

**Assessment
of the
Need For Change
to the
Wayne National Forest
Land and Resource Management Plan**

**Athens, Gallia, Hocking, Jackson, Lawrence, Monroe,
Morgan, Noble, Perry, Sioto, Vinton and Washington Counties,
Ohio**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Wayne National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (*Forest Plan*) was approved in 1988. There have been 12 amendments to the Plan subsequent to signing. At this time, an additional amendment is underway to address the protection of Threatened and Endangered Species. Since the *Forest Plan* was signed in 1988, the Wayne National Forest has also acquired an additional 54,000 acres. Implementation of the Plan over the last 15 years has resulted in thousands of management activities being planned and accomplished. . During this time, the conditions of the Forest have changed due to management practices and natural events. A wealth of new information on ecosystem management, social change, and analysis techniques is now available. Considering these facts, the Wayne National Forest is evaluating whether the existing *Forest Plan* should be revised, and if so, what specifically needs to be changed. This document describes a process forest managers are using to begin to answer these questions.

II. BACKGROUND

The Wayne National Forest is the only National Forest in Ohio. It contains more than 232,000 acres in 12 counties of Southeastern Ohio. The counties include: Athens, Gallia, Hocking, Jackson, Lawrence, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Perry, Scioto, Vinton and Washington. The Forest has two ranger districts. The Athens Ranger District has offices in Athens and Marietta. The Ironton Ranger District has an office in Pedro, north of Ironton.

The Wayne National Forest forms the core of the hill country of southeastern Ohio, the most heavily forested part of the state. Just 200 years ago, most Americans viewed this region of the Allegheny plateau as part of a vast wilderness. Today many people still view the Wayne as a remnant of the forest primeval. But the impacts of historic industry and agricultural practices have left indelible marks upon the land. Virtually all of the forest that covered Ohio when American settlers arrived was cut to make way for farms and to fuel both. Mining for iron ore, limestone, coal and clay scarred hillsides and polluted many streams. As factories closed and farms failed in the 1930s, the Forest Service began to acquire and restore what were once dubbed “the lands that nobody wanted.”

Acquisition of land for the Wayne National Forest began in 1935. Congress set the Forest Proclamation Boundary in 1951. Administration of the National Forest was provided through the Forest Supervisor’s Office of the Wayne-Hoosier National Forest, located in Bedford, Ind., until 1993. At that time, Congress authorized a separation of the joint forest and creation of a Forest Supervisor Office for the Wayne.

After nearly 70 years, the innate resilience of the hill country forest, enhanced by the work of the Forest Service and countless partners, has created a new forest that many people now value for its opportunities: to experience nature; to enjoy a variety of recreation; to explore the

unique heritage of Southeast Ohio, once a major link in the Underground Railroad; and to employ the Forest's resources for the region's economic development.

Today, Ohio is dominated by rich farmland, industrial cities, sprawling suburbs and busy highways, and ranks 7th among states in population and 47th in public lands per capita. This scarcity of public lands creates intense competing demands for the Wayne's limited landbase and resources. The challenge for those who choose to participate in the revision of the *Forest Plan* is to provide information and ideas that will help the Forest Service balance those competing demands in a way that will continue to provide for multiple uses of the Wayne National Forest. Given the significant impact that past agricultural and industrial practices have had upon the land, the *Forest Plan* management direction will continue to place special priority upon the restoration of the forest, the lands, the watersheds and the ecosystem.

The Wayne is managed for multiple uses such as recreation, timber, water quality, air quality, and wildlife. Minerals play an important role in the area, which has a long history of coal mining and oil and gas extraction. Former strip mining areas, some of which are currently being rehabilitated, are located throughout the National Forest.

Located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, the Wayne also provides outstanding recreational opportunities. Leith Run on the Marietta Unit and Vesuvius Recreation Area on the Ironton District are favorite destinations for campers, hikers, horseback riders and fishermen. The 35-mile Little Muskingum River, in Washington County, takes canoeists through pastoral farmland scenes, under several covered bridges and past wooded hills. The Little Muskingum River is one of the few remaining free-flowing streams largely on public land within the state. Its well-preserved condition, and its location in the midst of one of the most heavily populated regions of the country, makes it a valuable opportunity for Midwest recreation enthusiasts.

