CHAPTER 1 – Introduction and Scope

INTRODUCTION

Throughout Forest Service history, managers have sought to sustain resource-based commodity production and meet public demand for a broad mix of natural resource goods, services, and values. Changes in the way Americans value their public lands require a re-evaluation of the Forest Service stewardship regarding the nation's natural resources. Our challenge is to achieve quality land management under the sustainable multiple-use management concept to meet the diverse needs of people, now and for future generations.

This chapter describes forest planning and its role in the management of national forest resources and uses. Information regarding forest planning processes and the intent of the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) is included.

THE FOREST PLAN

The passage of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) began a new era in the Forest Service in which most of the activities managed by the agency were governed through National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans. Under the mantle of the Forest Service mission of "to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations," forest plans are the primary documents that define how individual forests and grasslands will be managed to achieve this mission. The process of revising or amending a forest plan is only one step in a continuous adaptive management process that includes assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

The Manti-La Sal Forest Plan (officially entitled *Manti-La Sal National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan)* is the document that establishes general management direction for lands administered by the Manti-La Sal National Forest. Using broad language, the Forest Plan determines the availability of land for resource management, predicts levels of resource use and outcomes, and provides for a variety of resource management practices. The Manti-La Sal National Forest completed its current Forest Plan in November 1986.

The plan does not include every decision or analysis that affects forest management. The Forest Service directives system provides a substantial component of the "how to" direction and guidance of forest management. Assessments at the forest-wide and watershed scales provide context for both forest plan and project decisions. Other planning efforts (fire management plans and roads analysis) build on the direction contained in forest plans to provide more direction for specific agency operations.

REVISION OF THE FOREST PLAN

NFMA requires National Forests to develop a Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) and update or revise the plan every 15 years or when conditions significantly change. Over the last decade the agency has learned a great deal about ecosystems and their function, public needs and desires, and strengths and weaknesses of the existing Forest Plans.

The Forest Service chartered a national comprehensive study on the adequacy of forest planning efforts, and in 1990 published the results in *A Critique of Land Management Planning.* That effort led to a decade of work to revise current planning regulations. Until new regulations are finalized and implemented, the Forest will continue with plan revision under the 1982 Planning Regulations (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 219).

Six Decisions Made in Forest Plans
(36 CFR 219.11, 219.17, and 219.25)

- Forest goals and objectives
- Forest-wide standards
- Identification of suitable uses
- Monitoring and evaluation requirements
- Recommendations to Congress of areas eligible for wilderness designation
- Identification of lands not suited for timber production

Direction for Revising the Forest Plan

In 1997, an interdisciplinary Committee of Scientists reviewed and evaluated the Forest Service's planning process. The Committee published their findings and recommendations in *Sustaining the People's Lands: Recommendations for Stewardship of the National Forests and Grasslands into the Next Century*. General recommendations from the report are summarized below:

- ***Ecological sustainability*** **-** Provides a foundation upon which the management of national forests can contribute to economic and social sustainability.
- ***Scale*** **-** Public lands rest in a mosaic of land ownerships; therefore, public land management must be integrated into a broader regional landscape. Consider the larger landscape in which national forests are located in order to understand their role in ensuring ecological sustainability and their contribution to human uses and values.
- ***Collaboration*** **-** Establish collaborative relations that provide opportunities and incentives for people to work together to contribute to forest planning in meaningful and useful ways. Forest planning must provide mechanisms for broad-based, vigorous, and ongoing opportunities for open dialogue.
- ***Focus on Desired Conditions*** **-** Make desired conditions (and outcomes associated with them) the central reference points for planning.
- ***Adaptive Management*** **-** Planning is dynamic and ongoing because the social values and scientific knowledge that guide decision-making will change with time.
- ***Monitoring*** **-** Adaptive management and learning are not possible without effective monitoring of the actual consequences from management activities.

Continuous Assessment and Planning (CAP)

The first round of planning in the early 1980s required that each Forest build a plan from scratch. This effort required big budgets, many employees, and a great amount of time. It became literally an all-consuming task for the Forest Service. With the advent of the revision of the first generation plans, the planning philosophy has evolved to fit the task at hand and the budget and work force available.

It is important to remember that the Forest is proposing changes to a plan that has already been developed and implemented. Therefore, there are years of experience with what direction is definitely working and what direction may need to be changed. Rather than start over (and because of a tight time schedule and limited budget), the focus will be on revision of the most critical items first. Less critical items will be dealt with as time and funding allow and at scales that make sense for the particular issues involved.

ANALYSIS OF THE MANAGEMENT SITUATION

The Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) is a compilation of information that describes implementation of the current Plan and resulting management conditions on the Forest. This AMS identifies changed conditions and new information, including new public issues and changed public attitudes. According to NFMA, the objectives of the AMS are:

- To determine the ability of the planning area covered by the Forest Plan to supply goods and services in response to society's demands.
- To determine the need to establish or change management direction.
- To provide a basis for formulating a broad range of alternatives for Forest Plan revision.

This preliminary AMS summarizes the current biological, physical, social, and economic conditions pertinent to the Forest, and identifies areas where management direction in the Forest Plan needs to be established or changed.

The information provided in this preliminary AMS will more effectively involve the public in the initial revision process than would a more traditional, but limited scoping letter. This AMS will help the Forest Service and interested public reach a common understanding of what will and will not be addressed during the Forest Plan revision effort by providing much of the same background information used to reach our decisions.

BENCHMARK ANALYSES

Benchmarks used in forest planning are parameters that define the maximum and minimum amount of resource production that can be reasonably expected under the various management alternatives. Benchmarks developed and analyzed in the 1985 AMS were reviewed and generally found to be valid. As additional analyses are completed, these benchmarks and the AMS will be updated.

