

Sawtooth National Recreation Area Planning

April - December 2006

Location: Stanley, ID

Background:

Located in central Idaho, the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) is one of the largest federally sanctioned recreation areas in the United States. Situated between four mountain ranges, with peaks reaching 10,000 feet or higher, the area provides spectacular scenery and an abundance of outdoor activities. The SNRA is also home to over 1,000 lakes and four major rivers, making it a popular fishing, kayaking, and whitewater rafting destination. The USDA Forest Service administers the 756,000 acres of the SNRA, which is part of the larger Sawtooth National Forest. Given its unique setting and management challenges, the Forest Service decided to develop a plan for the recreation area that was separate from, but coordinated with, the forest plan. In order to involve as many community groups as possible, the Forest Service asked an independent local organization, the Sawtooth Society, to organize and run a series of workshops to formulate the vision, strategic goals, objectives, and key implementation actions for the area. The U.S. Institute provided neutral support for the facilitation services throughout the process, through the efforts of roster member Susan Hayman.



Highlights/Innovation

- A unique facet of this effort was the role of the Sawtooth Society, which acted as the convener of the group. This group presented a great opportunity for stakeholder engagement because of its broad membership, and it had the community's respect as an independent organization. It also enabled Forest Service staff to participate more actively with the other stakeholders in the process.
- The use of "visioning" (the process of identifying, developing and documenting vision and values) in the development of Forest Land and Resource Management Plans is an effective way to get the community involved in the planning process. This provides for a more community-based, and proactive plan, and can anticipate and address many of the conflicts experienced in other planning efforts. The hoped-for outcome is a forest management plan that the community has helped develop and truly stands behind.

Results and Accomplishments

The collaborative group worked together over six months to develop the vision and goals for the SNRA using a 35-year planning window. They also developed implementation plans for the next 5-10 years. The group focused on formulating a plan that was comprehensive, community based, and easily measurable. Public meetings were held in Stanley, ID, and in surrounding communities to gain input and support for the strategic plan. The Society's report was completed in December 2006, and it will be integrated into the Sawtooth National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan.

Credits

Partner from National Roster of ECR Practitioners

Susan J. Hayman, North Country Resources, Inc.
Facilitation

U.S. Institute Project Manager

Larry Fisher, Ph.D., Senior Program Manager
Public Lands and Natural Resources Program
Phone: (520) 901-8544; FAX: (520) 670-5530
Email: fisher@ecr.gov; Website: www.ecr.gov