The Wayne is managed under the Land and Resource Management Plan adopted in 1988. The Plan provides overall direction for the resources of the Wayne for 15 years and included an analysis of the natural resources in the Forest. Public participation was instrumental in the development of the *Forest Plan*. Meetings were held with private landowners, individuals and representatives from organizations and other agencies to help shape future management direction. National forest land management plans are dynamic and leave room for change as new information is learned and projects on the ground are implemented. The 1988 Wayne National Forest has been amended 12 times since it was signed. A new plan amendment is currently under consideration. Those amendments include:

Amendment 1 (12/90) corrected an error in language related to oil and gas development.

Amendment 2 (12/90) eliminated Management Area 9.1 allocation.

Amendment 3 (12/90) changed standards for stream crossings by oil and gas pipelines.

Amendment 4 (12/90) increased width of vehicles on trails to 50".

Amendment 5 (12/90) clarified use of high-clearance 4WD vehicles on public roads.

Amendment 6 (12/90) clarified policy on retaining Little Muskingum River as a free-flowing stream.

Amendment 7 (1/92) classified three potential special areas (MA 9.2) as special areas (MA 8.2).

Amendment 8 (3/93) changed *Forest Plan* guidance for the management of special uses, minerals and geology to clarify resource protection needs associated with oil and gas development.

Amendment 9 (3/93) classified Morgan Sister's Woods as a special area (M.A. 8.2).

Amendment 10 (3/95) reclassified three potential special areas as special areas.

Amendment 11 (2/98) added two tables to *Forest Plan*: 1) a table showing actual timber sale acreage for the first decade of the plan, 2) a table showing anticipated harvest for the next 5 years under the plan.

Amendment 12 (5/99) designated Buffalo Beats as a Research Natural Area and revised management area designation for the RNA.

Proposed Amendment to address Threatened and Endangered Species - At the time that the *Forest Plan* was signed, there were no known federally listed Threatened or Endangered Species within the Forest Proclamation Boundary; there are now eight known TES on or adjacent to the forest, including the Indiana Bat and the American burying beetle.

In 1991, the Sierra Club and other environmental groups sued the Forest Service over the implementation of the 1988 Land and Resource Management Plan. The plaintiffs' complaint was that the Wayne's *Forest Plan* heavily favored timber production at the expense of other ecosystem management benefits. The U.S. Court of Appeals found in favor of the plaintiffs. However, the Ohio Forestry Association appealed that finding to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1997, the Supreme Court found that the case was not ripe for judicial review, in essence stating that the plaintiff could not demonstrate injury because a forest plan allows but does not authorize ground-disturbing activities.

III. THE NEED FOR CHANGE PROCESS

The Wayne National Forest began evaluating the need for changing the *Forest Plan* in 1997, when it was anticipated that the Forest was going to be revising its plan beginning in 1998. That initial evaluation began with an assessment of new information and changed conditions that may have led to a change in the existing *Forest Plan*. Information gathered at that time included:

- Results of monitoring and evaluation.
- Review of the major decisions made in the existing *Forest Plan*.
- Review of issues raised in appeals and litigation.
- Comments from the specialists on areas of the *Forest Plan* that required modification.

Prior to public involvement in the Need for Change process, language in the FY1998 Congressional appropriations bill halted all forest plan revision expenditures on the Wayne National Forest.

