers.
- o Unmanaged roads and trails that result from the volume of illegal movement across the border and Forest Service managed lands.

The scale and effects of illegal immigration and smuggling is clearly upsetting to users and other parties concerned with conditions on the CNF. Part of this distress appears to be related to a wide gap in desired conditions and actual conditions on the forest.

### **Conservation Values and Beliefs: Ranching and the Value of Local Knowledge**

Ranching participants in this project believe they have a strong conservation ethic and local knowledge that contributes to the overall health of forest resources. There is some acknowledgement that grazing has resulted in some abuses, but these are not perceived as indicative of the usual relationship of ranchers with forest lands. The following themes about this topic express the beliefs of ranching participants about their conservation values regarding forest resources:

- Ranching interests perceive their long-term relationship with the land and their “on the ground” knowledge of conditions results in its own type of expert knowledge

about the environment and its limits. This sentiment is expressed in the following comment by a Cochise County rancher:

*I am out riding fence regularly. I see what is happening to the grass. I see what the deer are doing and what is happening with other wildlife. I know the cycles of this place and how it works. They (Forest Service) don't really listen to me about how things are out here. They think they are the experts, but I have lived my whole life out here and I know a few things about it.*

Ranchers believe their knowledge should be respected and incorporated into the management of forest lands.

- Ranchers are good stewards and conservationists, in part, because their livelihood depends on it. However, there is a strong ethic of stewardship that is also based on the traditions of Arizona ranching and the knowledge required to be successful in a challenging environment. As one rancher observed:

*In Arizona if you over-graze, the land will not support it. So, you need to be a good ecologist and understand conditions here. In this environment, you only get one shot at being greedy because you will not get another chance.*

- Grazing has become a target of some environmental interests who are not necessarily informed about the local effects of grazing. These interests may have more influence in the planning process than is warranted because, in part, they mobilize urban residents with what is perceived to be biased information. For example:

*There are groups of "experts" in the urban areas of Phoenix, Tucson, Albuquerque, but they really don't know what is going on out here. They want the country to go back to nature and they are telling us that 'we are kicking your butts in the press.' We are busy working and making a living and the problem is getting bigger. People believe the first thing they read and it is not always true. So, we have a large group of people who don't have a clue about what is going on, but who are determining what is going on because they have the money and access to the press.*

- Ranchers believe there is misunderstanding about the environmental effects of grazing. For example, participants offered the following comments about misperception of grazing and its effects:

*There are these people that have been here for three days or four days or however long they have been here. And, we have been here all of our lives. We have lived here for generations and we have knowledge and our knowledge is discounted. ... The Forest Service needs to listen to locals. I was out with (person) and they said 'look at what the cows are doing to the agaves. They are all torn up.' But, it was bears and they didn't know the difference between bears and cow damage to the agaves.*

- Grazing is perceived to cause no more damage than other types of uses; and, ongoing monitoring of grazing can ensure accurate information about the interaction of grazing with forest lands. For example,

*We have been here for generations and we want to make sure we can demonstrate the effects of grazing one way or the other. We want to know as much as anyone about what the effects are and sometimes it seems there is more damage from other types of*

*uses than from grazing, but we want monitoring that will help to clear up the situation.*

Another participant noted,

*A number of scientists are working with us to find out what impacts cattle do have. We are having a hard time finding them. The drought swamps everything. And, a lot of things that have been blamed on cattle and, this is not to say you can't overgraze a piece of country, but a lot of things that are blamed on cattle turn out to be rodents, bears, deer, and a lot of other things going on out there. They see a cow and they think, 'oh, it is her fault'. You need to manage grazing. There is no question about it. But, you need to look at the whole picture. ... By in large, the Coronado has about as good a relationship with the permittees as any forest in the country....*

- Ranchers believe they have important knowledge that derives from their ongoing relationship with the land. They also believe that the knowledge of some urban residents about forest issues is limited because urban living has removed people from regular contact with forest resources and processes. This limited knowledge is, from this perspective, resulting in a need to better understand grazing on public lands and the monitoring of its effects. Their long term perspective is believed to provide an under-used asset that can use to benefit forest resources as well as those who depend on them.

## Special Designations

There are several prominent issues regarding special designation lands in the focus group discussions.

