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Sawtooth Vision 20/20

Shared Strategies for the Future of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area

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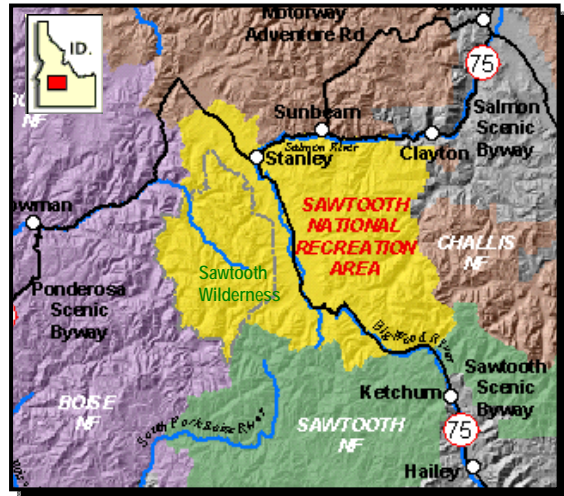
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INTRODUCTION

Background

Sawtooth Vision 20/20: Shared Strategies for the Future of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area originated through collaboration of two organizations dedicated to protecting and enhancing central Idaho's Sawtooth National Recreation Area (Sawtooth NRA): The Sawtooth Society¹ and the USDA Forest Service.

In 2005, the Society's President and Executive Director, Bob Hayes, discussed with Sara Baldwin, Sawtooth NRA Area Ranger, and Ruth Monahan, Sawtooth National Forest Supervisor, the idea of cooperatively developing a long-range vision and strategy for the Sawtooth NRA. The idea was grounded in a belief that Forest Service management of the Sawtooth NRA would benefit from a vision and set of strategies widely shared by organizations, businesses and individuals living, working and recreating in the Sawtooth NRA. Given the limited resources available to the Forest Service for managing the Sawtooth NRA, the increasing number and variety of area users, growing conflicts among various agencies, environmental and recreation organizations, and individuals within the Sawtooth NRA, and the need for consistency in various agencies' management policies that address long-term issues facing the Sawtooth NRA, the benefits of a cooperatively developed and shared long-term vision and strategy were obvious.



A steering committee of Sawtooth Society members, including Paul Hill (Chair), Jim Mitchell, Gray Reynolds, Jack Stevens, and Patricia Young, was established to coordinate the process design with the Forest Service. They determined that the process required four key elements to be successful:

- 1) **Long-term**, since many key issues require long-term solutions
- 2) **Comprehensive**, because most issues are interrelated
- 3) **Community-based**, so all key stakeholders in the Sawtooth NRA could have a voice in the process and a vested interest in its success
- 4) **Measurable**, so that progress can be monitored.

The Committee also realized the process called for an independent, professional facilitator. Susan Hayman, North Country Resources, Inc., served in this capacity through an interagency agreement between the Forest Service and the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution.

The process consisted of a series of three workshops spanning six months, involving participants who represented key interest areas and groups within the Sawtooth NRA. Thirty-seven dedicated individuals², representing over forty organizations, agencies and areas of interest, were selected to participate in the workshops. Between workshops, two rounds of public forums provided broad-based feedback that was diligently incorporated by workshop participants into the draft and final products. Over 100 people attended the five separate forums (two in Stanley, two in Ketchum, and one in Challis).

¹ A broad-based non-governmental/nonprofit organization dedicated exclusively to the Sawtooth NRA

² Appendix 1 contains a complete list of workshop participants

To make the process more manageable, workshop participants grouped critical values and issues into five separate (but interrelated) categories. Each category reflects a set of values identified in or affected by the legislation that created the Sawtooth NRA, and is critical to the overall long-term vision.

How to Use this Strategic Plan

The end product of the process is presented in this document. It reflects the shared long-term vision developed by workshop participants, as well as their collective views on the desired conditions and current situation for each key value area and the critical issues to address in pursuing the desired conditions. An important element is the list of specific actions to be taken in addressing the issues, along with timetables to measure progress.

Categories <i>(alphabetical order)</i>
• Economic and Community Stability
• Fish and Wildlife
• Historic, Pastoral and Scenic
• Natural, Sustainable Ecosystems
• Recreation

The end product is a road map of Sawtooth NRA stakeholders³ shared views on what should be done, when, and by whom to protect the values cherished in this remarkable area. As such, it should be used to guide the establishment of priorities, resource allocation, and business plan development for not only the Forest Service, but for all agencies and governmental units involved with the Sawtooth NRA, as well as non-governmental organizations, businesses and individuals. By so using this product, these entities have an opportunity to work cooperatively toward common goals, pooling resources and experience, rather than pursuing conflicting agendas.

Commitment to Implementation

Both the Sawtooth Society and the Forest Service believe that Sawtooth Vision 20/20 provides a unique and fresh opportunity to develop a shared approach to Sawtooth NRA management. In this regard, the Society is committed to a leadership role in implementing those particular actions within the scope of its mission, expertise and resources. It is expected that other organizations, individuals and agencies will assume similar leadership roles relative to actions falling within the purview of their respective missions and expertise.

Having initiated this project, the Sawtooth Society also accepts responsibility for a major role in coordinating and supporting others' efforts to implement recommended actions and to monitor and publicly report on the overall progress of these undertakings.

The Forest Service is committed to using the collaborative vision and broadly supported objectives and actions provided by the Sawtooth Vision 20/20 Strategic Plan to allocate and utilize staffing and budget resources more effectively. It will use the information to help set priorities, develop consistency, improve clarity and build understanding and commitment among all stakeholders. It will regularly validate the plan against the Forest Service Strategic Plan and National Executive Priority Items, the Intermountain Region and Sawtooth National Forest Emphasis Areas, Public Law 92-400⁴, 36CFR 202, and the Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

³ Stakeholders hold emotional, physical, financial and other interests in the activities and management of this extraordinary place known as the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

⁴ Public Law 92-400 legislatively established the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

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The Forest Service will also identify those critical issues and actions that lend themselves to a business plan model, and update the Sawtooth NRA Business Plan - a key tool in capturing and leveraging funding to implement showcase programs. It will actively monitor progress in implementing the Sawtooth Vision 20/20 strategic plan and provide support, where able, to other stakeholders in implementing key action items.

Much has been accomplished and much has been protected over nearly 35 years since the Sawtooth NRA was established, but the challenges and the environment have changed from 1972.

The results of Sawtooth Vision 20/20 offer great promise in addressing the new challenges, thanks to the hard work and cooperative effort of everyone involved. Realizing this potential depends directly on the continued commitment, involvement and support of all those represented in the process. While the Forest Service and Sawtooth Society will work to protect the key values of the Sawtooth NRA, only through such collaborative actions can we assure the Sawtooth NRA continues to be a place that provides a connection between people and the natural environment that sustains them.