Since the halt of the 1998 revision effort, additional vital information has continued to be collected that will support *Forest Plan* revision. Those additional documents include:

- Terrestrial Classification Inventory (1999)
- Programmatic Biological Assessment by the Wayne National Forest (2001)
- Biological Opinion by the U.S.D.O.I. Fish and Wildlife Service (2001)
- Pine Creek Watershed Assessment (2001)
- Little Muskingum Watershed Assessment (Scheduled to be completed 2002)
- Acid Mine Drainage Site Inventory (Scheduled to be completed 2002)
- Roads Analysis (Scheduled to be completed in 2002)
- Recreation Feasibility Study (Scheduled to be completed in 2002)

In January 2002, the Wayne National Forest invited public comment as part of the Need-for-Change Analysis in preparation for drafting the Notice of Intent. To validate the Revision Topics identified internally by the Forest Service, the public was given an opportunity to suggest topics for revision through a mailed solicitation, public listening sessions, personal conversations and e-mail submissions. The following events have occurred:

- 1/14/02 A letter was mailed to 1,400 addressees drawn from all existing mailing lists maintained by the Wayne National Forest on January 14, 2002.
- 1/14/02 A news release was sent to more than 40 media outlets in Ohio.
- 1/17/02 A section for plan revision was added to the Wayne homepage.
- 1/22/02 A public listening session was held in Nelsonville, Ohio.
- 1/23/02 A public listening session was held in Marietta, Ohio.
- 1/24/02 A public listening session was held in Ironton, Ohio.

More than 150 individuals attended the three sessions, and more than 70 took the opportunity to speak for three minutes. Their statements were recorded by a stenographer for later review by the Core Planning Team for use in writing the NOI, as well as the letters, responses and oral comments received outside the meetings. A total of 264 comments were received.

The Wayne National Forest assigned a Core Team to begin the *Forest Plan* revision. The Core Team includes the Forest Planner, the Forest Biologist, the Public Affairs Officer and the Planning Management Assistant.

Identifying Revision Topics

1. Identify potential need for change topics.

After the public meetings were completed, the Core Team reviewed the comments gathered in 1997 from the Forest employees and those gathered in 2002 at the public meetings and during the public comment period.

The 1997 review by Forest employees resulted in a list of over 100 recommendations for change, which broke down into three general classifications. First, many of these recommendations were edits to the wording of standards and guidelines that didn't really change the standard or guideline. Second, there were recommendations that were specific items related to implementation of the standards and guidelines for specific resources. The final grouping was recommendations that were general in nature not tied to specific resource programs.

Comments from the January/February 2002 public comment period were received on most every resource and program on the Forest. Almost all individuals made a comment related to some form of recreation, usually expressing a preference for the Forest to provide for more or less of specific forms of recreation, such as ORV trail riding. Fewer comments were received on a wide variety of other management issues. Topics, other than recreation, that were mentioned most frequently were: vegetation management (primarily centered around timber harvest); land acquisition; plant and animal species diversity; minerals management; and wilderness. A number of comments were related to the Forest not implementing the direction in the current Forest Plan, or the Forest not providing the quantity of a specific output (for example, not providing the amount of ORV trails, or not harvesting as much timber, as listed in the current Forest Plan).

2. Evaluate the potential need for change topics using established criteria.

The Core Team considered comments from nearly 300 external and internal sources. The objective of this step was to identify those subjects with the significance and relevance necessary to become revision topics. The Core Team discussed the criteria that would be used to identify key factors or conditions for the potential need for change topic to be incorporated into the revision topics discussed in the NOI. The criteria are:

- The Plan Revision process requires that six decisions be addressed:
 1. Forest-wide multiple-use goals and objectives. Goals describe a desired condition to be achieved sometime in the future. Objectives are concise, time-specific statements of measurable planned results that respond to the goals.
 2. Forest-wide management requirements (standards and guidelines.) These are limitations on management activities, or advisable courses of action that apply across the entire forest.
 3. Management area direction applying to future activities in each management area. This is the desired future condition specified for certain portions of the forest, and the accompanying standards and guidelines to help achieve that condition.

4. Lands suited and not suited for resource use and production (timber management, grazing, etc.)
 5. Monitoring and evaluation requirements needed to gauge how well the plan is being implemented.
 6. Recommendations to Congress, if any (such as Wilderness or Wild and Scenic River designation)
- Need for change topic must be consistent with federal laws and policies and relate to the mission of the Agency.
 - Need for change topic must be within the Responsible Official's decision-making authority.
 - Need for change topic is not adequately addressed in the current plan.
 - Need for change is proposed because there is new information that warrants a reevaluation of one of the six decision made in the plan cited above in first criteria.

