

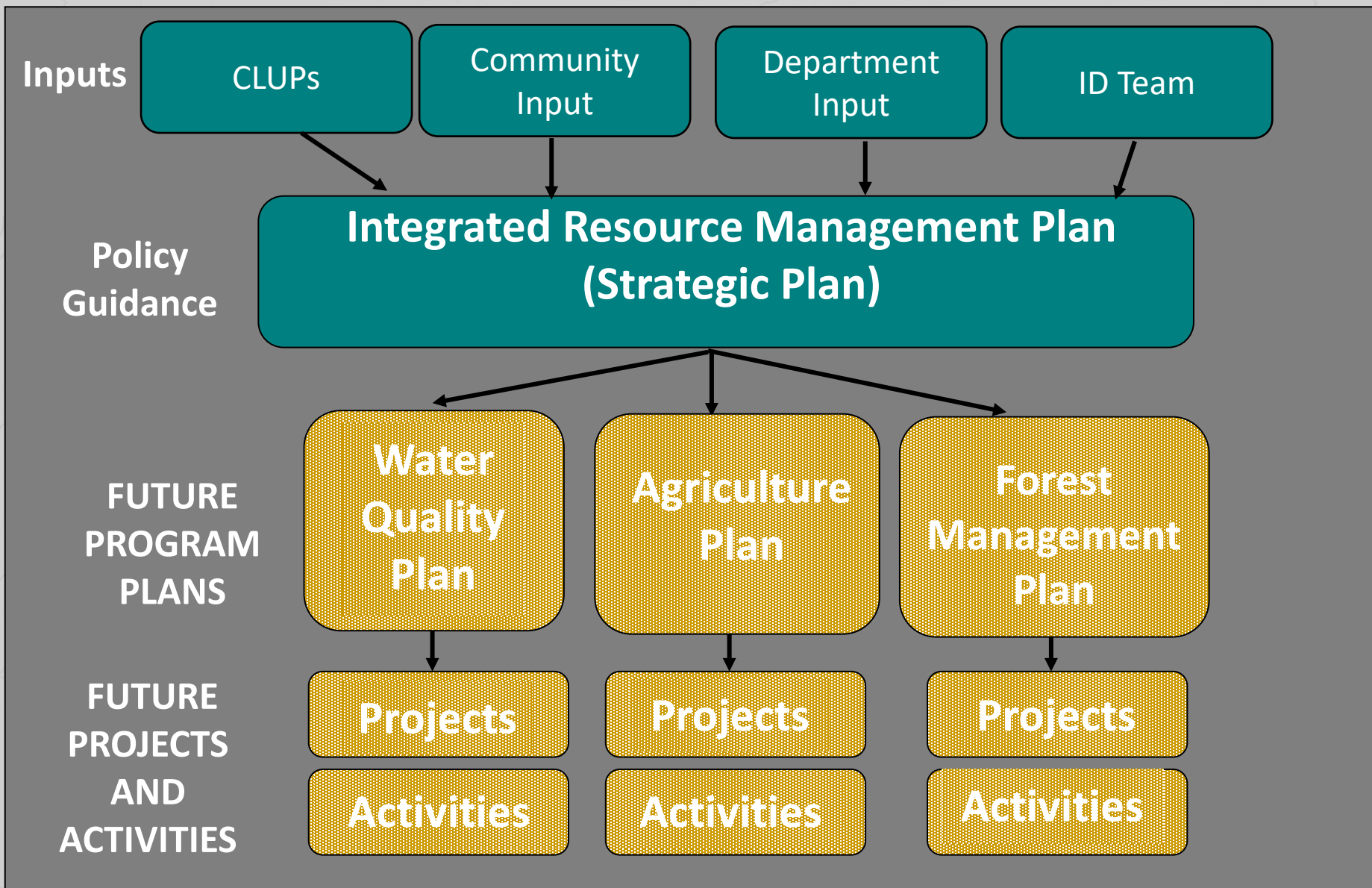


NAVAJO FORESTLANDS IRMP



Managing Our Land
Resources Collectively for the Diné

Division of Natural Resources EXPO
Presenter – *Frankie Thompson*
Henderson Fine Art Performance Hall
San Juan College, Farmington, NM
July 1, 2026



IRMP Development & Future Application

What is an IRMP?