VISION

The following statement describes an inspirational and timeless vision for what stakeholders want this area to be and become.

Vision for the Sawtooth National Recreation Area

The Sawtooth National Recreation Area is a magnificent place with breathtaking views, majestic mountains, open spaces, clear skies, dark nights, quiet places, clean air and waters, and abundant native fish and wildlife. Visitors and residents cherish their experiences, including opportunities for inspiration, solitude, silence, diverse recreational challenges, and a sense of history in a rustic, Western⁵ setting.

The Sawtooth National Recreation Area showcases effective stewardship, where all stakeholders collaborate to protect the scenic, historic, pastoral and natural values, diverse native fish and wildlife, and promote responsible recreation in this unique setting. Sustainable natural ecosystems and local communities thrive. Managers, visitors and residents embrace the special nature of the landscape and are enriched by their experiences.

CRITICAL ISSUES AND PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS

Critical issues are grouped into five separate (but interrelated) categories. Each category reflects a set of values identified in or affected by the legislation that created the Sawtooth NRA, and is critical to the overall long-term vision. There are three critical issues for each category. This section is organized as follows for each category:

Category

Overall Desired Condition

Critical Issues

Critical Issue #

- Desired Conditions
- Problem Statement
- Priority Action Items
 - Δ Short term (can be accomplished in 1-3 years)
 - Δ Long-term (will take 3+ years to accomplish)

Categories are listed in alphabetical order. Appendix 2 contains the complete description of desired conditions, problem statements, primary affected persons/interests, and challenges to resolution for each critical issue. Appendix 3 contains the complete list of actions items prioritized by category. The “Implementation” section of this document contains a table of those action items currently identified as having the highest overall priority for both the short and long term.

⁵ It is noted here that, throughout this document, inclusion of the term “Western” was not supported by all workshop participants, some of whom felt that the term was vague and unnecessary.

Economic and Community Stability

Overall Desired Condition

The Sawtooth NRA includes small, vibrant Western communities in a planned, sustainable economic environment, compatible with and complimentary to Sawtooth NRA core values. Communities comprise a stable core of residents who choose to live, work, play, and raise their families here while participating in their community. Stable, year-round economies with dependable revenues sustain a variety of businesses, community and visitor services.

Gateway communities, and communities within the Sawtooth NRA, enjoy economic and community stability, providing a quality living environment for residents, many of whom provide services and support to the Sawtooth NRA.

Critical Issues

Issue #1: Affordable Housing

- ***Desired Conditions:*** Well-planned, quality, affordable housing (including short- and long-term rentals and private home ownership) enhances the Western character and desirable living conditions for seasonal and year-round residents. This assists in the recruitment and retention of a dependable workforce within the designated communities of the Sawtooth NRA, many of whom directly contribute to maintaining or enhancing its core values.
- ***Problem:*** The designated communities within the Sawtooth NRA are at a crossroads, both economically and socially. High real estate costs create a barrier to businesses and families trying to establish themselves and create roots in the community. The lack of sufficient and affordable housing for short- and long-term rentals and seasonal workers, and similar unavailability of reasonably priced private homes for year-round residents, is impacting the ability of these communities to be sustainable and vibrant, and to provide services that support the core values specified in the legislation that created the Sawtooth NRA.

In addition, the lack of affordable housing in communities adjacent to the Sawtooth NRA impacts recruitment and retention of Forest Service and other local, state, and federal agency employees, and reduces the pool of potential private-sector employees available for support services within the Sawtooth NRA.

- ***Affordable Housing Priority Action Items:***

- △ ***Short-term***

- Objective:** Develop city-owned or sponsored seasonal and service employee housing to bring stability to those employed in community services.

- Action (ECS Short-term Priority 1):** Acquire some or all of the Harrah Trust properties and create a sustainable development plan.

- △ ***Long-term:***

- Objective:** Establish a stable workforce that helps stabilize the local economy.

- Action (ECS Long-term Priority 1):** Provide diverse affordable housing (tent, RV, and fixed structures) for people who are employed full-time, part-time or seasonally in the Sawtooth NRA (look at state land trade opportunities).

Issue #2: Infrastructure

- **Desired Conditions:** Adequate, functional and well-maintained infrastructure sustains safe and healthy services year-round to Sawtooth NRA communities and visitors. Power and communication grids, and functional and expandable water and sewer systems, meet the current and future demands of residents and visitors. Highways 21⁶ and 75 provide year-round, open, safe, reliable routes between Sawtooth NRA communities and communities outside of the Sawtooth NRA.
- **Problem:** Infrastructure is not adequate to provide safe and healthy services to the community and visitors. Highway 21 is often closed in winter months due to the presence or threat of avalanches, which impacts both safety and visitation from Boise and other communities west of the Sawtooth NRA. Power and communication services experience frequent outages. Water and sewer systems are inadequate in some areas to meet the needs of local communities, as well as the increasing demand from summer visitation, and are unreliable in the winter months to meet the demand of visitors and residents alike.

- **Infrastructure Priority Action Items:**

- △ **Short-term:**

- Objective:** Develop a long-term plan for infrastructure.

- Action (ECS Short-term Priority 2):** Inventory and develop a plan to maintain, upgrade, or build new infrastructure (e.g. sewer, telecommunications, roads and transportation, power, water, airports, RV and boat storage and any other infrastructure services) to meet the needs of the Sawtooth NRA in the long-term.

- △ **Long-term: None identified as priority at this time**

Issue #3: Community Services

- **Desired Conditions:** Designated communities within the Sawtooth NRA provide year-round, quality services. Emergency services, including fire, police, and medical, sustain residents' and visitors' basic needs for safety, health and welfare. Adequate school facilities, in conjunction with cultural opportunities and events, provide a stimulating and creative environment for residents and visitors. Local, state, and federal agencies share in providing these services. Extensive year-round information services, a variety of restaurants, lodging, guiding and other services provide a positive and memorable experience for residents and visitors. These services and others (grocery, merchants, gas stations, automotive repair, refuse management, etc.) enrich the community and visitor experience, and provide local employment opportunities.
- **Problem:** Community services (e.g. emergency services, medical services, information services, outfitting/guiding, merchants, food and lodging, etc.) are currently very seasonal, and difficult to obtain and sustain within the Sawtooth NRA and designated communities, given the limited existing financial, housing and staffing resources. Emergency services (police, fire, medical) rely largely on volunteers, and are difficult to staff. Declining school enrollment is making it difficult to maintain the numbers of teachers assigned to the Stanley school, which is discouraging families from staying in the community. There are currently no plans in place for the future expansion of services in these communities.

⁶ Not all workshop participants felt that it was desirable to keep Highway 21 open year-round -- that the challenging access was part of the overall rugged character of this area.

- **Community Services Priority Action Items:**

- Δ **Short-term:**

- Objective 1:** Create a healthy business climate that encourages local business development and retention.