Some of the suggestions made concerning need for change in the *Forest Plan* will not be addressed during *Forest Plan* revision. In nearly all cases, the reasons those suggestions are not being addressed is due to the application of the evaluation criteria discussed above. Some of the more common reasons are:

- Suggestion is already addressed in *Forest Plan* or recent decision;
- Suggestion would require a change to law, regulation or rule outside the scope of the *Forest Plan*;
- Sufficient information or rationale is not provided and does not exist to support a change to the *Forest Plan*;
- Outside the mission or authority of the Forest Service;
- Research or data needed to evaluate if a change is needed;
- Suggestion is an implementation item that may be addressed at the project level.

3. Develop revision topics and identify other needs for change

The evaluation of external and internal comments by the Core Team identified two categories of potential changes in the current *Forest Plan*. These categories are:

1. Revision Topics.

This category of proposed changes will relate directly to one of the six plan decisions listed above. A clear rationale for change will be described. In some cases, a specific change will be identified because it is widely supported. In some cases where significant debate is occurring across a wide array of stakeholders, further discussion and analysis following issuance of the NOI may be needed to determine what specific action best resolves or narrows the associated issues.

2. Editorial Changes and Clarifications

This category of proposed changes includes changes needed to explain or clarify direction in the existing plan. These changes do not represent a change in the direction, goals or objectives in the Plan.

To ensure the revision is completed within the scheduled four-year timeframe, the Forest Plan revision will focus on high priority topics and changes. Some changes that meet the criteria outlined in the previous section would not affect many resources or result in a significant change in the plan. Although these might include changes that are important as direction for the forest, they are narrow in scope. It is within the discretion of the Responsible Official to select the topics to be addressed in the Forest Plan revision. Most of these minor changes will be included in the revision. However, other narrowly focused topics and changes that are not critical for revision may be deferred until Plan revision is complete. They could then be implemented through the course of on-going Plan maintenance and amendments.

4. Notice of Intent and Public Participation

Based on the analysis of the need for change, the Core Team drafted the Revision Topics for the Wayne National Forest. Although the Core Team identified several Revision Topics in which goals and direction for change were clear, there were other topics that will require additional research and comment. The Wayne National Forest Notice of Intent will reflect this ongoing examination and continuing public participation.

IV. RESULTS OF THE NEED FOR CHANGE PROCESS

Revision Topics and Proposed Changes to Forest Plan

Each of the broad revision topics is listed below along with a brief description of the factors leading to a need for a change in the *Forest Plan*. The proposed changes in the *Forest Plan* are also described in general terms.

1. Watershed Health -- includes treatments to protect and restore in-stream conditions and the associated riparian areas.

Watershed Health includes treatments to protect and restore in-stream conditions and the associated riparian areas. Keeping watersheds in good condition and restoring watershed health where necessary is fundamental to the stewardship of the land and natural resources. The *Forest Plan* revision will provide guidance that is consistent with the agency's goal to improve and protect watershed conditions to provide the water quality and quantity necessary to support ecological functions and beneficial water uses.

Key aspects of this revision topic include:

- *Health of watersheds impacted by historic coal practices.*

Factors leading to a need for change: The *Forest Plan* includes standards and guidelines for the reclamation of mined areas. Restoration of abandoned mine lands has been

ongoing. However, emphasis has shifted from treatment of eroding uplands to the treatment and elimination of acid mine drainage. The section on abandoned underground coalmines needs to reflect this shift in emphasis. There is also a need to improve guidance for stream management, including the use of natural channel design in restoration projects.

Proposed Direction: Protect and restore watershed health, including restoration of abandoned mine lands.

- *Riparian Areas.*

Factors leading to a need for change: The *Forest Plan* includes standards and guidelines for management of riparian areas and reclamation of mined areas. There is a need to update the riparian management guidance to reflect the importance of riparian structure and function in the landscape, as well as clear definitions and delineation methods. Public comment indicated that people were interested in seeing more wetland habitat restoration and protection, including the mapping of all wetlands on the Forest. A specific concern was raised about the Greendale Wetland on the Athens Ranger District and impacts the current Management Area designation has on this watchable wildlife wetland.