- Wilderness is valued, but it has a contemporary context that may limit the desirability of adding additional lands as wilderness. Some participants expressed general support for existing wilderness and hiking interests were supportive of the proposed Tumacaori Wilderness. Other participants expressed some reservations about any additional wilderness because it is perceived to restrict uses; and, these restrictions are believed to displace users to other lands, which may increase the recreation pressure on other forest resources. For example, one recreation participant observed:  
*Given the population growth here, I don't see any areas that deserve special protection in addition to the ones we already have. Just locking up land 'just because' puts more pressure on the rest of the land.*

Another participant expressed a similar perspective:

*In the past, some of the ideas about roadless areas did not make sense. Like if there never was a trail in there, then there never will be one. That is a very narrow minded philosophy. With the growth we have in Arizona, if we don't develop more resources then we will ruin the ones we have. We need to be able to allow people to use the forest without ruining it. That is the key thing, without ruining it. If there are only two trails in Madera Canyon and next year there are 20 percent more people using it and ... continued growth after that, then no one is going to want to use those trails. No one will want to see and endless line of people going up the mountain.*

Other participants object to any additional wilderness based on the adverse consequences for big horn sheep populations perceived to result from prior wilderness designations. From this perspective, unintended consequences may accompany special designations, therefore, these should be carefully considered:

*The Coronado does not need anymore special designations. I would not oppose the Tumacaori designation, but most of this country is self-limiting. But, if you are going to make it a wilderness, then you need to have a good reason. By making it wilderness you may cause impacts down the road that you do not anticipate, so you need to be careful with special designations.*

- There are perceived differences between the support for wilderness in urban areas such as Tucson and the rural areas elsewhere in the region. Some participants from the Tucson areas expressed strong support for Research Natural Areas and Wilderness Areas because they provide opportunities to “get away” and have an experience different from those available at more heavily used areas such as Sabino Canyon. Other participants suggest wilderness is especially valued because it offers the opportunity to engage nature without interference from motorized vehicles. One participant suggested the current demand on forest lands is resulting in a “homogenization” of uses; and, this dilutes the experiences of all users. Wilderness thus provides an alternative to these “homogenized” experiences. The desire for more heterogeneity in the available experiences is expressed in the following statement:

*There used to be places you could go and not see cars and things like that. We are getting this homogenization of the whole forest. Whether it is through a wilderness designation or just a ‘no vehicle’ designation, there is a need to create some heterogeneity so it just does not become everything and everywhere.*

- Special designations are also perceived to provide some buffer from future development. Given the existing growth pressures in the region, special designations are viewed as one additional mechanism to ensure there are opportunities for “heterogeneous” experiences on Forest Services managed lands.
- A final topic regarding special designations concerns the Red Squirrel Refugium on Mt. Graham in Graham County. Some county residents believe the designation of this area as a Refugium is “nonsensical” and expresses limited knowledge about this species. For example:

*The irony of this Refugium, which has closed roads and allows no hiking, camping or other recreational activities, is that most of the trees in it have been killed by insect infestation, and almost all of the squirrels live outside of the “protected area”. While common sense suggests that the Refugium be abolished and the area opened up for treatment, the dogma of ESA regulations continues to lock up this once pristine area, and restrict its traditional uses. In addition, the fuel load approaches 100 tons per acre, which dramatically increases the potential for catastrophic fire, and the destruction of the Red Squirrel, their habitat, and the telescope site (Testimony of Mark Herrington 2004).*

The Refugium is believed to unnecessarily restrict the use of Mt. Graham and to pose a fire hazard to other resources such as the observatory located on the mountain. This

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observatory is believed to attract tourists and to provide economic benefits to a county in need of economic diversity.

# MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES AND DESIRED FUTURES: AGENCY AND PUBLIC PERSPECTIVES

Managers and staff of the Coronado National Forest identified a range of issues for consideration in the process of Forest Plan revision. This project also identified participant priorities and desired future regarding CNF lands and resources. This discussion compares these two perspectives about key issues for consideration in forest management. Some of the public issues presented here could also be considered as beliefs and values associated with particular resources. However, they are discussed in this section to emphasize participants concerns about changes needed in future planning efforts.

Residents also expressed a range of other issues that are addressed in this chapter regarding public and Agency management priorities.

## Forest Service Priorities

In the fall of 2004 CNF managers and staff identified the following topics important for consideration in plan revision. A summary of these issues prepared by the CNF is quoted below to retain sufficient detail for comparison with public perspectives.