- Action (ECS Short-term Priority 3):** Create and implement a plan to retain local business operators (currently losing multiple beds and services).

- Objective 2:** Improve stability and staffing for emergency services throughout the Sawtooth NRA.

- Action (ECS Short-term Priority 4):** Secure permanent, professional emergency medical staff and search out alternative funding.

- Objective 3:** Increase opportunities to inform and educate visitors and residents about the core values, recreation opportunities, history, unique values and current threats, area updates, etc.

- Action (ECS Short-term Priority 5):** Work cooperatively with the Forest Service to develop a dynamic Sawtooth NRA website.

- Δ **Long-term:**

- Objective 1:** Stabilize the workforce and add families to the community.

- Action (ECS Long-term Priority 2):** Relocate at least 1/2 of Sawtooth NRA Headquarters employees to the Stanley area.

- Action (ECS Long-term Priority 3):** Establish a high school in the Stanley area.

- Objective 2:** Create a stable, year-round economy in Stanley.

- Action (ECS Long-term Priority 4):** Keep Highways 21 and 75 between Salmon, Challis, Ketchum, Stanley, and Boise safe, reliable, and open year-round.

- Objective 3:** Increase the services available for the RV and developed recreation tourist base.

- Action (ECS Long-term Priority 5):** Locate and develop additional RV and camping sites to handle tourist base (privately operated, future plans, low scenic impact).

Fish and Wildlife

Overall Desired Condition

The Sawtooth NRA serves an important role in conservation biology, demonstrating the importance of habitat connectivity, continuity and functionality within a broader ecosystem. It provides a living, interpretive classroom that encourages scientific research, public education and appreciation of the intrinsic values of fish and wildlife, as well as fish and wildlife populations adequate to support traditional hunting and fishing activities. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA-Fisheries provide fisheries and wildlife expertise necessary to promote and sustain these important programs within the Sawtooth NRA. Partners in implementation include the Idaho Department of Water Resources, Idaho Transportation Department, and other federal, state and local agencies, interest groups and private citizens.

Appropriately managed forests promote a diversity of forested habitats, including aspen stands. Collaboration seeks to resolve conflicts and identify the desirable balances within the Sawtooth NRA between humans and wildlife, and between livestock grazing and wildlife and fisheries habitat. This results in mutual learning and understanding, creative problem-solving and peaceful coexistence.

Critical Issues

Issue #1: Salmon/Fisheries

- ***Desired Conditions:*** The Salmon River system historically provided 39% of all steelhead and 45% of all the spring/summer Chinook in the entire Columbia River basin, which provides an appropriate goal for restoration. Robust, harvestable and sustainable returns of wild Chinook, steelhead, and sockeye salmon invigorate and bolster resident fish species that depend on historic salmon runs. Local waterways contain sufficient flows for wild migration and are free of manmade obstructions and threats. People recognize the importance of fisheries for their intrinsic values, in addition to their economic benefit and contributions to sustainable communities and Sawtooth NRA values.
- ***Problem:*** Declining salmon populations in the Sawtooth NRA have profound biological and cultural impacts, and significantly impair fisheries, recreation, and socio-economic and historic values of the Sawtooth NRA. Conditions outside the Sawtooth NRA and Idaho that affect fish passage and salmon survival rates currently limit recovery of Sawtooth NRA salmon runs. Local problems include nutrient loss, reduced streamflow, habitat modification and fragmentation, invasive species, and riparian degradation, affecting both resident native trout and salmon species.
- ***Salmon/Fisheries Priority Action Items:***
 - △ ***Short-term:***
 - Objective 1:** Recover salmon & other threatened and endangered anadromous fish species returning to the Stanley area.
 - Action (FW Short-term Priority 1):** Develop a political advocacy coalition for recovery of Sawtooth NRA wild salmon runs, including advocacy for bypass of four Lower Snake Dams if necessary (including a mitigation package for stakeholders negatively affected), other downstream hydrosystem improvements, harvest controls, hatchery reforms, and habitat restoration.
 - Objective 2:** Improve the efficiency and timeliness of riparian habitat restoration (including removing problems, not just creating structures).
 - Action (FW Short-term Priority 2):** Develop a streamlined process among management agencies for habitat restoration and fish protection projects, such as reconnecting streams, completing riparian fencing, restoring riverbank vegetation, removing barriers to fish migration, and other improvements.
 - Objective 3:** Provide an opportunity for collaborative, mutual learning, and help establish an interest-based (rather than position-based) discussion on salmon recovery.
 - Action (FW Short-term Priority 4):** Convene a Local Salmon Information Session as an accurate informative effort to educate cities and communities in the Sawtooth NRA and downstream about the benefits and challenges of salmon recovery.
 - △ ***Long-term: None prioritized at this time***

Issue #2: Riparian Habitat

- **Desired Conditions:** The extent and health of riparian habitats approximate historic conditions. Properly managed and fully restored riparian areas exist throughout the Sawtooth NRA. Water flows are sufficient to sustain all native aquatic and/or riparian dependent species and age classes, including migratory needs both within and beyond the Sawtooth NRA. These habitats support a diverse array of native wildlife.
- **Problem:** Healthy riparian habitat components, such as the extent of streamside vegetation, woody debris, and shade are not optimal in some areas and need improvement.

Flows in some streams and tributaries are insufficient due to consumptive water use, and may contain artificial barriers to fish passage, cause entrainment, etc.

- **Riparian Habitat Priority Action Items:**

- Δ **Short-term: None prioritized at this time.**

- Δ **Long-term:**

Objective 1: Recover salmon & other threatened and endangered anadromous fish species returning to the Stanley area for both cultural & economic issues.

Action (FW Long-term Priority 1): Complete streambank stabilization/restoration projects in priority areas throughout the Sawtooth NRA.

Issue #3: Wildlife

- **Desired Conditions:** The Sawtooth NRA supports seasonal ranges and migration corridors that sustain diverse and viable wildlife populations. These habitats experience minimal obstructions and threats from human-generated features and uses, including roads and traffic, mining material pits, fencing, recreation, livestock grazing and invasive species. People recognize the importance of wildlife and game species for their intrinsic values and their economic benefits to the communities within the Sawtooth NRA, including preserving traditional harvestable game programs.
- **Problem:** Wildlife populations and associated habitats face increasing pressures from numerous existing and potential factors, including: conifer encroachment into aspen and meadow complexes, highway/wildlife interference (wildlife-vehicle collisions), impact on wildlife from motorized and non-motorized recreation, unsanctioned winter feeding by private citizens, unnatural obstructions to migration corridors, inappropriate and/or increased dispersed camping, wildlife-unfriendly fencing and disease transmission between domestic and wild animals.

In addition, social conflict exists over the management of predators and prey, and the role of trapping within the Sawtooth NRA. Some people see these relationships as a natural part of the system. Others feel the impacts from large predators on game species and domestic livestock and their potential threat to human life and property, need to be aggressively addressed.