Proposed Direction: Protect riparian areas.

2. Ecosystem Restoration -- includes the integration of vegetation management and wildlife habitat management

The Wayne National Forest is comprised of lands heavily impacted by centuries of past human inhabitants. Research indicates that in both pre-historic and historic periods Native American cultures routinely used fire to modify their environment. Researchers speculate that fire was used to accomplish objectives including driving game during hunts, facilitating travel, improving habitat for favored game species, facilitating detection of approaching enemies near their settlements, and clearing croplands. When European settlers arrived in Ohio in the late 18th Century, they found a mature forest canopy over an open, grassy forest floor, which provided forage for bison, deer and elk.

The settlers cleared large areas of forest to create subsistence farms, using the lumber to build their home and warm their hearths. Later, industries cut down swaths of forests to fuel the furnaces of the Industrial Revolution. Miners removed iron ore, coal, clay, sand, gravel and salt from region, each leaving behind their imprint on the land. The introduction of non-native pathogens also changed ecological conditions, virtually eliminating important tree species such as American chestnut and American elm.

When the U.S. Forest Service began to acquire land in Southeast Ohio during the 1930s, much of the land was no longer suitable for farming because of erosion, and the underground mineral wealth had been largely depleted. The regenerative power of the hill country's ecosystem, coupled with early conservation efforts directed at erosion control and reforestation, has resulted in a vigorous new forest. However, research into the pre-European settlement conditions suggest that the forest covering southeast Ohio today is outside the

range of historic variability: younger, with a denser overstory, and with more shade tolerant understory trees than ever occurred before.

By managing for ecological restoration, forest ecosystems will become healthy, resilient, and sustainable in the long term, and will therefore provide a sustainable flow of goods and services that help maintain the social and economic components of the ecosystems.

Managing for ecological restoration requires an integrated management approach that considers natural processes such as fire, insect and disease outbreaks, and catastrophic wind events, along with human-induced management activities that mimic those natural events.

Key aspects of this topic include:

- *Desired future condition.*

Factors leading to a need for change: Research increasingly indicates that the forests of what is now southeast Ohio were predominantly oak-hickory. Stands dominated by the more shade tolerant-species, such as maples and tulip-poplar, were confined mostly to north slopes and other wetter sites. Recent forest inventory and analysis, based on satellite analysis and ground surveys, shows that the proportions of oak and hickory species the forest is declining throughout southeast Ohio, while more shade tolerant species, particularly red maple, tulip-poplar and cherry, are increasing. One possible cause of this decline is the absence of fire, which research has shown helps foster regeneration of oaks. Based on the analysis of the management situation, the Forest Service must determine a desired forest condition. Definition of the desired mix of vegetation conditions may need to be modified, based on the new information research is providing, changing public demand, changing conditions on the land, and the condition of the newly acquired lands. Future ecosystem restoration efforts will be based upon the best available science to achieve that objective.

Proposed Direction: Restore the mixed oak ecosystem to a sustainable level.

- *Vegetation management.*

Factors leading to a need for change: Public comment revealed a need for public discussion on the techniques of vegetation management to be used within the Wayne National Forest. Some people believe there should be no timber harvesting on the National Forest. Their concerns relate to how timber harvesting impacts water systems, biodiversity, the beauty of undisturbed forests and large trees, and people who use the land for recreation. There is also a belief there is little forest left in Ohio, and what is left on the Wayne should be protected. There is concern that sales of National Forest timber adversely impact the value of timber from private land.

Other people support timber harvesting because they believe this tool contributes to the local economy, and can help maintain and promote ecosystem health, biodiversity and restoration. Some people wish to see the amount of logging reduced, use of alternative harvesting methods rather than clear cutting, and the restriction of below-cost timber sales.