### **Increasing pressures on forest ecosystems caused by population growth and development in areas surrounding the forest**

*Increasing development around the Forest boundaries can cause biological isolation of sky island ecosystems that are dependent on flow of biological organisms, especially in corridors trending along a North-South directional gradient.*

*Development along Forest boundaries often results in loss of public access to the Forest. At this time, the number of legally dedicated public access points to many of the mountain ranges is very low. As development occurs, traditional public access points that are not legally secured are blocked. Although public access is blocked, some landowners who control that access appear to be using it as a private entrance to the Forest. Additionally, user-made trails are often created to provide “backyard” access from homes developed along the Forest boundary.*

*Management of roads will be increasingly important as more people use the Forest and surrounding areas. Road density has increased on the Forest primarily as a result of illegal activity, with increasing miles of roads made by Forest users, and also by law enforcement officers in pursuit of criminals.*

*There is an increasing demand for electronic sites and other non-compatible uses of Forest land to provide services to growing populations near the Forest.*

*There is a need to manage informal shooting activity on the Forest primarily because more people are using the Forest for shooting, and there are serious safety concerns associated with this use.*

## **Impacts from illegal activities**

*The problem of impacts from illegal activities (smuggling and illegal immigration) is associated with population growth and development at a national scale. Although the causes of these activities are not ones that Forest management policies can change, strategic guidance is needed to deal with the impacts to Forest ecosystems and to ensure safety for Forest visitors.*

## **Restoring Fire Adapted Ecosystems**

*Excluding fire from the natural cycle has resulted in a buildup of flammable plant materials across large areas of the Forest landscape, and also to changes in the character of vegetation communities. As forest fuels accumulate at higher elevations, the forest structure changes, leading to greater continuity of fuels between the ground surface and the upper tree canopies. This altered structure results in fires that move up “ladder” fuels and spread from tree to tree in the Forest canopy. These crown fires can be devastating to communities, and also to the natural resources that are subjected to the unnaturally hot conditions. The Coronado has experienced three of these catastrophic fires in the last three years. The challenge ahead is to find better and cheaper ways to treat large areas where fuels levels are unnaturally high, and at the same time maintain a cycle of treatment, with natural or prescribed fire, for those areas that have recently burned.*

*In lower elevation areas, the exclusion of fire has resulted in an increase in brush species at the expense of open grassland. In the past, this problem was exacerbated by poor grazing management practices. Although grazing management practices have greatly improved, a combination of grazing rest and burning and will be needed in some areas in order to restore grassland ecosystems.*

## **Public Priorities**

Most of the issues and priorities identified by project participants are anticipated in the CNF's identification of management priorities. This discussion first presents an overview of concepts interpreted as organizing the specific management issues identified by participants. This discussion is followed by a topic listing summarizing the prominent issues and desired futures identified in the data from the focus groups and individual interviews.

## **Organizing Concepts**

There are several organizing concepts that suggest the foundations of public concerns about management priorities. These organizing concepts are strategic issues that suggest some of the foundations of public concerns and desired futures regarding current forest management and desired futures.

## **Manage for Sky Islands**

Participants stress the unique ecological characteristics of the Sky Islands as a region and as individual “Islands” or mountain ranges associated with the CNF. Furthermore, communities adjacent to these particular mountain ranges also have particular socioeconomic relationships with these individual mountain ranges. A “one size fits all” approach to managing these ecosystems and their social environments is considered problematic. Thus, this strategic concept

suggests the importance of planning that is adaptable to the unique characteristics of each Sky Island and their respective social environments.

### **Manage to Sustain Existing Resources**

*What most people want is for it to be managed the way it has been. They are pretty satisfied that it is primarily a recreation forest. It has some grazing ... but when people look at the forest what they see is what they want, but they want the things they see broken to be fixed.*

The above quotation expresses a strategic assessment of the management of existing resources and a desired future condition. Participants emphasize their desire for managers to sustain existing resources that are perceived to be declining in quality. This decline is perceived to result from: increased use directly related to population pressure; resource damage from illegal immigration and smuggling; limited resource availability resulting in over-use; the need for adequate monitoring of permitted uses; dense and “unhealthy” forests creating fire danger; and, the need for more personnel on the ground. This last point about limited Agency personnel resources is perceived to contribute directly to declining resource conditions, but it is also an issue of broader strategic importance.

### **Respond to Changing Agency Resources**

Declining resource conditions, the desire for more information about the Agency and its mission and activities, the organization of volunteers, range and recreation management, enforcement, and maintaining working relationships with community publics are each perceived to be affected by limited personnel and declining budgets. Participants stress the importance of changing Agency priorities such that there are more personnel “on the ground” to manage resources and assess existing conditions. The desire for more personnel in the field is the one of the highest priorities described by participants since it can address a range of resource conditions and public needs about use of forest resources.

