Talking Points, Prepared by Dave Cleaves – co-team leader of WO SNFP Review Team
8/21/00 Meeting in WO to discuss SNF
Attendees: Diaz-Soltero, Green, Solomon, Cleaves, OGC (?), Mason (at WO); Powell, Connaughton, Holthausen, Kershner, OGC-Region (?) by telephone.

Opening Statements by Hilda

Status of Team's Recommendations

- Members: Iverson, Cleaves, Holthausen, Kershner, McKelvey, Finney, Weatherspoon, (Phil Dietrich – USFWS)
- Written reports being reviewed by team – to be sent to SNF

- Bottom line summary of the team's recommendations
  - Many strengths
    - Creativity in developing old forest and fire/fuels strategies
    - Base for further analysis at the forest and watershed level
    - Incorporation of stakeholder concerns
    - Struggle with issues, integration and tradeoff challenges of national importance
  - Serious problems that will most likely lead to failures in
    - Understandability –important team concern
    - Defensibility – scientific, logical, legal –important team concern
    - Meeting public expectations
    - Implementability
    - Cost-effectiveness
    - Others
  - Three types of options for making changes
    - Continue – will not be understandable or defensible – Option A

- Rethink and rewrite. Rethink and document existing alternatives and analysis. Assemble team to cover interdisciplinary issues not yet resolved, given the current alternative structure. Will be more understandable but very likely will not be fully defensible. May be more or less defensible than the current version when the assumptions, linkages, etc. become more clear. – Option B

- Redesign and reanalyze. Reconstruct alternatives, purpose-and -need and reanalyze effects – most likely be both understandable and defensible. Nothing will guarantee defensibility. This is only the minimum that would be required to have a high likelihood of surving scientific and legal challenges. Shaving the time and talent to be used on this option will rapidly slide its expected success back to Option B level. – Option C (and beyond)

Clarification of the Team's Role – Nature of the Recommendations

Two roles – two messages – clarify, re Hilda's letter of 7/13: Improvements (relative standard, given the deadline) vs. meeting defensibility standards (scientific and logical (absolute standards). Agreement about these standards may be an issue. "Defensibility involves usability in the decision, scientific credibility, logical consistency, compliance with law and policy, and meeting expectations of the public. Science is a necessary but not sufficient condition for "defensibility".

Provide recommendations

- Evaluate the quality of the DEIS and ongoing changes

- Evaluate the scientific and rationale basis for effects

- Ensure the science and viability analysis were well integrated

Help the IDT incorporate changes - constraints of deadline – key uncertainty

- Ensuring the validity of this review
  - Evaluate the content of the public comments and incoming reviews
  - Review the planning notes and recall visits – nothing new here
  - Ask for an anonymous evaluation by SNF Team(s)
  - Organize another outside review by a team with no previous involvement as advisors to SNFP.
  - WARNING: DO NOT GO TO ACADEMY OF SCIENCES YET. THIS DOCUMENT IS NOT CLEAR ENOUGH OR ORGANIZED WELL ENOUGH FOR A FULL OUTSIDE REVIEW!!!! DO NOT GO TO THE ACADEMY

AFTER YOU HAVE A ROD!!! THERE IS NO CHANCE OF SCIENTIFIC REVIEW INFLUENCING ALTERNATIVE DESIGN OR CHOICE AND IT IS AN INSULT TO THE ACADEMY TO ASK THEM TO DO IT!!!

METHODS

- Sources of information
  1. DEIS
  2. Interviews with IDT members – ongoing changes
  3. Previous experience with the SNF project

- Evaluated the science content

  1. Documentation

  2. Comprehensiveness

  3. Quality of interpretation – relative degrees of certainty

  4. Peer review

- Evaluated the scientific integration – modeling and interactions

  1. Documentation

  2. Rigor

  3. Reality

- Evaluated the logical strength

  1. Consistency with stated objectives

  2. Agreement of alternatives and Purpose and Need

  3. Balance in the analytical treatment of alternatives

  4. Trains of asssumptions and inferences that led to effects conclusions

  5. Consistency and quality of the assumptions

  6. Treatment of the key uncertainties

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FINDINGS - AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURE

Overall Vision

- Presence and prominence of a larger, integrated vision of what the Sierra Nevada National Forests will look like and contribute.
- Balance among the major issues – relative emphasis in alternative design and analysis. Noxious weeds and Aquatics versus Fire and Old Forests.
- Logical connections among major issues and between desired future conditions and standards and guides within an issue.
- Reference conditions for resolving multiple, possibly conflicting standards at finer ecological and managerial scales.
- Thematic and "all or nothing" nature of the alternatives – pitting interest groups' visions against the Forest Service's.