Vegetation management is a tool that enables the Forest Service to create a range of habitat to ensure wildlife diversity. There is a need to discuss the role of the Wayne National Forest in the management of old growth forest habitat, the provision of early-

successional habitat, establishment and management of corridors that link habitat together to protect plant and animal diversity, and the restoration of riparian and wetland habitat. Several individuals, both internal and external, raised the issue of the role of fire in the restoration of the forest ecosystem, especially in connection with oak regeneration.

Proposed Direction : Use vegetative management techniques to move toward the desired future condition.

- *Non-native invasive species.*

Factors leading to a need for change: The presence of non-native invasive species is increasing in Southeast Ohio. Invasive flora include kudzu, and purple loosestrife, multi-flora rose, Japanese honeysuckle, garlic mustard and tree-of-heaven. The most significant invasive insect is the gypsy moth, which has been identified within the National Forest.

Proposed Direction: Control non-native invasive species.

- *Diversity of Plant and Animal Species*

Factors leading to a need for change: There is a need to provide early-, mid-, and late-successional habitat on the Wayne National Forest to maintain a diversity of habitats for plants and animals. The management indicator species for the 1988 *Forest Plan* were selected to emphasize species of interest to the public and indicators of ecological change. Information gained in the past 15 years through monitoring suggests that there may be additional or other species that could better reflect changes in habitat composition and quality.

The Wayne National Forest's Regional Forester Sensitive Species Program should encourage an approach for species conservation and ecosystem management. Sensitive Species are defined as "those plants and animal species identified by a Regional Forester for which population viability is a concern as evidenced by significant current or predicted downward trend in numbers and density" and "habitat capability that would reduce a species existing distribution." The Wayne National Forest has completed an analysis to update the Regional Forester Sensitive Species list. This list, and information generated from the preparation of conservation assessments and approaches needs to be incorporated into the revision of the *Forest Plan*

Proposed Direction: Provide a range of ecological conditions to maintain diversity of native plants and animals.

3. Recreation Management -- includes developed and dispersed recreation uses, scenery management and the management of Heritage resources.

The Forest Service must help meet the Nation's growing need for outdoor recreation in a manner that protects the health, diversity, and productivity of the land. Demand is increasing for most types of recreation opportunities available on the Wayne. Demand is high for additional Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) trails, horse trails, and mountain bike trails. Fishing pressure at Forest ponds and lakes has been documented to be at least twice the state average. Hiking, backpacking, hunting, and nature viewing continue to be popular activities. While interest in primitive camping remains stable, campers using developed campgrounds are

demanding more amenities, such as improved RV pads, electricity, and sewer hookups. Interest in heritage resources, especially pertaining to the Underground Railroad found in the Wayne National Forest, is increasing.

In 2002, the Wayne National Forest will complete a recreation feasibility study. The three-phase study included personal interviews with key stakeholders in gateway communities, telephone surveys with residents of four metropolitan areas surrounding the Wayne and public meetings held in gateway communities to discuss the opportunities for development of recreation facilities both public and private. The Forest Service anticipates that this study will define the range of recreation opportunities that users seek in the Southeast Ohio landscape and provide recommendations related to those which are appropriate for development on the National Forest.

Key aspects of this topic include:

- *Scenery Management System*

Factors leading to a need for change: A new method for the management of scenic values has been developed known as the Scenery Management System. Forests have been directed to incorporate the new system into their revised forest plans.

Proposed Direction: Provide a visually pleasing landscape.

- *Recreation opportunity.*

Factors leading to a need for change: The demand for recreation opportunities on the Wayne has increased since the *Forest Plan* was developed. The majority of persons who commented on *Forest Plan* revision have mentioned increased recreational use of one type or another. Demand is high for both motorized (OHV/ORV use) and non-motorized (hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking) recreation. It is also high for both developed (campgrounds) and dispersed (general forested areas) recreation opportunities. Demand is also high for extractive recreation (hunting, fishing, plant collecting), as well as for non-extractive recreational uses (bird watching, photography, swimming, sight-seeing, foliage tours, etc.). There is debate about what types of recreation uses, and the amounts of the various uses, are appropriate on the Wayne National Forest. Input has also raised the question of what types of uses are not compatible with other types of uses.

Proposed Direction: Maintain a range of recreation opportunities.