- **Wildlife Priority Action Items:**

- Δ **Short-term:**

- Objective 1:** Increase the public appreciation and understanding of all types of fish and wildlife, including large predators (e.g. wolves, black bear, mountain lion).

- Action (FW Short-term Priority 4):** Develop a four-season public education program about fish and wildlife to explore contemporary issues and expand public appreciation.

- Objective 2:** Help curtail wildlife-vehicle collisions near current feeding sites, disease transmission and unnatural dependence on supplemental feeding.

- Action (FW Short-term Priority 5):** Develop written, local ordinances regarding wildlife feeding on private lands (including measures to prevent unintentional feeding such as requiring bear proof garbage containers).

- Objective 3:** Reduce wildlife mortality and improve motorist safety.

- Action (FW Short-term Priority 6):** Develop and implement a wildlife-vehicle collision reduction program

- Objective 4:** Minimize wildlife impact and eliminate wildlife injury and death from fences across all ownerships within the Sawtooth NRA.

- Action (FW Short-term Priority 7):** Develop and implement uniform wildlife-friendly fencing standards for both public and private land ownerships

- Δ **Long-term:**

- Objective 1:** Develop an accurate understanding of the recreation impacts to fish and wildlife with credible information that can be used as a basis for future management actions.

- Action (FW Long-term Priority 8):** Collect monitoring data (using historic and current figures) on the impacts of motorized and non-motorized activity on wildlife and fish

Historic, Pastoral and Scenic

Overall Desired Condition

Visitors and residents of the Sawtooth NRA experience a tangible sense of place when they cross the NRA boundaries. Open, diverse and relatively natural scenic vistas are dotted by buildings and other developments consistent with the historic scale and design that characterize the area. Scenic view corridors include traditional, sustainable land uses such as ranches, with the visible presence of livestock, and agricultural equipment. Clean air and water, along with a dark night sky, are valued characteristics of the area. Recreational and commercial activities and transportation corridors within the Sawtooth NRA generally reflect a quieter and slower pace. Private lands afford reasonable access to public lands. Preserved historic buildings and sites offer both a glimpse into the past and an educational opportunity for residents and visitors.

Critical Issues

Issue #1: Land Development/Easements

- **Desired Conditions:** Areas undeveloped in 2006 largely remain undeveloped, native and/or pastoral in the future. Development harmonizes with the surrounding scenery, and with the historic character and scale of the area. Clear, mutually beneficial and enforceable conservation easements exist for all private lands where they are needed. Landowners provide reasonable public access across private lands to public lands. The Forest Service, State of Idaho, and Blaine and Custer Counties work cooperatively to ensure consistency between land development and the core values of the Sawtooth NRA. The Forest Service utilizes a variety of management tools when faced with non-compliant land development.
- **Problem:** There are instances of land development on both private and state lands within critical view corridors of the Sawtooth NRA that are inconsistent with its historic, pastoral and scenic core values. While these developments represent a small percentage of total land development, their visual impacts can be significant and long lasting.

In addition, it remains an ongoing challenge to ensure that private land development is compliant with Sawtooth NRA private land regulations and existing conservation easements.

There are several factors contributing to this challenge:

- Turnover in private landowners and the need to ensure that they are aware of the regulations and provisions of the conservation easements
 - Ambiguous or inconsistently applied Forest Service regulations governing private land development, conservation easements, and the process for Forest Service review and approval of proposed developments
 - Insufficient tools to address non-compliance beyond the extreme measure of condemnation, which limits the Forest Service’s ability to enforce regulations and easements with uncooperative private landowners
 - High land values, contributing to the potential for significant change in land uses as residents’ exercise their “build-out” rights
 - Idaho Department of Lands property within the Sawtooth NRA operates under mandates inconsistent with Sawtooth NRA core values
- **Priority Land Development/Easement Action Items:**

Δ Short-term:

Objective 1: Protection of critical scenic resource and compliance with Sawtooth NRA core values.

Action (HPS Short-Term Priority 2): Acquire Idaho Department of Lands properties within the Sawtooth NRA.

Objective 2: Ensure development of privately owned lands in the SNRA consistent with the intent of Public Law 92-400 and the Private Land Regulations.

Action (HPS Short-Term Priority 4): Simplify the annual inspection of easement workload and streamline the number of Forest Service employees involved in certification reviews.

Objective 3: Encourage people to protect the critical scenic resource by helping them understand the value of this to the Sawtooth NRA.

Action (HPS Short-Term Priority 5): Educate private owners/potential owners on voluntary compliance with Forest Service private land regulations.

Δ **Long-term:**

Objective 1: Protect critical scenic, recreation and other core value resources in compliance with Sawtooth NRA legislation.

Action (HPS Long-Term Priority 1): Accelerate acquisition of conservation easements, and include protection for scenic, recreation and other core values.

Objective 2: Reduce ambiguity in interpreting compliance with regulations and increase consistency, make compliance and enforcement more reasonable.

Action (HPS Long-Term Priority 2): Amend the Private Land Regulations to provide clarity in interpretation, and more tools for enforcement (fines, liens, other, community design review committee).

Objective 3: Provide additional tools (beyond condemnation) for the enforcement of private land regulations.

Action (HPS Long-Term Priority 3): Require compliance with updated Sawtooth NRA building design standards as part of the City of Stanley and county building permit approval process.

Issue #2: Historic/Archaeological Properties and Structures

- **Desired Conditions:** Maps and inventories document the location, condition and priority of historic/archaeological properties and structures within the Sawtooth NRA. Decisions on whether or not to abandon, maintain or restore historic sites involve collaboration between the Forest Service, interest groups, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, the Sawtooth Interpretive and Historical Association, and private citizens.
- **Problem:** Many historic/archaeological sites within the Sawtooth NRA are unmapped. There is a lack of information as to their historic importance and condition. For those sites that are known, funding for preservation, maintenance and restoration activities is insufficient. As a result, many valuable historic/archaeological resources, both known and unknown, have fallen into disrepair and may be lost to future generations.
- **Priority Historic/Archaeological Properties and Structures Action Items:**

Δ **Short-term:**

Objective 1: Restore, protect, preserve and interpret known historic sites.

Action (HPS Short-Term Priority 1): Develop and implement a plan, by priorities, to restore, protect, preserve and interpret known historic sites.

Objective 2: Develop baseline information for focusing actions on how and what to save and/or restore.

Action (HPS Short-Term Priority 3): Identify and inventory additional historic sites.

Δ **Long-term:** None prioritized at this time.