Linkage to Science base – SNEP

- Effective use of the science findings and recommendations
- Evaluation of the SNF against organized bodies of science and science-based opinions (SNEP and other on-going investigations)

Fire and Fuels

- Science basis of the alternatives – treatment effects on fire behavior
- Clarity of the objectives – acres burned averaging period
- Range of fire/fuel options considered, tested
- Reconciliation of fuels, wildlife and other objectives in the treatment prescriptions

Adaptive Management

- Specificity of the plan as a process for future decisions based on signals and experimentation
- Integration of the monitoring around key uncertainties relevant to decisions

- Focus on key ecosystems or watersheds where results can be reliably evaluated

MODELING

- Accuracy assessment
- Choice of the modeling framework – SPECTRUM
- Clarity of the linkages, assumptions, weaknesses, and sensitivities
- Prominence of timber harvesting in the objective functions
- Assumptions about treatment effectiveness

AQUATIC CONSERVATION STRATEGY

- Clarity of overall strategy with ties to a desired future condition
- Range of issues consistent with importance in the Purpose and Need (water quality, species viability and diversity, hydrology, riparian communities, etc.)

SPECIES EFFECTS

- Cohesiveness and consistency of the overall, consistent framework for assessment – consistency of methods across species and alternatives.
- Integration of the published literature and the best thinking of recognized experts.
- Consideration of the range of risk factors and their roles
- Specification of outcome or rating scales that inform alternative selection and evaluation of compliance
- Species selection – criteria for vulnerability; representative ness of focal species
- Evaluation of the likelihood of meeting legal obligations for viability under NFMA and ESA.

ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS

- Differences in economic and social impacts across the alternatives
- Emphasis on employment (a harvesting outcome) versus social and economic impacts of catastrophic wildfire outcomes.
- Social and demographic patterns that exacerbate the fire loss problem.
- Cost-effectiveness of alternative fire/fuels programs in reducing risk of catastrophic wildfire and reintroducing ecological benefits of fire.

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IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS – DRAFT TO FINAL EIS/ROD

IMPROVEMENT OPTION, STATUS, AND CONSEQUENCES

***** SNF Leadership should review and assessment the consequences *****

Alternative Structure

Overall vision of desired future landscape		
A. Stay with existing alternative set		??
B. Develop best estimates of historical conditions at the landscape and stand level. Use these as reference conditions against which to judge alternatives.	Major – within deadline – 3 months.	??
C. Above plus develop a new alternative which embodies historical reference conditions.	Major – 6 months	??
Linkage to Overall Trends, Problems, and Strategies in SNEP		
A. Leave as is	Minor	
B. Document references to SNEP findings in separate chapter. Describe rationale for adoption/non-adoption/modification of SNEP recommendations.	Major – within deadline	??
C. Above plus do a science consistency check on the aquatics, economics, species, fire, old forest and other sections. Use the SNEP science assessment	Major – within deadline	Greater credibility and defensibility

plus recent contributions as a reference point.		
Science Basis of Fire Fuels Components		
A. Leave as is	???	
B. Describe fuels management alternatives not considered in detail and document rationale for non-selection. Document rationale for selecting the fuels strategy in greater detail than in current draft.	Major – within deadline – 2-3 months	More understandable
C. Construct a range of fire loss reduction strategies: fuel breaks; area treatment strategies including SPLATS, condition class, topographic and other priorities; maximum suppression; urban interface education and incentives, etc. Compare these options and organize adaptive management plan to test them.	Major – outside deadline – 1-2 years	More defensible; higher likelihood or a more successful and integrated solution.
Adaptive Management Structure		
A. Leave as is – DEIS promises more structure	Underway	
B. Better describe the monitoring and response option sets in at least one adaptive management alternative. Link monitoring plan and response to key uncertainties. Set up testing of fire/fuels strategies in key watersheds in each forest.	Major – within deadline – 2-3 months	More understandable, more internally consistent; may minimize likelihood of large-scale landscape errors.
C. Develop an integrated monitoring and adaptive management strategy for all the issue areas and key uncertainties. Outline monitoring-adaptive response option sets for each alternative.	Major – outside deadline – 1 year	