- A tribe's strategic plan for management of a reservation's resources
- A tribal policy document that lists the goals for the future, and develops recommended actions to better manage resources for the benefit of the Navajo
- Based on issues, concerns & solutions identified by the Community & Resource Department representatives
- Provides guidance for future development of resource plans & activities

Integrated Resource Management

An approach to reservation resource management which takes a whole system approach, viewing all resources—natural, social, cultural, and economic—as being interrelated in such a manner that management actions directed at one resource also affect others.

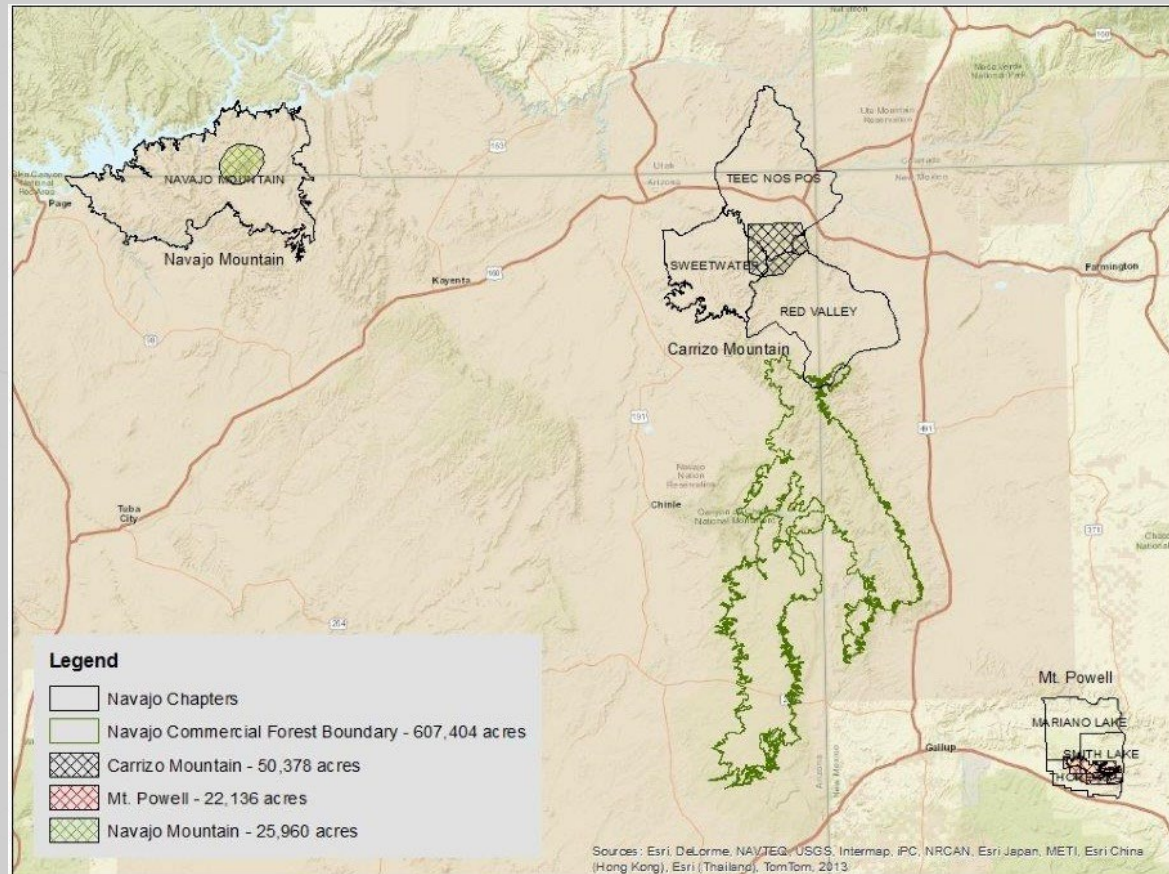


Forestlands Project Areas

The IRMP Project includes 705,878 acres of Navajo Forestlands within the following areas:

Commercial Forest: 607,404 AC
Defiance Plateau: 270,467.6 AC
Chuska Mountain: 336,940.5 AC

Satellite Forest:
Navajo Mountain: 25,960 AC
Mount Powell: 22,136 AC
Carrizo Mountain: 50,378 AC



IRMP Planning Process



**Background
Information,
Chapter
CLUPS, Data**

**Listen to the
Community to
Understand
Concerns,
Needs &
Hopes for the
Future**

**Develop
Goals,
Strategies &
Measures**

**Resource
Management
Options**

**Draft IRMP
Report
Development**

What Did it Include?

*Includes an assessment & evaluation
of the following resources and
activities:*



- Forests
- Vegetation
- Soils & Geology
- Mining and Minerals
- Fish & Wildlife
- Water Resources
- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources & Sacred Sites
- Land Ownership
- Infrastructure
- Recreation
- Home Site Development
- Agriculture & Rangeland Management
- Fire Management
- Community Development Activities

Looks At ALL Resources Together, As Part Of One Land Area

Community First Planning Approach

- Community centered approach focused on meeting community goals for plan development
- Grounded in the places, culture, environment, health, spirituality & other community values
- Helps communities identify potential preferences & strategies for moving forward to achieve their goals
- Uses technology to analyze dozens of potential resource management options to determine the right mix of strategies to meet community & management goals

Community Participation



Chapters Within Project Area

- Navajo Mountain
- TeecNosPos
- Sweetwater
- Red Valley
- Mariano Lake
- Smith Lake
- Thoreau
- Oak Springs
- St. Michaels
- Klagetoh
- Kinlichee
- Nazlini
- Sawmill
- Fort Defiance
- Red Lake
- Crystal
- Lukachukai
- Tsaile/Wheatfields
- Round Rock
- Twin Lakes
- Mexican Springs
- Tohatchi
- Naschitti
- Sheep Springs
- Two Grey Hills
- Sanostee
- Cove

Community Participation Opportunities

Includes:

- 9 Regional Community meetings
 - Written & oral translation [Navajo/ English]
- 2 Regional Open Houses
 - Written & oral translation [Navajo/ English]
- Chapter meetings by request
 - Written & oral translation [Navajo/ English]
- Community Survey (online & printed)
- IRMP Project Video [Navajo/English] (online)
- IRMP Website
- IRMP Facebook Page, Twitter & Instagram Accounts

Social media Used:

<https://navajoirmp.wixsite.com/irmp>

Facebook: [Navajo Forestlands IRMP](#)

Twitter: [NNForestIRMP](#)

Instagram: [navajoforestlandsirmp](#)



IRMP Development: Community & Resource Dept.

Community Survey

- Provides demographic info that describes our reach
- Validates what we've heard from community meetings
- Identifies additional issues/concerns not captured from other community input sources

Community Comments

- Regional Community meetings
- Chapter meetings, Local Farm Board
- Navajo Nation Fair
- Web and social media comments
- Organized by theme, comments heard most frequently

Community Land Use Plans (CLUPs)

- Includes collection & review of 21 Chapter CLUPs adjacent to Forestland Project Areas (6 CLUPs not available)
- Summarized top goals & objectives of community
- Identifies resource management issues/collaboration opportunities

Resource Department Input

- Review of project vision, goals and objectives
- Cross reference & integrate community concerns, goals & objectives
- Includes additional recommendations for goals & objectives
- Compare against baseline Resource Assessment document
- Apply Community First Methodology to consider different management approaches help to achieve goals



Continued Community Engagement

Where We've Been:

- 11 Community & Chapter Meetings Held
- 128 Returned Community Surveys
- 21 Reviewed Community Land Use Plans
- Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)

