



A Forest Plan Overview

What is a Forest Plan?

Plans define how the Forest Service manages the national forests. For the most part, each national forest in the United States has its own plan. The plans establish the desired future condition for the land and resources and sets broad, general direction for managing national forests. Plans identify where and under what conditions an activity or project can proceed. *They are forest-wide zoning documents that do not make site-specific decisions to undertake particular projects.*

Under the 1982 planning rule, a management plan makes six decisions:

1. Establish forest-wide multiple-use goals and objectives.
2. Establish the forest-wide management requirements (standards and guidelines for implementing projects).
3. Determine the boundaries of management areas and prescribe the activities that may be applied in them (management prescriptions).
4. Identify land suitable for producing timber and establish how much timber the Forest Service is allowed to sell from lands suited for timber production (allowable sale quantity.)
5. Establish what the Forest Service must do to monitor and evaluate management activities and effectiveness.
6. Determine which roadless areas will be recommended as parts of the National Wilderness Preservation system, and which rivers will be recommended for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers systems.

Why does a Forest Plan matter?

Plans govern the way national forests are managed. This management is very important to many people—from those who live near or work or recreate in the Forest to those who simply dream about visiting. If you are interested in how the national forest is managed then engaging in the Forest Plan revision process is an excellent opportunity to make a difference. The day-to-day operations that national forest managers undertake must be consistent with the plan's management direction, as well as relevant laws, regulations, and policies.

The boundaries of management areas designated in the Forest Plan and the prescriptions for them, for example, determine what types of activities may be allowed there and, in many cases, how they are to be conducted.



Why are Plans Amended and Revised?

Forest Plans were developed in context of the issues, policies, and resource conditions at the time that they were created. However, issues, policies, and resources conditions can change over time, and the plans need to change with them. Plans can be changed through amendments at any time. Plans can also be changed through revision. According to the 1982 Planning Rule, Plan revisions should occur every 10-15 years.

Plan revisions are designated to:

- * Review management direction to see if it is still valid and consistent with national policy.
- * Identify and address any new issues or resource conditions.
- * Incorporate the latest scientific information.
- * Set the stage for future management.

We encourage everyone who cares about the Forest to work with the Forest Service planning team and resource staff to help revise our plan. Working together means sharing information and communicating openly throughout the process from identifying issues all the way through the release of the revised Plan. Building and maintaining open communication between the public and public land managers is critical to developing a successful Forest Plan!