### **Establish Collaborative Working Relationship with Publics**

Participants desire to have a cooperative and productive working relationship with the Coronado National Forest. There is recognition of the need for interested parties to constructively work with the Agency and for the Agency to reach out to develop collaborative working relationships with the range of users and interested parties. Commitment to gathering public input, effective communication with interested parties and the general public, effective organization of volunteers, and partnerships with other agencies and interested parties are some of the components perceived by publics as components of establishing productive working relationships.

### **Respond to the Effects of Illegal Immigration and Smuggling**

Illegal immigration and smuggling are perceived to directly affect resource conditions and user experiences of the Coronado National Forest. Participants suggest apprehending and other law enforcement issues associated with illegal immigrants and smugglers are the responsibility of the Border Patrol and other enforcement agencies. However, this is a desire for the Forest Service to respond to the consequences of illegal activity such as trash, pollution, and other damages to property and resources. It is recognized these are difficult issues and the solutions are ultimately beyond the resources available to the CNF. However, the scale of the problems are such that

publics perceive a need for the Agency to have some strategic direction for addressing the consequences of illegal activity.

## **Specific Topic Concerns**

Participants identified a range of resource and other topics as issues and priorities for Forest Plan revision or desired future conditions. These topics and some of the specifics regarding their content are summarized in the following sections.

### **What is the Forest Service?**

Participants express some confusion regarding the Agency's mission, scope, and planning processes as well as the interface of USFS managed lands with other public lands. Some observed that the Park Service and Bureau of Land Management are often confused with the Forest Service. Television programs identify District Rangers as "Park Rangers." While most participants see this lack of knowledge about the Agency as inconsequential "as long as they get the job done" others suggest there is a strong need for the Agency to define and publicize its mission and priorities. This is perceived to be a basis for more effective planning since publics will have a better understanding of the scope of Agency activities, areas of planning authority, and the boundaries of public lands managed by different public agencies.

### **Rights of Way Access**

Among the most frequent topics for future consideration identified by participants is the need to gain right of way access to Forest Service lands. Participants suggest that private land owners surrounding CNF managed lands do or may restrict trespass rights that allow public users access to forest lands. There are two primary reasons cited: (1) new land owners who are not familiar with the traditions of rights of way access close their property to public access; and, (2) damage from public use as well as from illegal use is prompting some private land owners to close gates and otherwise prohibit or restrict access. One participant commented:

*Neither the Forest Service nor Fish and Game has had legal access to the Whetsone Mountains. They have not been aggressive enough in doing land acquisitions and developing their land program to deal with the problem. In the future this is going to be one of the biggest problems they have and if they don't get on top of it now, they are in trouble, we are in trouble.*

Participants stress that an important effect of these access issues is the potential increase in pressure on other lands, which may then result in accelerating damage to resources.

### **Roads and Trails**

Unmanaged roads and trails resulting from off-highway vehicles, illegal immigration, and other non-sanctioned uses has created an "uncontrolled snarl of unmanaged trails and roads" Participants identify these unmanaged roads and trails as a significant front-country and back-country problem requiring a meaningful transportation plan that will address these issues. The following comment illustrates public priorities about this issue:

*In some places there are just too many roads and they cannot maintain them at all. They start to erode, they look bad, and they cause problems. Most of them are wildcat roads that have come about from; I guess you call it unmanaged use. I don't like to see it. As more people start to go*

*into the forest the problem is going to get bigger. This is part of the 'people management' that they really need to focus on in the next plan.*

## **Recreation Futures**

There is a strong desire for acknowledgement of the increased recreation pressures and a need to devote resources to maintenance of these resources. From one perspective management perspectives about recreation resources need a different priority:

*What they are doing is upside down as far as I am concerned. All of their money is going to the Healthy Forest Initiative and none to trail maintenance. ... Does that make sense?*

From another perspective, a future that does not consider the increase in demand has the potential for significant consequences for recreation resources:

*The people are not going to stop coming and using recreation resources. If they are maintained or trails are closed, they are going to use them anyway because of the increased pressure (from population increase). If they don't do something about managing recreation, then ... It is kind of like treating a cancer: When the public begins to lose confidence in an organization that they once trusted ... well it does not give you a warm fuzzy about the Agency. Some of the tarnish is starting to rub off the Agency and they (the public) may not support the Agency in the future. So, you know what happens to a cancer when it goes untreated.*

There are specifics about the need for campground monitors, particular trails that should be maintained, areas for off-road recreation, and numerous other project specific details participants used to illustrate the general issue of a desired future with more priority for recreation.