What We've Heard: *"The mountains are sacred."*

- Water Security issues: potable water quantity, water quality, delivery infrastructure
- Communities want enforcement of violations regarding grazing, trash, homesites, firewood, hunting, fishing

86%

Protect
Cultural
Areas

74%

Manage the
Forestlands
for Long-
Term Health

88%

Monitor
Wildlife
Populations
& Habitats

88%

No to Mining
Activities

77%

Yes to Active
Restoration



Navajo Nation Natural Resources Issues & Concerns



Listening to All Voices:

Firewood Collection without Permits and by Vendors

Demand for Homesite Locations, Repairs and Access

Declining Mule Deer Population

Watershed Protection

Need for the Restoration & Replanting of Burned Areas

Lack of Communication about Habitat Changes

Threats to Traditional & Medicinal Plants

Policies & Practices of Timber Harvesting

Updated Resource Data/Information & Sharing Across Departments

Need for Forest Thinning Activities to Manage Forest Density

Invasive Species & Resource Impacts

Agency, Department and Community Coordination on Resource Management Activities

Poaching

Review & Application of Resource Management Activities & Plans Across Departments

Habitat Fragmentation

Overpopulation of Feral Horses and their Impacts

Illegal Trash Dumping

Unregulated and Over Grazing of Trespass Livestock

Green Cutting of Trees

Access Roads Conditions & Impacts

Identification & Protection of Cultural Resources, Practices & Places

Inconsistent Water Supply, Access and Quality

Degradation of Wetlands, Ponds & Streams by Livestock

Soil Erosion

Primary Themes Collected from Community Input

1. Grazing permit administration, management and enforcement
2. Identification, protection and education about cultural sites, practices and traditions
3. Conservation and protection of wildlife and their habitat
4. Implement forest management & restoration for forest health
5. Forest product permitting, management & enforcement
6. Balanced recreation development with sound management of areas
7. Identification and maintenance of key access roads
8. Weed & invasive species management needed along with active restoration of native species
9. Water infrastructure needed to support communities, agriculture & farming
10. Watershed protection to support water quality, supply and environment
11. Need more enforcement, stricter penalties for violations associated with trash & illegal dumping

Resource Assessments



IRMP Resource Assessments

Provide a high-overview of Natural and Cultural Resources within the Navajo Nation focusing on the five forestland areas: the Chuska Mountains, Defiance Plateau, Carrizo Mountains, Navajo Mountain and Mount Powell. The main objective of the Resource Assessments is to **Build Awareness** between the resource departments, on key issues, needs and initiatives, and to communicate the related community concerns.



Agriculture



Air Quality



Cultural Resources



Wildlife & Fisheries



Forest Resources



Noxious Weeds & Invasive Species



Water Resources



Housing & Land



Recreation



Wetlands & Riparian



Forest Roads



Human Resources



Visual Resources & Viewsheds



Minerals

Initial IRMP Resource Assessments

Shared Resource Challenges Identified:

(Issues with wide cross-over between departments and the public)

- Livestock Management
- Farming Support & Infrastructure
- Housing
- Abandoned Mines and Resource Extraction
- Invasive Species
- Dissemination of Information
- Enforcement
- Cultural Respect
- Natural Hazards
- Habitat Loss and Fragmentation
- Resource Economies
- Recreation
- Roads and Transportation
- Water Rights
- Water Infrastructure
- Water Quality
- Water Use and Conservation

A Draft copy of the Resource Assessment document is available on the IRMP Project Website <https://navajoirmp.wixsite.com/irmp> or as a download on to your flash drive upon request.