Issue #3: Historic and Pastoral Values

- **Desired Conditions:** Traditional land uses typifying the economic and social history of the Sawtooth NRA remain evident. Designated communities within the Sawtooth NRA are small, vibrant, and rustic, as defined by the legislation that established the Sawtooth NRA.
- **Problem:** The historic and pastoral values of the Sawtooth NRA related to traditional ranching and agricultural practices, and the Western⁷ character of Stanley and other designated communities within the Sawtooth NRA, are being lost as development occurs in a manner inconsistent with the historic character of the area. In addition, economic pressures, environmental conflict, and high land values are providing incentives for ranchers to sell their land to buyers who may have no interest in sustaining these traditional uses. As these traditional uses decline, their contributions to the scenic reminders of the historic and pastoral values of the Sawtooth NRA will significantly diminish.
- **Priority Historic and Pastoral Values Action Items:**
 - △ **Short-term:**
 - Objective 1:** Restore (and prevent loss of) scenic vistas, particularly along Highway 21.
 - Action (HPS Short-Term Priority 6):** Remove unnatural highway fillslope encroachment by dog-haired lodge-pole pine trees.
 - Objective 2:** Protect critical nighttime scenic resources.
 - Action (HPS Short-Term Priority 7):** Enact a “Dark Sky Ordinance” throughout the Sawtooth NRA.
 - △ **Long-term: None prioritized at this time.**

Natural, Sustainable Ecosystems

Overall Desired Condition

Healthy, sustainable and functioning natural ecosystems characterize the Sawtooth NRA, making it resilient to human disturbance. Effective education and enforcement of regulations minimize resource degradation from inappropriate recreational uses. The Sawtooth NRA supports wild places (areas with minimal human impact), including those without roads and motorized trails where natural processes dominate the landscape, providing opportunities for scientific study, public education and appreciation. Collaborative efforts between the Forest Service, other agencies, interest groups and private citizens resolve conflict among human activities, resulting in ecosystem sustainability.

Critical Issues

Issue #1: Fire

- **Desired Conditions:** Fire’s natural role in the ecosystem is recognized, understood and adopted through appropriate wildland fire-use programs within the Sawtooth NRA. Forests resemble a patchy mosaic with disturbance size and intensity commensurate to vegetation type (e.g. lodgepole pine = high intensity fire). Within wildland-urban interface areas, a balance between

⁷ Again, inclusion of the term “Western” in this sentence was not supported by all workshop participants, some of whom felt that it was vague and unnecessary.

vegetation screening and adequate defensible space exists, and surrounds fire-resistant structures and communities. New construction within fire-dependent vegetative types creates significant risks and social and economic impacts for society, and is discouraged. Limiting human interference with fire's natural role reduces fire-fighting costs and unacceptable environmental impacts.

- **Problem:** The absence of fire on the landscape has altered the composition, extent, and complexity of habitats in some areas to the point where unnaturally large fires cause unexpected environmental change. In addition, increasing private development in forested areas has exacerbated the risk to life and property from wildfires. Priority Action Items:
- **Fire Priority Action Items:**

Δ **Short-term:**

Objective 1: Control motorized access to reduce fire starts, reduce the spread of invasive species, protect over-wintering wildlife during vulnerable times of the year, and enhance the integrity of wild places.

Action (NES Short-Term Priority 4): Develop and implement a motorized access management strategy, including effective permitting, consistent with desired conditions

Objective 2: Reduce the loss of property and human life

Action (NES Short-Term Priority 6): Develop a "personal responsibility" policy for new construction, and compliance of existing structures to appropriate fire protection standards, in difficult-to-defend circumstances (e.g.: thick forest, difficult access, remote locations).

Δ **Long-term:**

Objective 1: Integrate fire back into the natural, sustainable ecosystem.

Action (NES Long-Term Priority 1): Implement a prescribed fire and wildland fire⁸ use plan for the Sawtooth NRA.

Objective 2: Reduce the loss of property and human life, and facilitate wildland fire use.

Action (NES Long-Term Priority 2): Create defensible fire corridors/units near developments and facilities.

Objective 3: Increase awareness of fire significance and management.

Action (HPS Long-Term Priority 5): Develop education programs to explain fire to visitors and residents, using the most current research and science.

Issue #2: Invasive Species

- **Desired Conditions:** Healthy, functioning native ecosystems limit the opportunity for non-native and unnatural plant and animal species to invade and establish. Active prevention and eradication programs inform employees, residents and visitors to the Sawtooth NRA about the need for early detection and ongoing prevention of invasive species establishment and proliferation.

⁸ Wildland fire use plans describe the appropriate conditions and places under which fire caused by natural ignitions (e.g. lightning) may be allowed to burn under the supervision of the Forest Service.

- **Problem:** Invasive plants and animals introduced into the Sawtooth NRA through commercial activities (e.g. domestic livestock, heavy equipment) or recreational use (e.g. livestock feed, vehicles, or boats) threaten native terrestrial and aquatic habitats, animals, agriculture, and economic and recreation opportunities within the Sawtooth NRA. Invasive threats currently exist and new infestations are expected in the future. Public education on invasive species threats, as well as timely response and treatment, are critical to effective control. Establishment and expansion of invasive species threaten many of the core values within the Sawtooth NRA.
- **Invasive Species Priority Action Items:**
 - Δ **Short-term:**
 - Objective 1:** Reduce the threat of new infestation of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species.
 - Action (NES Short-Term Priority 3):** Establish vehicle wash stations and livestock decontamination corrals at key entrance locations as a means to be certified weed free.
 - Objective 2:** Reduce the threat of new infestations of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species.
 - Action (NES Short-Term Priority 5):** Develop response plans to specific land and water disturbances that invite invasive species.
 - Δ **Long-term:**
 - Objective 1:** Increase the awareness, and control the spread, of existing invasive species.
 - Action (NES Long-Term Priority 4):** Develop an extensive, coordinated approach with residents, visitors and other volunteers to educate about and control existing infestations of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species.

Issue #3: Wild Places

- **Desired Conditions:** Healthy and functional areas with minimal human presence provide a cornerstone for natural systems and effective wildlife habitat. A limited network of well-maintained recreational trails and other facilities provide access to and through wild places. Wild places are important for many reasons, including their intrinsic, social and economic values.
- **Problem:** The need to protect wild places as cornerstones of healthy, natural systems can conflict with some recreational, social and commercial interests within the Sawtooth NRA. There is a finite amount of land with limited human influence remaining in the Sawtooth NRA. Increasing the official protection of these places can be a contentious social and political issue.
- **Wild Places Priority Action Items:**
 - Δ **Short-term:**
 - Objective 1:** Protect riparian and floodplain habitats from development in the Valley Creek floodplain.
 - Action (NES Short-Term Priority 1):** Stop development of lots along lower Valley Creek in Stanley by purchasing and/or exchanging lands and/or development rights.

Objective 2: Protect a key and unique ecosystem by reducing negative human impacts on Railroad Ridge⁹.

Action (NES Short-Term Priority 2): Close existing motorized infrastructure on Railroad Ridge (and restore to natural condition).