## **Enforcement**

There are contrasting themes about the need for additional enforcement. Participants recognize the law enforcement challenges posed by some of the most intensive illegal immigration and smuggling in the United States. While there is a strong desire to increase law enforcement attention to this issue, participants suggest the Forest Service should concentrate its enforcement activities on natural resource issues. For example:

*They (Forest Service) only have a few law enforcement officers. They do deal with resource-related issues, but they are too focused on smuggling and illegal border crossing. We would like to see more focus by them on natural resources like OHV enforcement, which is a real big issue here. But, they seem to be focused on dope. The Border Patrol should be doing that.*

Another theme is the need for more law enforcement presence to address existing and future "people" problems associated with increased use. Participants suggest that there is a need for more enforcement officers who can monitor uses and cite those who violate laws and regulations on Forest Service managed lands. One participant suggested:

*What they really need to do is hire more officers. There are maybe three? Look at the size of this forest. Look at how spread out it is. If someone shoots a cow in the Dragoons it is going to take a while to get an officer there. More people means more problems. They gotta deal with it.*

## **Implications of Population Pressure: Addressing Multiple-Use**

Throughout the interview and focus group data, participants describe the need to acknowledge and address the demands on forest resources from population growth and development pressures. Although residents focus on how those pressures may influence urban areas such as Tucson, there is also a perception that more distant forest areas will also be affected by spill-over as areas nearby urban centers receive increased pressure.

*Trying to be realistic about it, we know that the area is still growing and will continue to grow. With increased growth comes increased use and increased types of uses. So, the Forest Service has to figure out a way to manage the lands to allow the most amount of use without damage. ... Until the mandate of the Forest Service changes, they need to regulate those uses and ... they need to maintain the beauty and diversity and still maintain different uses. It comes down to limiting the numbers and that is going to be the tough thing.*

Another participant suggested:

*I think it also comes down to creating new opportunities. I go to (unintelligible) Park and I would like to see half a dozen other places like that. It is one way to limit numbers by increasing the opportunities on and off Forest Service lands. I think you have to have access points ... look at what happened to (unintelligible) Park versus Redmond Pass. Those are the two models. Unregulated uses ... those will happen because of increased population and it is going to be much less pleasant for all users. Now, people really enjoy Sabino Canyon, but the use is so high. That is a detracting factor for a lot of people. As the population grows you need to provide more of that kind of use so you can take the pressure off. ... There are dozens of equally nice places, but those need to be developed in partnership with other entities, like the State, because that is who controls those access points.*

## **Volunteer Resources**

The need to maintain existing resources and anticipate future demands in a time of diminishing resources appears to place the Agency in a bind. There is a strong perceived need to more effectively work with volunteers:

*They need to ensure information is available, but they need to put their resources into maintenance and resource development. A lot that used to happen does not happen anymore. They could create some new things. The things we have now are deteriorating. ... They could assign someone from the Nogales District to work with the volunteers rather than have one person for the whole forest.*

As previously noted, one perceived solution to address part of the problem is to first acknowledge the need to efficiently use volunteers. This includes attention to streamlining the process for allowing volunteers to assist in maintenance and to designate and train district-level personnel who can assist in mobilizing volunteer resources.

## **Permittees and Grazing**

There are three related themes regarding desired futures for grazing permittees. The first theme concerns the status of grazing permittees. Ranchers believe they are held to a higher standard of

stewardship than other users of forest resources; and, there is a “punitive” component to monitoring their use of forest resources:

*They do it to penalize us rather than to learn ... to help us understand how to change. It is a two way street, because there are some people not willing to learn.*

That is, there is a desire to change the relationship such that their stewardship values and contributions are acknowledged; and, the relationship with the Agency is treated as a partnership rather than with the “punitive” character it has currently. The second theme concerns the desires for effective monitoring in future assessments of grazing. Ranchers suggest their permits are especially vulnerable to legal challenges if there is no effective monitoring of the terms and conditions of their permits. They also believe there are insufficient Forest Service resources to implement effective monitoring that is essential for effective future management of grazing. Fostering relationships with cooperative extension and with local ranchers to develop and implement future monitoring is one perceived solution. The third theme concerns the value of local knowledge and a desire to see it incorporated into grazing management. Participants suggest that they have extensive local knowledge of ecological conditions and this has value to contribute to future management regimes, especially in a time of diminishing Agency resources and the perceived limited availability of the Range Conservation staff.