Listening to All Voices: Issues & Concerns

Community/Chapter	Resource Department
Livestock Overgrazing - Enforcement	Declining Mule Deer Population
Firewood Collection	Feral Horses
Restoration of Burned Areas	Watershed Protection
Forest Density/Thinning	Timber Harvesting
Feral Horses	Agency & Department Coordination on Resource Management Activities
Protection of Cultural Sites/Traditional Practices	Lack of Communication About Habitat Changes
Water Supply, Access & Quality	Updated Resource Data/Information & Sharing Across Departments
Homesite Locations, Repairs & Access	Review & Application of Resource Management Activities & Plans Across Departments
Traditional & Medicinal Plant Use Threatened	Identification & Protection of Cultural Resources, Practices & Places
Invasive Species & Resource Impacts	Invasive Species & Resource Impacts

IRMP Vision

Vision: *The Navajo Nation Manages, Protects, Conserves, and Enhances forest lands for the People, using an interdisciplinary and integrated approach for all resources.*



Potential Integrated Management Options



Initial IRMP Goals

1. Strengthen the preservation and incorporation of Navajo culture, traditional ways and values
2. Increase active forest management for the benefit of multiple natural resources
3. Strengthen the ability of the forestlands to recover from disturbances, changing environmental conditions and climate change
4. Create economic development opportunities
5. Provide education and outreach to community
6. Improve compliance with current laws and regulations regarding permits
7. Improve enforcement of current laws and regulations
8. Increase rangeland management to ensure adequate grazing for wildlife and livestock
9. Conservation and protection of wildlife and their habitat
10. Provide an adequate, safe water supply for people, livestock and wildlife to ensure water security for the future
11. Improve communication and coordination between NN Departments and BIA/Federal Government
12. Identification and maintenance of key forestlands access roads
13. Balanced recreation development with sound management of areas

Goals & Recommendations Advanced with Each Management Option

Management Option A: Increase Resiliency Through Conservation/Restoration	Management Option B: Active Management & Enforcement	Management Option C: Culture, People & Partnerships
GOALS SUPPORTED: • Strengthen recovery from adverse conditions and climate change • Conserve & protect wildlife & their habitat • Active forest management • Ensure water security for the future • Ensure adequate grazing for wildlife and livestock RECOMMENDATIONS: • Forest Health • Land Stewardship • Climate change, extreme weather events, natural hazards • Wildlife Protection & Monitoring • Protection of rivers, lakes streams (watershed) • Restore native ecosystems • Resource inventories and mapping • Mimic natural processes	GOALS SUPPORTED: • Improve enforcement • Improve permit compliance • Active forest management • Road maintenance • Ensure water security for the future • Ensure adequate grazing for wildlife and livestock RECOMMENDATIONS: • Improve permit management & enforcement of violations against trash dumping, firewood collection, cutting • Address grazing management • Perform select timber harvests • Develop Resource Management Plans & Policies (Forestry, Agriculture) • Significantly Reduce Feral Horse Population	GOALS SUPPORTED: • Strengthen & Protect Navajo Culture • Create economic development opportunities • Balance Recreation development • Agency coordination • Community education& outreach • Ensure water security for the future • Ensure adequate grazing for wildlife and livestock RECOMMENDATIONS: • Chapter Infrastructure & Community Development • Resource development, permitting & use for communities • Education on resource use & development • Agency collaboration • Recreation Development • Economic Development • Cultural Protection

Selected Preferred Management Option

Preferred Management Option: Active Land Stewardship By and For the Diné

GOALS SUPPORTED:

- Strengthen the preservation and incorporation of Navajo culture, traditional ways and values
- Increase active forest management for the benefit of multiple natural resources
- Conservation and protection of wildlife and their habitat
- Create economic development opportunities
- Strengthen the ability of the forestlands to recover from disturbances, changing environmental conditions and climate changes
- Improve rangeland management to ensure adequate grazing for wildlife and livestock
- Provide an adequate, safe water supply for people, livestock and wildlife to ensure water security for the future
- Provide education and outreach to Navajo communities
- Improve enforcement of current laws and regulations

