

Summary of Comments Niche Statement

Recreation Site – Facility Master Plan April 20, 2007

As of April 20, 2007, the Clearwater National Forest received fifty written and email responses to the “Niche” statement developed during the Recreation Site – Facility Master Planning (RS-FMP) process. Most groups and individuals responded using the questionnaire form mailed to recreation stakeholders in early February or emailed the forest with answers to the questions listed on our website.

Comments were received from a cross section of forest users, including local individuals, members of larger user groups and governmental representatives. Respondents from local communities included individuals from Kamiah, Kooskia, Orofino, Grangeville, Lenore, Culesac, Moscow, and Lewiston. Responses were also received from the regional areas including Montana, Oregon, and Washington.

There are a variety of opinions about how recreation sites should be managed, about where activities should occur and about how access to recreation opportunities across the forest should be managed. The comments have been very helpful in determining what experiences and facilities our visitors value and what concerns they have. What everyone agreed on, regardless of how they planned to recreate on the forest, was that the beauty of the mountains and rivers, the clean water and the feeling of remoteness found here are important to them today and for the future.

The following is a summary of the comments to the questionnaire:

Question #1: What is unique or exceptionally distinctive about the Clearwater National Forest and/or the recreation opportunities the forest provides?

- Trails, roads, trailheads, and campgrounds that provide access to the forest and remote backcountry areas for hiking, pack & saddle stock, and motorized uses.
- Motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities to remote areas with beautiful pristine scenery, wildlife, hunting and fishing (especially at lakes).
- Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark – Nez Perce and Lewis & Clark Trails and other historic sites.
- River fishing without commercial outfitters and guides.
- Clean water and great fishing
- Solitude, remote back country, beautiful scenery of mountains and rivers.
- Relatively easy access to the “Big Wild Country.”
- Extensive system of wilderness trails.
- Close proximity to local communities.
- Habitat for diverse wildlife.

- Provides multiple uses for many diverse types of users.

Question #2: What are the things that Clearwater National Forest visitors are most satisfied about?

- Presence of diverse wildlife including predators.
- Good/balanced access (roads and trails) to the forest and trailheads to get to the backcountry/wilderness areas.
- Clean facilities.
- Public land, not private.
- Quiet wilderness, backcountry offering solitude and great fishing.
- Undeveloped forest, pristine mountains and rivers.
- Uncrowded diverse opportunities for riding horses and hiking.
- Dispersed camping at minimally developed sites.
- High water quality, great scenery, developed and dispersed camping.
- Visible Forest Service presence.
- Partnerships with organizations that are interested in helping the Forest.
- Unparalleled scenic beauty.
- Opportunities for ATVs and snowmobiles.

Question #3: What is the importance of the Clearwater National Forest and/or the recreation opportunities the forest provides to local communities?

- Money/jobs provided to local communities by forest visitors and logging.
- Recreation opportunities for residents of local small communities and cities and free access add to the quality of life.
- Opportunities for group use for community events.
- Difficult for communities to survive on tourism alone.
- Our rivers and river sports are important to the community image.

Question #4: Twenty-five years from now, what do you expect the public to value the most about the Clearwater National Forest?

- Solitude, quiet, scenery and wildlife.
- Pristine mountains and waters are going to become more difficult to find.
- Clean water and great fishing.
- Accessible forest available to motorized and non-motorized users
- Undeveloped backcountry with pristine mountains and limited motorized use.
- Developed camping sites along major rivers and travel routes and dispersed camping in remote setting.
- Place to escape from city, work and development.
- Multiple uses.
- Wildlife of all kinds.
- Roads to trailheads that accommodate trailers.

- People have become increasingly separated from the natural world. It will be important to reconnect in the future.

Several respondents had concerns that this process would lead to further development of recreation sites or removal of sites on the Clearwater National Forest. Some people feel that the type of recreation facilities are currently appropriate and don't see the need for change. Others feel that the existing facilities are overly developed and should be reduced. Many people have great concerns about changes in the location and level of access, both motorized and non-motorized across the Forest. Some respondents wished to have greater restrictions on the type and location of use, while others wanted to reduce restrictions.

There was concern about how user data was collected and how visitor information was developed. Visitor information was collected from a number of sources, including national recreation studies, census information, state recreation studies and the professional observations of recreation managers who work in the field with the public. A few respondents were concerned with the descriptions in the "niche" statement of the settings and of the use of the term "developed" for recreation sites that had very few improvements. Further clarification of the term "developed" in reference to recreation sites, a slightly revised "niche" statement and a description of the user data used for the study will also be added to the Forest website.

A summary of the Clearwater National Forest Proposed Program of Work will be posted on the Forest website for review and comment. A copy of the summary of comments and a summary of the Proposed Program of Work will be mailed to those interested parties who responded to the request for comments and provided a return address. The Forest will also be scheduling informational meetings to discuss the planning process and the proposed program of work. A news release will provide information about dates and times for the meetings to local newspapers. The dates and times will also be posted on the Forest website.

In addition to answering the questionnaire, some who commented had concerns about the RS-FMP process in general. There was a concern that an EIS would be required to complete the planning process. Some respondents also looked beyond the Clearwater National Forest and expressed concerns about the planning being undertaken by the Forest Service as an agency. These respondents are concerned that the RS-FMP process will lead to increased privatization, increased development of the forest lands, increases in fees or closure of sites. Answers to these questions can be found by reviewing the Forest Service RS-FMP website located at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/rsfmp/index.shtml>.

Adjustments and changes will be made to the proposed program of work as a result of public participation. From that adjusted program of work the Forest will develop a 5-year implementation plan. Any proposed activities that require an environmental analysis to implement will then be analyzed using standard analysis procedures as outlined in the National Environmental Planning Act. The program of work will be reviewed annually

and revised as needed. This information and more general information about the RSFMP process will be placed on the Clearwater National Forest RSFMP webpage which is located at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/clearwater/Projects/rsfmp/rsfmp.htm>.

If you do not have access to a computer and would like to have the information sent to you, please contact the RSFMP coordinator and the information can be mailed to you.