## **Fire Management**

A prominent topic for future management consideration is the need to attend to conditions creating a fire prone landscape. One perspective about how to attend to fire in the future is expressed in the following comment:

*We have to get fire back on the land. The challenge is to recognize that if you don't see smoke in the air, then there is a problem. Until people recognize that, it will be a problem to get fire back on the land.*

Participants suggest an important priority is a proactive fire plan that incorporates both prescribed burning as well as allowing natural fires to burn. The perceived need is both to protect residents in the growing urban-wildland interface and to use fire to promote ecosystem health. The following statements illustrate some of the issues and priorities expressed by residents:

*Fire is part of landscape as well and if it occurs more regularly, then it would ease some of the difficulties with management. Fire has more effects on people because we are sensitized because of what happened at Summerhaven. If it burns more regularly, then it would tend to be less of an issue. But, I don't know if it will be allowed because of the drastic effect of two big fires back to back.*

The urban interface issues are especially noted as issues of concern:

*Part of the fire thing is that there are more and more people living in the forest, including areas where they (Forest Service) would like to let it burn. But, there are cabins and people in their places. So, they have to put the fires out. A lot of the fire people spend time and risk their lives trying to protect homes rather than trying to manage the fire better for the health of the forest.*

Allowing natural fires to burn is believed by some to be not desirable, while others believe this is a high priority for the future:

*How they deal with fire is a gross mismanagement of our national forests, trying to knock out these natural fires. Close to a hundred years now we have been doing that and it is part of why we are seeing these catastrophic fires. Fire is a natural process that happens out there. Here fire is supposed to happen, but we have not allowed it. I would love to see in this Plan Revision provisions for conscientious thinning done. I would like to see our forest have more natural features to them. ... I would love to see the Forest Service teach people that fire is something you have to learn to live with.*

From another perspective, there is a need to readjust the basic priority in response to fire:

*There is a huge amount of money spent on fire suppression. A huge amount of time is wasted by the Rangers and others who go on these fires. I think what they need to do is take those funds and put them on the front-end rather than the back-end. Putting the monies into better management so fires will not get out of hand is a better alternative.*

And,

*They should be thinning around areas where there are people. We should not be thinning in the backcountry, twenty or thirty miles from population centers. They need to put the emphasis where the fire danger is. In some forests thinning in the back country makes sense, but around here it needs to be near the population centers and where the houses are.*

Recent experiences with the Summerhaven and other fires have sensitized publics to the need to address fire and its management. This is clearly among the most sensitive topics with diverse views among participants about the most effective strategy and “desired future” for fire management.

### **Invasive Species**

Some participants describe a need for future consideration of management of invasive species, particularly noxious weeds. Participants suggest species such as mesquite are increasing and without attention to responding to the increase, these species will become a more intensive problem. This issue was also often addressed in connection with uses such as off-highway vehicle traffic, increases in roads and trails, and other uses creating opportunities for the spread of noxious weeds.

### **Timely Completion of the Forest Plan**

A strong theme in the data from participant’s knowledge about forest planning and some permittees is the need for a timely completion of a Forest Plan. Participants express concern about issues they perceive as related to development of a Forest Plan:

*Look at what happens in the NEPA process. By the time an issue is identified and they do the NEPA to respond, then the problem has already changed. The process just takes too long.*

There is an anticipation of the plan revision process taking so long that it will not be responsive to the pressures influencing current resource conditions and those anticipated for the future. For example,

*We need a plan and we need to accelerate development of the plan because the population of Arizona is not going to sit around and wait for three years. The longer we wait the bigger the problem is going to be. It needs to be a more general plan and let the Districts write the more specific details. The Districts should be under the umbrella of the overall plan. ... Another thing this plan has to do or else they ought to hand it up, is that it has to be a living document and a usable tool.*

Some participants also have specific concerns about the involvement of publics in the planning effort. This topic is addressed in the next section regarding forest-community relationships.

# FOREST-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship of CNF management and staff with interested parties and community members is a topic addressed by participants in all of the focus groups conducted for this project. In most Districts, participants expressed a general satisfaction with forest-community relationships, but in the Safford District there was some concern about past relationships and also hope for future constructive relationships with District personnel. Participants in all Districts expressed ideas about how relationships could improve. Since these types of issues have direct implications for future collaboration, these issues are briefly summarized in this section.

## Inclusion of All Interested Parties

Participants expressed three concerns about ensuring that the CNF includes all interested parties in gathering public input. These concerns are:

- There is a desire to see more diversity in stakeholders, especially Mexican-Americans who are a significant demographic element of the population in this region. One participant noted:  
*I attend a lot of these types of meetings and they (Mexican-Americans) never seem to part of the groups I am in. The Forest Service needs to reach out to those groups and ask for their participation.*
- Some county government officials note they feel as if some groups have undue influence in the process of providing public input and local government is “left out” of the process too often. As one commissioner noted:  
*They don't ask my opinion, no one does. They ask Audubon, they ask the Nature Conservancy, they ask other groups. Lately that has been better, but I have a place at the table too. We feel left out of the process.*

Another non-government participant made a similar observation:

*In the last Forest Plan effort a Forest Service plane brought over people from the National Wildlife Federation and met with them. They (Forest Service) did what the wildlife people wanted and that became the Forest Plan. We saw that, other people saw that and just said 'Why bother.'*

These types of comments indicate a perceived need for future planning and public involvement to be more inclusive.