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Communicate with communities through educational programs; develop and utilize Navajo speakers
- Identify forest harvest areas and implement select forest treatments to ensure and promote forest health
- Conduct thorough inventories of cultural resources sites, traditional and medicinal plants, wildlife, grazing animals, water retention areas, etc. to better understand resources
- Work with the Chapters on natural resource projects
- Work to maintain the diversity and heterogeneity of wildlife habitats
- Reduce the feral horse population
- Educate the public and enforce current policies and regulations
- Adjust and enforce grazing permits to support current range conditions and carrying capacity
- Foster and grow traditional Navajo land stewardship ethic across all generations in our communities with a focus on building resilience and restoring the land
- Share data and information across NN Division of Natural Resource Departments, Federal Government agencies, Chapters
- Develop and implement an Adaptive Planning Process
- Identify funding options for natural resource projects
- Involve the youth in conservation and land stewardship projects
- Evaluate and recommend modifications to Chapter land zoning and permitted uses adjacent to the forestlands to ensure Natural Resource Protection

The Preferred Integrated Resource Management Option focuses the work of the Navajo Forestlands IRMP on nine primary goals.

1. Strengthen the preservation and incorporation of Navajo culture, traditional ways and values
2. Increase active forest management for the benefit of multiple natural resources
3. Conservation and protection of wildlife and their habitat
4. Create economic development opportunities
5. Strengthen the ability of the forestlands to recover from disturbances, changing environmental conditions and climate changes
6. Improve rangeland management to ensure adequate grazing for wildlife and livestock
7. Provide an adequate, safe water supply for people, livestock and wildlife to ensure water security for the future
8. Provide education and outreach to Navajo Communities
9. Improve enforcement of current laws and regulation

RECOMMENDATIONS (ORGANIZED BY GOAL)

(1) GOAL: STRENGTHEN THE PRESERVATION AND INCORPORATION OF NAVAJO CULTURE, TRADITIONAL WAYS AND VALUES

Recommendations:

- Update the Division of Natural Resources on current legislation pertaining to NEPA & ensure compliance.
 - Conduct Heritage & Historic Preservation Outreach
 - NEPA protocol/manual for DNR departments including videos, DVDs
- Understand AARPA Bulletin 38, for evaluating and documenting Traditional Cultural Properties and Cultural Landscapes and provide information and education to the public.
 - Encourage ethnographic surveys before and after projects.
 - Apply guidance to mountains, high places, and elevated places
- Conduct an inventory of cultural resource sites & medicinal plants. Develop methods for sharing and educating local communities about protection of places, traditions and sensitive areas
- Track and monitor burial sites to determine the extent of the problem with burials in unauthorized places. Ensure compliance with land office regulations regarding burial sites: acknowledge, educate and apply regulations
- Ensure better access to cultural resources spatial (GIS) information between DNR departments
- Identify and protect traditional plants used in ceremonies and gathering thereof; harvest seeds, replant, and establish native seed banks for restoration. Note: Fish & Wildlife has started a seed bank that could be replicated
- Undertake recruitment & training of Navajo speakers who can interpret the “technical” aspects of natural resource management and communicate with the public
- Establish educational programs to teach cultural/traditional ways to younger generations for the protection of cultural and natural resources
- Demonstrate and deliver messages to the Navajo People that traditionally it is not good to overgraze forestlands or any other lands

(2)GOAL: INCREASE ACTIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT FOR THE BENEFIT OF MULTIPLE NATURAL RESOURCES

Recommendations:

- Update and adopt the Forest Management Plan
- Identify future commercial harvests based on demand and forest health
- Determine forest needs to ensure sustainability for wood collection, watershed protection, range management needs, wildlife and recreation
- Assess markets and identify and recruit buyers for 1.) wood waste product and 2). Timber products
- Investigate niche, international markets; Markets open to Native producers
- Implement select forest treatments to maintain forest health
- Conduct timber harvests in select management units to promote forest health and generate resource revenue
- Conduct forest thinning activities within the forestlands to provide room for tree growth, to help diversify vegetation base for wildlife species and reduce risk of catastrophic wildland fire
- Improve management of forest product permitting system to ensure that permits cannot be sold or transferred. Increase enforcement of forest product permit violations to prevent resale of wood and cutting of green trees
- Stay abreast of Best Management Practices and training and apply to forest management activities
- Conduct before/after studies of forest road access impacts, maintenance requirements and methods to implement forest restoration projects on unnecessary roads
- Reach out to EPA Region 9 to ensure forest impacts from mining remediation work is considered