- *ORV use on the forest.*

Factors leading to a need for change: The current plan restricts off-road vehicle use to designated trails or use areas. The *Forest Plan* does not prohibit the designation of additional trails or use areas.

ORVs are restricted by *Forest Plan* direction to designated trails, but these trails do not seem to provide the recreational experience desired by many of these users. As a result, many areas adjacent to designated trails are riddled with illegal, user-developed trails. ORV users have expressed confusion regarding which trails they are allowed to use. In addition, ORV users have also expressed a strong desire to have additional trails built to

meet the goals outlined in the 1988 *Forest Plan*. Some individuals in the public comments expressed the feeling that ORVs should be prohibited on the Forest if they could not be restricted to the trails to prevent resource damage. While a major change in plan direction for off-road motorized use does not appear warranted, it may be possible to refine direction to improve recreation experiences, improve resource protection, and reduce unlawful use.

Proposed Direction: Provide trails for motorized and non-motorized users.

- *Cultural and Heritage Areas.*

Factors leading to a need for change: Interpretation and education guidance about heritage resources needs to be updated to reflect a shift in emphasis in historic resources such as the iron furnaces and Underground Railroad. This education effort reflects an important emphasis area for the Forest and the Eastern Region. The Wayne is a partner in research of the Underground Railroad with the Hoosier and Shawnee National Forests, as well as many government and private organizations. The Wayne's efforts were recognized in 2001 with a Chief's Spirit Award.

Proposed Direction: Manage pre-historic and historic cultural resources, including preservation of sites associated with the Underground Railroad.

4. Land Ownership -- includes land purchases; land exchanges; and management of ownership boundaries

The USDA Forest Service began acquiring land in Southeast Ohio in 1935, at the invitation of the State of Ohio. The original purchase units were established to provide for the restoration of key watersheds that had been heavily impacted by farming and mineral extractive industries in the 1800s. Virtually all of the National Forest lands in Ohio were acquired from private individuals or corporations through purchases on a willing seller basis, dependent upon available funding. Occasionally the Forest has exchanged lands after conducting an analysis of the specific tracts of lands proposed, and making a finding that the resource or management values gained by the government were increased by agreeing to the exchange.

Key aspects of this topic include:

- *Priorities for land acquisitions and exchanges.*

Factors leading to a need for change: The combination of seller interest and funding availability has created a fragmented ownership pattern, with significant areas of private holdings remaining within the Proclamation Boundaries and interspersed with Forest Service holdings. National Forest ownership currently totals approximately 233,000 acres within the 833,990-acre Wayne National Forest Proclamation Boundary area. The number of smaller tracts also significantly increases the Forest's ownership boundary, currently at more than 1,980 miles.

The land acquisition program remains one of the most politically controversial activities on the Wayne. In 2000, legislation was introduced in the Ohio Legislature to revoke the

state's consent for federal acquisition. Many area residents express the belief that the Forest Service is buying up all the land available for commercial development, and that federal acquisition undermines the local property tax base. Others strongly support additional land acquisition because they see resource protection, economic development, and recreation values in public land. There is also public debate about the types of land that the Forest Service should acquire.

The land acquisition program (buying land from willing sellers) is the main way the Forest ownership pattern has changed since 1988. The land exchange program has historically been a very small program on the Forest.

Proposed Direction: Acquire and exchange land to increase contiguous Federal ownership and reduce the existing fragmented ownership pattern.

- *Boundary management.*

Factors leading to a need for change: The dispersed ownership pattern of the National Forest creates a large boundary line between federal and private lands. The Forest's actual boundary is currently more than 1,980 miles. If the current level of acreage was contiguous, the boundary would be less than 80 miles in length. This situation is complicated by the variety of survey techniques employed in Ohio from the 1700s forward. This largely unmarked boundary creates a potential for trespass by Forest visitors onto private lands and encroachment by adjacent landowners onto National Forest lands.

Proposed Direction: Manage National Forest boundaries to reduce trespass and encroachments.