Δ Long-term:

Objective: Restore the aquatic ecosystem throughout the Sawtooth NRA by restoring in-stream flows to natural levels.

Action (NES Long-Term Priority 3): Lease/purchase water rights, and acquire additional water through legal and administrative changes, to increase in-stream flow.

Recreation

Overall Desired Condition

The Sawtooth National Recreation Area provides a showcase for environmentally conscious recreation within outstanding scenic and sensitive natural resources. Residents and visitors find the deliberate lack of some modern conveniences and limitations on the nature and extent of their recreational activities to be a reasonable tradeoff for their experience in this pristine and rugged environment. The Forest Service manages recreation and effectively enforces designations and carrying capacities in partnership with other local, state and federal agencies, commercial outfitters, guides, permittees, interest groups and private citizens. Ongoing recreation planning and implementation occurs in coordination with county and other Forest Service plans, and accommodates continuous changes in recreation patterns, demand and technology.

Critical Issues

Issue #1: Recreation Uses

- **Desired Conditions:** A spectrum of well-managed recreational uses occurs in areas appropriate for their use across the Sawtooth NRA. Recreation management, and decisions about what types of recreation activities to manage for, emphasizes activities to help people experience and enjoy the primary values of Public Law 92-400 (Scenic, Natural, Pastoral, Historic, Fish and Wildlife, and Recreation). Recreation management also recognizes the potential impacts of recreation on these values and seeks to minimize negative effects.

Recreationists interact in a mutually cooperative and respectful manner within shared use areas and designated activity areas. Designations include those made for a variety of recreational uses for motorized (including “scenic overflights”) and non-motorized uses, as well as areas designated for specific kinds of uses. Accessible semi-primitive motorized and non-motorized areas complement less accessible, harder to reach Wilderness. Recreational uses occur with respect for ecosystem and social capacities, as measured by established “Limits of Acceptable Change.” This minimizes user conflicts and resource damage and provides for the collective enjoyment of this and other core values within the Sawtooth NRA.

⁹ One participant objected to the specific reference to Railroad Ridge, preferring that the focus should be on addressing any unacceptable resource damage within specific areas, rather than closing an entire area.

The Forest Service collaborates with local government, Idaho Parks and Recreation, commercial guides and interest groups for recreational infrastructure planning, construction and maintenance.

- **Problem:** Increasing primitive and developed recreation use is affecting the ability of the Forest Service and communities within the Sawtooth NRA to meet objectives for quality recreation experiences and activities within the framework of Sawtooth NRA core values. It is also creating unacceptable environmental impacts and an increased need for restoration of overused and abused recreation areas. If this increased demand is not adequately planned for and managed, it could result in threats to Sawtooth NRA core values.
- **Recreation Use Priority Action Items:**
 - △ **Short-term: None prioritized at this time.**
 - △ **Long-term:**
 - Objective 1:** Increase, and disperse, winter recreation opportunities by improving visitor comfort and convenience in key areas.
 - Action (Rec Long-term Priority 1):** Build warming huts and overnight huts in key areas, and possibly connect with existing hut system.
 - Objective 2:** Increase, and disperse, winter recreation opportunities by improving visitor comfort and convenience; Improve health and safety.
 - Action (Rec Long-term Priority 2):** Install winter toilet facilities in key recreation areas.

Issue #2: ORV and Travel Management

- **Desired Conditions:** An established and adequately enforced travel plan, along with informative and visible signage, provides opportunities and guidance for a variety of motorized and non-motorized travel through the Sawtooth NRA in harmony with Sawtooth NRA core values. The Forest Service, counties, local and state agencies, local interest groups, and private citizens work collaboratively to maintain, educate, and patrol travel routes.
- **Problem:** The Sawtooth NRA is not well suited for intensive off-road vehicle use. Increasing demand for this type of recreation use, as well as instances of irresponsible off-road/off-trail use, threatens the core values identified in the legislation that established the Sawtooth NRA. There is inadequate infrastructure (e.g. a designated trail system with an adequate number of connecting and looping trails, trailheads, etc.) to meet an “appropriate level” of off-road vehicle use in this area. In addition, there is a lack of education, enforcement capability, and information for appropriate off-road vehicle use.

Snowmobiles need to be better regulated so that they are kept on designated trails and open play areas, so that impacts from noise, light, exhaust fumes/motorized pollutants and conflicts with other users, wildlife and resources are minimized.

Impacts of recreation (for example, from snowmobiles and hikers) on wildlife and habitat need to be evaluated. In addition, use of personal watercraft on Redfish Lake is increasing, and needs to be planned for and managed.

- **ORV/Travel Management Priority Action Items:**

- Δ **Short-term:**

- Objective 1:** Provide opportunities for motorized and non-motorized recreationists to enjoy their activities without conflict or resource impacts (particularly impacts on fish and wildlife).

- Action (Rec Short-Term Priority 1):** Identify and designate motorized and non-motorized recreation roads, trails, and areas (closed to motorized use unless posted open).

- Objective 2:** Improve visitor experience and reduce resource damage.

- Action (Rec Short-Term Priority 2):** Increase the number of trained individuals enforcing FS travel and other regulations, especially on weekends and hunting season.

- Objective 3:** Increase effectiveness of law enforcement and user education efforts for motorized travel.

- Action (Rec Short-Term Priority 5):** Create a peer-group to assist law enforcement officers by monitoring compliance with FS travel and other regulations, especially on weekends and hunting season.

- Δ **Long-term: None prioritized at this time.**

Issue #3: Visitor and Interpretive Services

- **Desired Conditions:** Year-round professional emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) provided by public and private entities, as well as quality routine non-emergency medical services, satisfy basic requirements for safety, health and welfare for both the community and visitors. Cities, counties and federal agencies proportionally share the funding for such services.

Extensive directional and educational guidance for visitors that connects them with the natural setting is provided year-round by Forest Service informational, historic and environmental interpretative services in partnership with the City of Stanley, local businesses and commercial outfitters and guides. Year-round restaurants, lodging, outfitting, guiding and other services provide a positive and memorable experience for residents and visitors.

Partnerships between federal agencies, local government and non-government organizations provide special interpretive events that capitalize on the available resources and help to improve the economic stability of Sawtooth NRA communities.

- **Problem:** Given the existing financial, housing and staffing resources, visitor services (e.g. emergency services, medical services, information services, food and lodging, etc.) are too seasonal, and difficult to establish and sustain within Sawtooth NRA-designated communities. All levels of government are stressed by attempting to provide visitor service commensurate with the volume of summer tourism and tourists' expectations. Quality visitor services are available year-round in Ketchum, but are fewer in Stanley, which serves as a central point of contact for visitors within the NRA. There is no comprehensive plan for visitor services in Stanley or other Sawtooth NRA communities.