- Some groups dominate the public input process because of the nature of the Agency's process to acquire this input. This belief specifically concerns a perceived disadvantage of “working people” who may not have the same opportunity to contribute as environmental interests. For example:  
*The environmental interests know how to contribute and John Q. Public does not. In the last Forest Plan, the ranchers and others did not contribute because they were too busy working. You see, the way they hold meetings, the environmentalists come*

*and they yell and intimidate people. We see that and who wants to be a part of that. It is not a process that makes you want to speak your mind.*

## Working as Partners

The common element in many expressed concerns about forest-community relationships is a desire for a change in the relationship between communities and interested parties and the Agency. Participants with a wide-range of views expressed a desire for a relationship that is a partnership. The basis for future partnerships is believed to have a strong foundation in most Ranger Districts, although the past history on the Safford District was noted as especially problematic. For example:

*They treat us like they own the mountain. Well, they don't own the mountain. My family has lived here for over a hundred years. We know this place. Our family, other families, we go to the mountain because it is part of our traditions and it is important to our custom and culture. But, they treat us like we don't know anything and they own it.*

The belief “they treat us like they own the mountain” indicates the alienation of residents who have strong historical and contemporary attachments to forest lands. This alienation foments distrust and dissatisfaction with the Agency and its management practices. There is an expressed willingness to work with the Agency and a desire for solutions that allow for developing a partnership with the Forest Service. For example, a Safford area participant observed:

*There was a problem with opening the road up to the mountain. It should have been open by now, but it wasn't. Well, we called the new Ranger about it and he said that he could check on it. I got a call back and he said they would open it. I give him credit for that. It is a good sign they want to work with us. It is a good sign for the future and we all want it to work out.*

The concerns of Safford participants about forest-community relationships express a more general issue about the quality of forest-community relationships. Participants desire better communication about management decisions, especially the reasons why particular decisions are taken. Participants desire more appreciation of local knowledge and experience with the ecological conditions in particular areas. Participants also desire a “restoration of our partnership” with the Forest Service to address the concerns of local residents and interested parties in the health of forest resources.

While there is criticism of the nature of this relationship, there is also hope for change and a desire for more engagement with publics to improve this relationship:

*A good example is what happened at the community of Summerhaven. The community organized in a stakeholders meeting. ... They wanted to work with the Forest Service collaboratively. They (USFS) didn't make the step from seeing 'here is a bunch of people' and 'here is the Forest Service.' We are really in it together. The Agency has not quite made the step to say, 'We are one chair at the table.' This Forest Plan process could go that way. ... The idea of sitting down at somebody's living room with a small group of people and asking what do we need to do with this little of land and how do we fit that into the bigger puzzle, that does not happen as much as it should.*

## Sincerity in the Public Input Process

Some participants expressed concern about the Agency's sincerity in gathering public input. A belief about this issue is summarized in the following statement by a long term Tucson resident:

*They don't really take public input seriously. Here is an example, they had this group meeting about Mt. Lemon and they hired a facilitator to conduct the meeting, but the report was written before the group was even done! They did the same thing for Madera Canyon. Does that sound like they really want public input? They are just jumping through hoops. ... There is this residual feeling that they can't be bothered with public input. They have to rebuild public trust. There is a backlog of people who have not had a chance to participate in the process and we want to be heard.*

Participants also suggest there is a need for the Agency to conduct more outreach efforts by visiting publics "on our turf" rather than only inviting publics to meetings at Agency offices. For example, participants suggest attending service club meetings and other community-based meetings and events is one desire for future efforts to identify local perspectives about forest management issues.