(3) GOAL: CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION OF WILDLIFE AND THEIR HABITAT

Recommendations:

- Maintain inventories of Threatened and Endangered species, big game and fisheries
 - Distributions, habitat needs, and major threats
- Broadly: maintain diversity and heterogeneity of wildlife habitat
 - Horizontal diversity of landscape
 - Vertical diversity of individual forest stands
- Maintain inventories of Threatened and Endangered species, big game and fisheries
 - Distributions, habitat needs, and major threats
- Establish collaborative relationships with wildlife agencies and universities to acquire funding for Master and PhD students to conduct field-based, scientific studies on Threatened and Endangered species and big game species, and to share findings, reports and publications with the Fish & Wildlife Department for future use in forest and wildlife management plans
- Create Big Game Management Plans for the following species with distributions that overlap Navajo Forestland areas: Mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, pronghorn antelope, Desert bighorn sheep, black bear and mountain lion
- Continue current monitoring efforts for sensitive wildlife and big game species, and conduct habitat improvement projects to provide quality habitat where it has deteriorated
- Improve lake conditions to reintroduce trout populations for fishing opportunities
- Reduce feral horse population to protect wildlife and habitat
- Reduce feral cows in forestland

(4) GOAL: CREATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Recommendations:

- Explore an interdepartmental forestry entrepreneurial program to help Navajo business to harvest wood
 - Investigate opportunities for public/private partnership
- Explore how to diversify funding/dedicated funding with Navajo Nation entrepreneurs
- Evaluate firewood and timber markets and operations to identify future use of wood products
- Partner with the chapters to designate specific areas to harvest wood

(5) GOAL: STRENGTHEN THE ABILITY OF THE FORESTLANDS TO RECOVER FROM DISTURBANCES, CHANGING ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGES

Recommendations:

- Provide ongoing skills & safety training to resource department personnel to increase ability to respond to changing conditions, industry trends and management of extreme events associated with natural hazards and climate change
- Inventory land to target priority areas that have denuded vegetation and loss and need restoration
- Protect and manage watersheds and streams; watershed restoration
- Partner with chapters to create conservation projects
- Build awareness and education
- Pilot demonstrations; expand successful pilots to other areas
- Employ targeted, temporary fencing of conservation/restoration areas to allow areas to regenerate.

Support efforts through education and outreach to communities

- Create reseeding projects where needed
- Partner with schools to develop a conservation project
- Partner with area university to study the forest and create high school/university internships
- Avoid fragmentation and maintain forest connectivity
- Maintain stand densities (appropriate for area) that optimizes and promotes tree growth, forage and forest production
- Use public service announcements on water conservation, wildlife protection, livestock, etc.; to share information on how to maintain healthy forestlands
- Talk about the benefit of thinning, prove it through thinning

(6) GOAL: IMPROVE RANGELAND MANAGEMENT TO ENSURE ADEQUATE GRAZING FOR WILDLIFE AND LIVESTOCK

Recommendations:

- Educate the Navajo Nation that living within permit conditions is necessary & beneficial (more sustainable)
- Communicate the urgent need to change the grazing management mindset
- Adjust grazing permits to support current range conditions and carrying capacity
- Incorporate wildlife support conditions (20% utilization) into grazing carrying capacity
- Include wildlife in grazing management policies
- Inventory all grazing permits then manage for the health of the land, including enforcement
- Enforce animals in trespass through animal removal
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of enforcement
- Develop education/training plan to help people manage livestock and land
- Recruit and train Navajo speakers for education, training, conveying technical information
- Remove feral horses and reduce overpopulation
- Use of pilot/demonstration Holistic Resource

Management projects as a BMP, tool, model to help advance responsible resource management

- Enforce compliance with use of land with Land Department
- Include overall land management: homesites, burials etc.
- Explore policy options to grandfather or develop a permit issuance process for people with animals and no permit / out of compliance