- **Visitor and Interpretive Services Priority Action Items:**

- Δ **Short-term:**

- Objective 1:** Provide easy to understand and up-to-date information, and create an expectation that this is a special place with unique values, opportunities and management.

- Action (Rec Short-Term Priority 3):** Create a new visual identity for the Sawtooth NRA and improve availability and quality of visitor information at portal sites, major trailheads and activity centers, and with the website.

- Objective 2:** Provide adequate recreation infrastructure consistent with Sawtooth NRA core values.

- Action (Rec Short-Term Priority 4):** Assess adequacy of recreation infrastructure for future use demand (Including dispersed camping/use impacts).

- Objective 3:** Recognize the high cost of search and rescue to the counties and try to find a way to lessen the burden on them for services to non-residents.

- Action (Rec Short-Term Priority 6):** Explore means to reimburse counties for search and rescue and emergency service expenses not recovered from the user.

- Δ **Long-term: None prioritized at this time.**

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Foundation for Implementation

Workshop participants consistently affirmed that implementation of recommended actions was the only true measure of the success of this process. The diagram on page 24 illustrates the organizational structure that will be developed **beginning early in 2007**, with the core mission to implement high priority actions, monitor the results, and annually (at least) report back to stakeholders and the public regarding the progress of implementation.

The following assumptions are critical to the success of implementation

- 1) As stated in the “Commitment to Implementation” section of the introduction to this document, the expectation is that a diversity of stakeholders (not just the Forest Service or the Sawtooth Society) will provide leadership for initiating and completing actions.
- 2) Action implementation leaders will coordinate with other organizations, agencies, etc. who may already be working on a similar action item so as not to duplicate effort, and to pool resources.
- 3) This document reflects a dynamic strategy. It will be assessed and updated annually as the high priority action items are initiated and/or completed, or as new information affects the critical issues or action items identified in this strategy.
- 4) Detailed descriptions of what will be monitored, by whom, and by when, will be prepared prior to action item implementation.
- 5) Stakeholder education/interpretation is a critical component of every value and issue.
- 6) Action items proposed by stakeholders during the process, but not included within this document or Appendix 3, are documented in supplemental tables used during Workshops 2 and 3. These supplemental tables contain useful information, and should be referenced as needed during the implementation process.

Immediate High-Priority Actions

Table 1 – High Priority Actions displays the actions identified at the conclusion of Workshop 3 that **workshop participants felt most urgently needed to be initiated within 2007**. The number by each action refers to its numbered location in Appendix 3 – Complete List of Priority Actions, and is included in the table for ease in cross-referencing.

Short-term actions are defined as those that can be initiated and completed within 1-3 years. Long-term actions are defined as those that will take more than 3 years to complete once initiated. Appendix 3 should be referenced as other actions are completed, or if there is an opportunity to grab some “low hanging fruit” that didn’t make the immediate high priority list below.



Table 1: Immediate High Priority Actions

(Items with an asterisk denote those items of particularly high priority within this list)

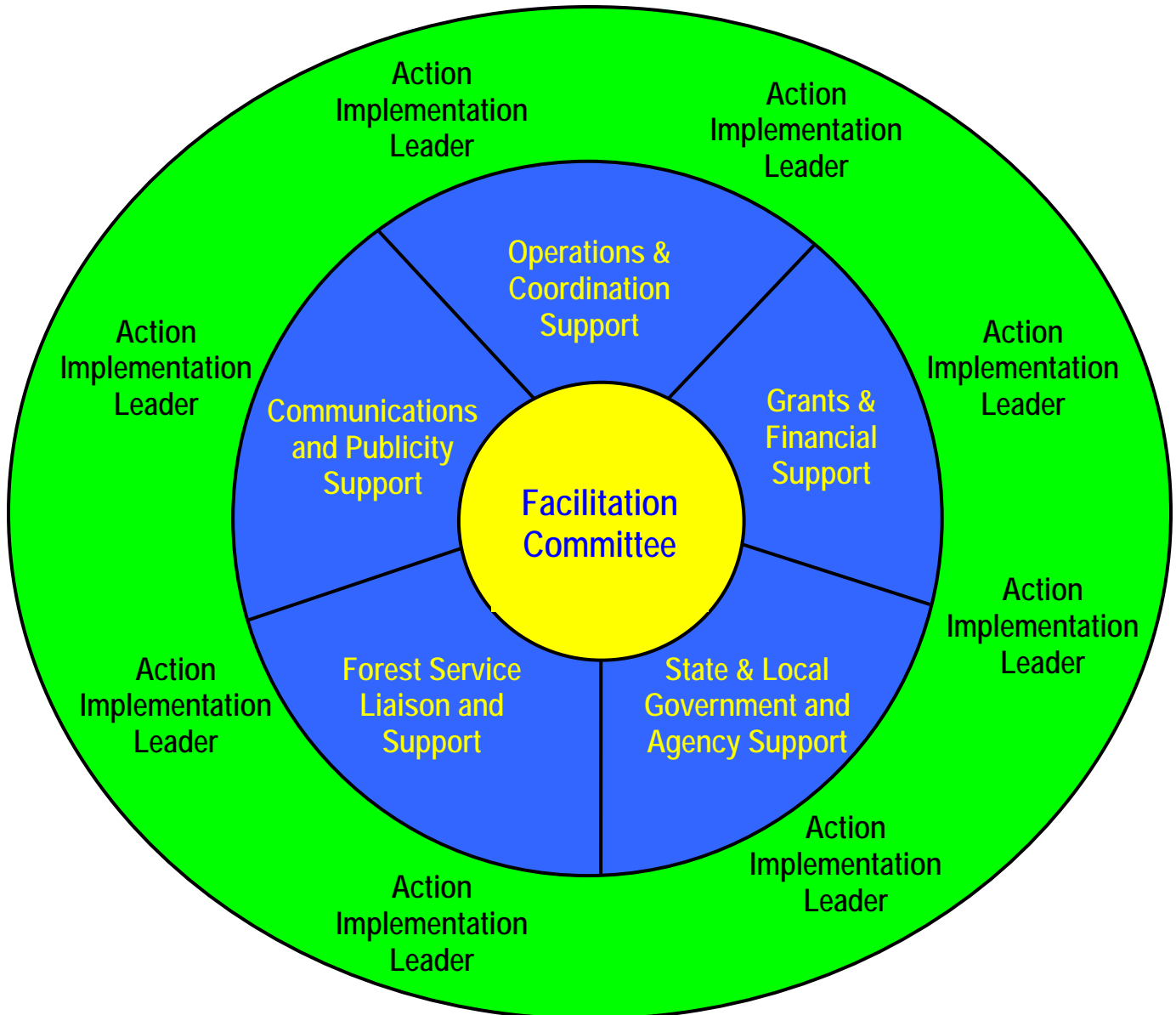
Appendix 3 Table Number	Short or Long Term	Value - Issue	Action	Objective	Potential Action Implementation Leader	Other Critical Stakeholders
6*	Long	ECS Affordable Housing	Provide diverse affordable housing (tent, RV, and fixed structures) for people who are employed full-time, part-time or seasonally in the Sawtooth NRA. (look at state land trade opportunities)	Establish a stable workforce and helps stabilize the local economy.	Jeff Clegg, Andy Gunderson	Coalition of Partners (Housing authority, Federal, State, County, and City)
7	Long	ECS Community Services	Relocate at least 1/2 of Sawtooth NRA Headquarters employees to the Stanley area.	Stabilize the workforce and add families to the community.	Mayor of Stanley and the Sawtooth NRA Deputy Ranger	Employees and their families
11*	Short	FW Salmon recovery	Develop a political advocacy coalition for recovery of Sawtooth NRA wild salmon runs, including advocacy for bypass of four Lower Snake Dams if necessary (including a mitigation package for stakeholders negatively affected), other downstream hydrosystem improvements, harvest controls, hatchery reforms, and habitat restoration.	Recover salmon & other threatened and endangered anadromous fish species returning to the Stanley area	Tom Stuart (Idaho Rivers United)	Mayors of other river communities and Tribes
18	Long	FW Salmon/Fisheries	Complete streambank stabilization/restoration projects in priority areas throughout the Sawtooth NRA	Recover salmon & other threatened and endangered anadromous fish species returning to the Stanley area	Soil & Water Conservation Districts	Idaho Department of Agriculture, Forest Service and IDFG