5. Minerals Resource Management -- includes natural gas; oil; coal; and other common variety minerals.

Oil, gas, and coalfields as well as industrial minerals such as sand, gravel, limestone, clay, shale and salt are found within the Wayne National Forest. The United States own the rights to about 33% of these minerals with the rest in private ownership. Federal laws and policies regulate the exploration and development of the minerals within the Wayne National Forest while being consistent with other resource needs. The 1988 *Forest Plan* recognizes oil and gas exploration and development as a suitable use of the Forest and determines that the entire federally owned oil and gas mineral estate is administratively available for leasing, although surface occupancy is prohibited in some management areas.

Key aspects of this topic include:

- *Development of oil and gas extraction.*

Factors leading to a need for change: Because more than 60 percent of the mineral rights beneath the National Forest remain in private hands, the Wayne must provide access to those individuals and corporations who choose to exercise their valid rights.

Proposed Direction: Minimize adverse environmental impacts to National Forest resources when private mineral rights are developed.

- *Consent to lease.*

Factors leading to a need for change: Both the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Forest Service administer oil and gas leasing on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, respectively. The Forest Service and the BLM have joint responsibilities and decision-making for management of the minerals resource. This presents both agencies with a challenge with regards to coordination and timing in the course of processing applications for minerals development. Currently, the decision-making process for oil and gas leasing (outlined in Amendment 8 of the *Forest Plan*) involves three steps. Other National Forests have adopted a two-step process, where the decision of which areas to consent to lease is made in the forest plan, rather than in a subsequent NEPA decision.

Proposed Direction: Identify areas appropriate for leasing of federally held oil and gas rights consistent with national direction.

6. Roadless Area Inventory and Evaluation; Wilderness Recommendation; and Wild and Scenic River Recommendations:

All three of these items were evaluated during the development of the current *Forest Plan*. No areas on the Forest were found to meet roadless or wilderness definitions. The Wayne National Forest has acquired over 50,000 acres since that evaluation was completed.

- *Roadless Area Inventory and Evaluation*

Factors leading to a need for change: Forest Service planning regulations on roadless and wilderness recognize that National Forest System lands in the eastern United States have been acquired over time from private ownership. For the Forest Service to recommend an area for wilderness, it must first qualify as a roadless area. Criteria for identifying roadless areas in the East recognize that much, if not all of the land, shows some signs of human activity and modification even though they have shown high recuperative capabilities. Forest Service planning regulations require that during the development, or revision, of a forest plan the roadless character of the land be evaluated.

The additional acres that the Wayne National Forest has acquired since 1988 have not been evaluated for their potential to contribute to some area of the Forest achieving roadless or wilderness character. Without completing the roadless area analysis at this point, it is premature to rule out whether any areas might be recommended for wilderness.

In addition to the regulations, there are some members of the public who have expressed a desire that the Forest consider potential roadless areas. Some members of the public have expressed a strong desire for some wilderness recommendations on the Wayne National Forest. Other members of the public have expressed strong opposition to any wilderness recommendation.

Proposed Direction: Protect the wilderness characteristics of those areas identified for potential wilderness designation.

- *Wild and Scenic River Recommendation*

Factors leading to a need for change: New information on watershed conditions has been collected through detailed ecological analyses of a couple of watersheds since the current *Forest Plan* was approved. The Wild and Scenic River analysis completed during the development of the current *Forest Plan* has not been reviewed in light of the new information, or with the new lands acquired since 1988. Some members of the public have expressed an interest in having the Wayne National Forest consider potential recommendations based on a perceived economic benefit to tourism and recreational uses of the Forest. Other members of the public have expressed strong opposition to any potential wild and scenic designation due to perceived threats to their property and their rights.

Proposed Direction: Protect rivers eligible for inclusion in the national Wild and Scenic Rivers system.

Editorial Corrections / Clarifications

In addition to the major revision topics listed above, we anticipate making other minor changes of an editorial nature. These could include changes needed to explain or clarify direction in the existing plan, removing items that don't pertain to the six forest plan decisions, or removing direction that can be found elsewhere, such as in the Forest Service Directives System. These changes would not represent a change in the direction, goals or objectives in the Plan.