Modeling

A. Make changes planned by ID Team	Underway	
B. Document existing assumptions and rationale and do limited sensitivity analysis at selected finer scale. Overview of linkages, reorganize in central place, highlight assumptions, devalue models in effects analysis, some sensitivity analysis.	Major – within the deadline	Reveals weaknesses in the analysis but minimize surprises. Devalues the role of the models in the evaluations of alternatives.
C. Redevelop model and parameters and run across the range of landscapes and conditions	Major – 1-2 years	Better prepare for fire and tree growth issues that may be center of litigatory challenges.

Aquatic Conservation Strategy

A. Revise the Purpose and Need to reflect a fire and old growth-driven EIS. Rely on watershed analyses and standards and guides to develop protection.	Underway	
B. Rethink the strategy and integrate priorities, opportunities for protection and restoration into restructured alternatives.	3-6 months	
C. Identify inadequacies in the EIS and commit to a supplement to develop a more comprehensive strategy.	1 year	

Species Effects

A. Clean up the existing analysis – present as is	Underway	
B. Establish common output across species and	Major – within deadline – 2-3 months.	Lacks outside credibility, but is a clearer and more

alternatives. Have SNF Team(s) (a) select species, describe (b) risk factors and (c) conservation measures, and (d) assess the effects with a standard set of outcome statements about USFS lands and species populations. Ask for peer review but not structured input from outside experts.		consistent presentation
C. Re do analysis with front-end expert involvement in (a), (b), and (c). Effects assessment (d) done by SNF Team(s) but reviewed by outside experts. See more detailed process plan.	Major – outside deadline – 6 months.	Better substantiated (outside expertise); easier to understand. May reveal some surprises (non-viable species), which may result in modifications in alternatives to comply with NFMA/ESA.

Economic and Social Impacts

A. Make planned changes: employment impacts, carbon cycle impacts, spatial grazing and recreation impacts, valuation of water, and environmental justice, the costs of implementing the alternatives.	Underway	
B. Peer review current analysis. Evaluate more closely the differences across the alternatives on clearly defined measures. Reduce emphasis on employment effects with harvesting driver. Expand range of recreation activities impacted by fire/fuels and old forest strategies.	Major – within deadline – 2-3 months.	Lacks outside credibility, but is a clearer and more consistent presentation
C. Describe the social and	Major – outside deadline –	Better substantiated (outside

demographic patterns that aggravate the fire loss problem. Analyse projected patterns of residential growth into the hazard/risk areas planned for fuels treatment and species protection. Evaluate the economic and social impacts of catastrophic wildfire such as direct property loss, business disruptions, health care costs, transportation interruptions, and others. Develop a more complete analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the fire/fuels programs.	12 months.	expertise); easier to understand. May reveal some surprises (non-viable species), which may result in modifications in alternatives to comply with NFMA/ESA.

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OVERARCHING CONCERNS

Consequences of not ensuring science quality

- Challenges in court
- Appearance of a pre-ordained choice
- Lack of clear science-based direction for the SNF Forests
- Working relationships between science community and NFS

- Influence of politically-driven, incremental deadlines – "groupthink" leading to the premature rejection of options and inadequate documentation of non-selection rationale.

- Role of the Science Team – evaluation and interpretation vs. integration and justification. Responsibility for separating judgments about (a) science (state of knowledge), (b) integration of science into the alternatives, (c) social and political influences on alternative design and choice. Future role of PSW station in the attempts to adjust the analysis.

- Reputation of the SNF to "take advice".

- Involvement of the Forest planning specialists – feasibility and adaptive management planning

- Availability of SNF team people to rework the analysis

- Tradeoffs involved in meeting deadline vs. ensuring quality
  - Administration opinions (existing and incoming)
  - Litigation
  - Public expectations and opinion
  - Organizational implementation – NFS and Research
  - Additional analyses – “do-overs” and costs
  - Interagency relations

- Sequential dependencies in the tasks of revision. – vision feeds dfc feeds SG feed modeling feeds effects. How long does it really take to do this job ???