Appendix 3 Table Number	Short or Long Term	Value - Issue	Action	Objective	Potential Action Implementation Leader	Other Critical Stakeholders
22	Short	HPS Land Development/ Easements	Acquire Idaho Department of Lands properties within the Sawtooth NRA	Protection of critical scenic resource and compliance with Sawtooth NRA core values	Sawtooth Society and Forest Service	Forest Service, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Transportation Department, coalition of community leaders
28	Long	HPS Land Development/ Easements	Accelerate acquisition of critical conservation easements, and include protection for scenic, recreation and other core values	Protect critical scenic, recreation and other core value resources in compliance with Sawtooth NRA legislation	Sawtooth Society	Forest Service, and other NGOs
29	Long	HPS Land Development/ Easements	Amend the Private Land Regulations to provide clarity in interpretation, and more tools for enforcement (fines, liens, other, community design review committee)	Reduce ambiguity in interpreting compliance with regulations and increase consistency, make compliance and enforcement more reasonable	Keith Reese, and the Forest Service	Blaine and Custer Counties and designated community representatives
31*	Short	NSE Wild places	Stop development of lots along lower Valley Creek in Stanley by purchasing and/or exchanging lands and/or development rights.	Protect riparian and floodplain habitats from development in the Valley Creek floodplain	NGO and Custer County	Stanley Mayor and City Council
37*	Long	NSE Fire	Develop a prescribed fire and wildland fire use plan for the Sawtooth NRA	Integrate fire back into the natural, sustainable ecosystem	Forest Service	Stanley Fire Department, IDFG, BLM, IDL

Appendix 3 Table Number	Short or Long Term	Value - Issue	Action	Objective	Potential Action Implementation Leader	Other Critical Stakeholders
39*	Long	NSE Wild places	Lease/purchase water rights, and acquire additional water through legal and administrative changes, to increase in-stream flow	Restore the aquatic ecosystem throughout the Sawtooth NRA by restoring in-stream flows to natural levels	Idaho Department of Water Resources	National Marine Fisheries Service, Forest Service
40	Long	NSE Invasive species	Develop an extensive, coordinated approach with residents, visitors and other volunteers to control existing infestations of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species	Increase the awareness, and control the spread, of existing invasive species	Sawtooth Society	County Weed Districts, Forest Service, IDFG, outfitters and guides
42	Short	REC OHV/Travel management	Identify and designate motorized and non-motorized recreation roads, trails, and areas (closed to motorized use unless posted open).	Provide opportunities for motorized and non-motorized groups to enjoy their activities without conflict or resource impacts (particularly impacts on fish and wildlife)	Norma Douglas (Wilderness Society) and the Forest Service	Motorized and non-motorized interest groups, NGOs
43*	Short	REC OHV/Travel management	Increase the number of trained individuals enforcing FS travel and other regulations, especially on weekends and hunting season.	Improve visitor experience and reduce resource damage	Norma Douglas (Wilderness Society) and the Forest Service	Idaho Fish and Game, Parks and Recreation
44	Short	REC Visitor services	Create a new visual identity for the Sawtooth NRA and improve availability and quality of visitor information at portal sites, major trailheads and activity centers, and with the website	Provide easy to understand and up-to-date information, and create an expectation that this is a special place with unique values, opportunities and management	NGO	Forest Service

Appendix 3 Table Number	Short or Long Term	Value - Issue	Action	Objective	Potential Action Implementation Leader	Other Critical Stakeholders
46	Short	REC OHV/Travel management	Create a peer-group to assist law enforcement officers by monitoring compliance with FS travel and other regulations, especially on weekends and hunting season	Increase effectiveness of law enforcement and user education efforts for motorized travel	ORV Group and the Forest Service	NGOs, other recreation organizations, IDFG, IPR

Organization Structure -- Action Implementation and Resource Support



Resource Support

Used by Action Implementation Leaders (AILs) as needed to provide support or direct AILs on where to get support

- Communications + Publicity: Ed Waldapfel, 208.727.5000
- Grant Applications + Financial: Carol Cole, 208.727.5007
- Forest Service Liaison: Joe Harper, 208.774.3000
- Operations + Coordination: Paul Hill, 208.774.3645
- State + Local Government + Agency: *To be determined*

Facilitation Committee

Facilitate Action Implementation Leaders (AILs) activities and eliminate obstacles where needed. Coordinate activities of different AILs with local governments and others. Monitor progress in implementation. Coordinate annual public forum to review implementation progress

- Blaine County: Tom Bowman, 208.788.5500
- Custer County: Cliff Hansen, 208.879.2325
- City of Stanley: Hannah Stauts, 208.774.2286
- Forest Service (Sawtooth NRA): Sara Baldwin, 208.727.5020;
Joe Harper, 208.774.3000
- Forest Service (Sawtooth NF): Sara Baldwin, 208.727.5020
- Sawtooth Society: Bob Hayes, 208.788.5500
Paul Hill, 208.774.3645

A FINAL WORD...

Those implementing the strategy are encouraged to refer to previous versions of the action item tables (i.e. from Workshops 2 and 3) for more detailed information regarding how to implement, relative cost and time to implement, and suggestions for monitoring and evaluation. These tables are available on the Sawtooth Vision 20/20 project website, www.sawtoothsociety.org/snra.

Now go forth and do great things...



**Sawtooth Vision 20/20 --
Shared Strategies for the Future**