Out of respect for land, need to let land rest

(7) GOAL: PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE, SAFE WATER SUPPLY FOR PEOPLE, LIVESTOCK AND WILDLIFE TO ENSURE WATER SECURITY FOR THE FUTURE

Recommendations:

- Inventory, conserve, restore and protect wetlands and natural springs
- Require each DNR department project include surface water management as part of the project planning and implementation to slow and impede the flow of surface water runoff
- Provide public outreach and education on surface water management
- Provide adequate buffers along all Navajo Nation bodies of water (consult with Forest Management Plan) and maintain the buffer zone to enhance and preserve water quality
- Watershed restoration to keep water on the land and prevent erosion
- Repair, maintain and develop earthen dams and water catchment systems for livestock, wildlife and agriculture
- Inventory, repair and maintain windmills
- Provide public outreach and education on water harvesting
- Work with NNEPA, USEPA-Region 6 and/or 9 to provide training to identify wetland delineation procedures
- Research and describe the surface and groundwater resources to identify potential water sources and use potential
 - Conduct hydrologic study
 - Ensure meets NNEPA/USEPA standards for quality and contaminants
- Develop criteria to utilize lakes and reservoirs to supply water for domestic and municipal water systems
- Develop a Recreation Management Plan for selected lakes

(8) GOAL: PROVIDE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH TO NAVAJO COMMUNITIES

Recommendations:

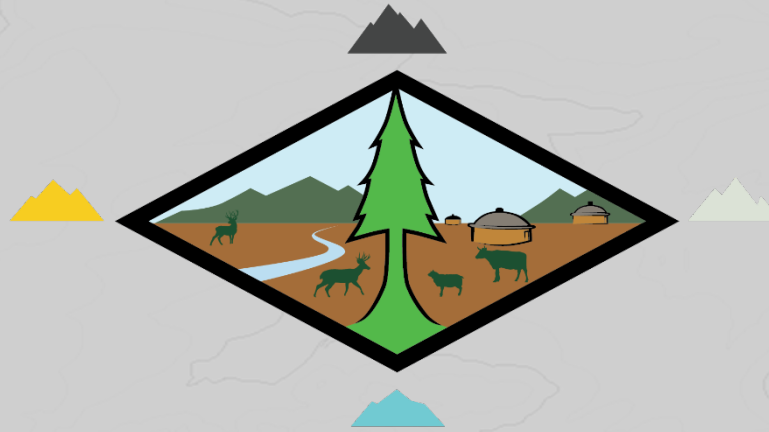
- Conduct an annual area youth conference on natural resource protection/enhancement
- Conduct public targeted education/training on natural resource protection/enhancement
- Establish Earth Day activities at area schools
- Educate/train the public on existing Navajo Nation laws & regulations for Natural Resources
- Create and fund a DNR team to do continuous training
- Create an education program and provide resources to incorporate rain water harvesting at community level
- Conduct public presentations summarizing current research and monitoring efforts for wildlife, specifically for communities within wildlife study areas and communities that may be affected by wildlife-conflict

(9) GOAL: IMPROVE ENFORCEMENT OF CURRENT LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Recommendations:

- Make the Navajo Nation law stronger to allow enforcement officers to remove livestock in trespass
 - Fish & Wildlife: use of federal law to prosecute in federal court
- Hire more enforcement officers; establish funding and set aside for more officers
 - Example: tax or grazing fee
- Explore areas for consolidation of enforcement agencies so individuals aren't spread so thin
- Establish grace period to come into compliance before enforcement
- Improve enforcement to control illegal trash dumping and punishment for violations
- Develop a policy for the capture and removal of feral horse. Communicate to all Navajo the schedule for removal by region
 - Example: program at Navajo Mountain
- Provide education/training on Navajo Nation laws, rules, regulations, policies, etc. for hunting, fishing, trash, grazing, burials, poaching, wood cutting, etc. for enforcement officers, Navajo Nation staff, public, prosecutors

NAVAJO FORESTLANDS IRMP



Managing Our Land
Resources Collectively for the Diné

Thank You