## Engage People in the Resource

Hikers, ranchers, environmentalists, and a range of other participants express a desire for more engagement and interaction with Forest Service personnel "on the ground." Participants suggest this engagement would offer more confidence about Forest Service awareness of issues and provide the opportunity for feedback and comment by forest users. Although this point is made elsewhere in this document, it is restated here to emphasize how publics construct this as a desire for a change in the relationship of Forest Service personnel with the forest users. Despite budget constraints, despite personnel reductions, and despite paperwork demands, public perceive there are solutions to more engagement with the resource and its users:

*The forest here can do something about the people on the ground. There has been a move toward centralization here and that is something they can do something about. There aren't any more people to do the work, but it is a mistake to centralize even though you are in a very lean situation.*

And,

*When I am out hiking, I would like to see a Ranger or someone who is checking on things. I have been hiking here for a long time I have never seen anybody out there. I want to know they know what is happening. I want to be able to tell them about things I see, but no one is out there.*

These sentiments express public desires for a future in which there is opportunity for the exchange of ideas and sharing of ideas that can contribute to improving forest conditions and the relationship of communities with the Forest Service.

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# APPENDIX

## Topic Areas for Discussion

The following topic areas will guide the discussion about forest and grasslands management.

**Identity.** Each participant will be asked to describe their interest in management of National Forests and Grasslands and any particular perspective or interest/stakeholder group with which they are affiliated.

**Community Character and Recent Changes** This topic address about the lifestyles and social life in communities adjacent to National Forests and Grasslands. The purpose of this discussion topic is to understand the connections between communities and these public lands. Example questions are:

How would you describe this place to someone who has never been here, both the place and the way of life?

How has this community changed in the last 10-15 years? What are the important sources of change?

What are your thoughts about the challenges for this community/region?

What communities, occupations, or lifestyles are most and least affected by how National Forest and Grasslands are managed?

**Uses.** Communities and groups have connections to National Forests and Grasslands from the types of uses of these lands. This topic develops the range of uses of National Forests and Grasslands. Example questions to discuss are:

What are the most and least common uses of these National Forest and Grasslands?

Are there any types of existing or potential uses that are not compatible with these lands? Do all users get along?

Is there anything the Forest Service should do to change how Forests and Grasslands are used in the future?

**Resources.** This topic area identifies the types of resources that are contained within National Forests and Grasslands. This will aid in identifying the connections between communities and resources of the National Forests and Grasslands. An example issue to develop is:

A place is often thought of as the sum of its parts. Can you describe the parts, the types of resources of this National Forest or Grassland?

What are the special qualities and characteristics of these Grasslands?

**Areas for Special Designations.** Some Forests and Grasslands have an area or geographic feature that is given a special designation such as Wilderness, Wild and Scenic River, Roadless Area, or Research Natural Area.

For any existing area, how do you describe the qualities and characteristics of this area? What does it contribute to communities in this area?

What are the benefits of having this type of area in this National Forest or Grasslands? (Local, National, Other?)

If areas for special designation do not exist on this National Forest or Grasslands, is there are need to identify a particular place or landscape? If so, where?

Are there other types of “special places” in this National Forest or Grasslands? (Locate these on Forest/Grasslands map). And, what are the qualities of these places that make them “special?”

**National Forest and Grasslands Benefits and Values.** “Value” has several definitions such as “attributed worth or merit.” This discussion will develop locally meaningful definitions about values and identify specific values about National Forests and Grasslands.

Similarly, a “benefit” can refer to the types of effects that result from a resource such as a National Forest or Grassland. Some benefits may be economic and others may be recreational. Some communities, groups, or individuals may receive more benefits than others from having such resources nearby. This topic area will address questions such as:

What is valued about National Forests and Grasslands?” (e.g., Products, Services, Opportunities, Existence)

What are the benefits to nearby communities and groups from National Forests and Grasslands?”

**Desired Futures.** Many people have an idea of how they would like to see a place such as a National Forest be in the future. They have ideas about current conditions and how those should change to improve the landscape and its resources. This topic will develop information about your future vision for National Forest and Grasslands resources. Example questions this topic will address are:

How would you describe how these lands (National Forest/Grasslands) were when you first became aware of them? (Historical and present-day conditions)

If you think about how you want these Forests/Grasslands to be when your children are grown, what is your vision?

What should the Forest Service do to achieve your future vision for these lands?

**Key Management Issues and Priorities for Future Forest Management.** The Forest Service is developing strategic plans to guide future management of National Forests and Grasslands. An understanding of public assessments of existing plans and future needs can help the agency to identify planning issues. To discuss this topic, we can address questions such as:

What do you think is broken and what needs to be fixed as the USFS revises existing plans?

What has the USFS done well in its management of lands and resources here?  
Are any changes needed in the management strategy in those areas?

What are the “bottom line” issues for you in revision of the existing plan? That is, are there management issues that absolutely must be addressed or changed from how they are now?

**Additional Issues.** These topics are guiding the discussion, but there may be others that you feel are important and need to be included. Please identify any additional topics you feel need to be considered by the USFS as it tries to understand the connections between communities and National Forests and Grasslands.