DETERMINING THE SCOPE OF THE FOREST PLAN REVISION

The regulations found in 36 CFR 219.12(b) provide the following direction regarding the scope of the revision process: "The Forest Supervisor shall determine the major public issues, management concerns, and resource use and development opportunities to be addressed in the planning process."

The first step in determining what needs to be addressed in the revision of the Forest Plan involves a review of current laws, regulations, policies, and Forest Service direction found in various sources, including the Code of Federal Regulations, National Forest Management Act, and Forest Service Manuals and Handbooks. The following items were identified as a result of this review:

- Timber Suitability – Lands identified as not suited for timber production must be examined at least every 10 years to determine if they have become suited. If such lands have become suited, they are returned to timber production (36 CFR 219.12 [k][5][ii]).

- Recommendations on Wilderness - The Forest Service is required to inventory, evaluate, and consider all roadless areas for possible inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (36 CFR 219.17).

  The Utah Wilderness Act of 1984 established the Dark Canyon Wilderness on the Manti-La Sal National Forest. The Act also pronounced completion of the Roadless Area Review and

Evaluation II (RARE II) for Utah (a nationwide study of roadless areas initiated by the Secretary of Agriculture) and eliminated the need to evaluate wilderness during preparation of the initial Forest Plans but required re-evaluation during Forest Plan revision.

- Recommendations on Wild and Scenic Rivers - The Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-542) establishes objectives, goals, and procedures for Wild, Scenic, and Recreational river designation. Agency policy related to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in land management planning requires that rivers identified as potential Wild and Scenic Rivers be evaluated as to their eligibility, with findings documented in the Forest Plan. Additionally, it is recommended, but not required, to complete the WSR suitability studies during the Forest Plan revision process.

- Needs for Change - In revising the Forest Plan, the focus will be on those areas that must be reviewed in accordance with regulation, and on those portions of the Forest Plan where new information, monitoring, and public concerns indicate a change may be needed.

Determining Needs for Change

Considering national, regional, and local direction, policy, and strategies for natural resource management, the following information was initiated to identify the "Needs for Change" in management direction on the Forest. The process included:

- A review of monitoring items in Chapter IV of the 1986 Forest Plan and monitoring and evaluation reports.
- A review of existing legislation, regulations, and Forest Service Manual policy and direction.
- A review of management direction in the 1986 Forest Plan.
- An assessment of existing conditions (Chapter 3).
- Public input from public meetings held in April/May 2003 and May 2004 and newsletters published in March 2003 and April 2004.

This process resulted in the proposed list of Needs for Change found in Chapter 4.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A successful forest plan revision depends on public understanding and contribution to this effort. Public participation is encouraged and ongoing opportunities for discussion will be provided throughout the revision effort.

There has been much discussion among federal agencies about collaboration. The Forest views collaborative planning not as consensual decision-making, but rather a shared understanding and learning from one another. The controversy inherent in some public land issues cannot be eliminated but collaborative planning will allow us to better understand each other and appreciate the choices and trade-offs that must be made. It will allow us to learn from others new and creative ideas that may not have been thought of previously.

One area of confusion is how collaboration influences the decision-making process. The authority for making Forest Plan decisions rests with the designated federal officials, in this case the Regional Forester and Forest Supervisor. These decision-makers are responsible for ensuring appropriate public participation and making sure that no group has undue influence or unfair access to the decision process (Federal Advisory Committee Act, 1972). In 1995, Congress updated the law to allow

intergovernmental partners (tribal, state, federal, local) to have access to decision-makers in providing advice and seeking consensus in government decision-making. The law also controls how decision-makers obtain advice from the public, but does not limit how the public chooses to give advice. The primary guidance is that if the decision-maker solicits advice from the public, it must involve all interested parties and not allow any group undue influence.

The public will be involved in a series of public information meetings at all major mileposts during the planning process. To date, the following public involvement has taken place:

- Public meetings to discuss:
  - Geographic Areas (March/May 2003)
  - Needs for Change, Roadless Area Inventory and Evaluation for Wilderness Characteristics, and Wild and Scenic Rivers Suitability (May 2004)
- Newsletter 1 – What is Forest Plan Revision and how do you use the Forest? (March 2003)
- Newsletter 2 – Need for Change in the Forest Plan (April 2004)
- Newsletter 3 – Wild and Scenic Rivers Eligibility and Suitability (May 2004)
- Newsletter 4 – Roadless Area Inventory and Evaluation for Wilderness Characteristics (July 2004)

A mailing list has been compiled and will be updated throughout the plan revision process. A website (http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/mantilasal/projects/) is available that provides documents, processes, and a comment form for those unable to attend meetings but interested in being informed and involved.

Government to Government with American Indian Tribes

The following tribes have an interest in management of the Manti-La Sal National Forest: Northern Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, White Mesa Ute, Navajo, Hopi, and Paiute. The Forest will meet with each tribe to determine the extent of their interest and involvement and conduct the meetings necessary to meet their expectations.

Government to Government

The Manti-La Sal National Forest has cooperating agency agreements with Carbon, Emery, Grand, Juab, San Juan, and Sanpete counties, and the State of Utah Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. The purpose of the agreements is to work collaboratively with these entities during the revision process.

Four other counties (Sevier, Utah, and Montrose and Mesa, Colorado) with smaller impacts have not entered into cooperating agency agreements. At this point, these counties have chosen to be involved along with the public.

In addition, Forest resource specialists routinely communicate, coordinate, and consult with other federal agencies as required by law and for consistency.