

# **US Forest Service Region 5 Roundtable on National Planning Rule**

Location

Shasta Trinity National Forest  
Headquarters  
3644 Avtech Parkway, Redding, CA

**April 6, 2010**

Summary Report Prepared By:

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## Executive Summary

Meeting participants in the US Forest Service (Forest Service) Region 5 Planning Rule Roundtable, held at the Shasta-Trinity National Forest Supervisor's office, represented a range of interests and concerns. Over the course of two meetings (one in-depth planning session and one session designed to receive large group feedback) participants provided valuable input on proposed principles for the Planning Rule (Rule) revision.

Input on the principles varied, but several key themes occurred. These themes included:

- A need for greater collaboration with locally affected stakeholders in the development of planning actions. In particular, participants expressed the need for local government input as a *partner* in Forest Service Planning Processes.
- A desire for all forest management plans to apply a "multi-use" philosophy to forest use that balances recreation, ecosystem/habitat concerns, and business uses (i.e., grazing, timber sales, etc.)
- Maintaining flexibility in the Rule to develop forest management plans that apply to local conditions as opposed to a "one size fits all" approach.
- The critical importance of transparency in Forest Service planning processes. Participants expressed a substantial amount of distrust and confusion about the Rule and the management plans that develop out of it.

In-depth discussions were held on each of eight suggested principles for the Rule. Participants delivered comments and concerns on the principles and offered constructive recommendations for consideration in the Rule. These recommendations are discussed in detail below.

## Introduction

This Roundtable was one of four that took place throughout Region 5 on April 6, 2010. The Shasta-Trinity Roundtable was divided into two sections: an in-depth planning discussion in the afternoon and a large-group discussion in the evening. The following document describes the result of the meeting in detail.

Concerns, comments, and recommendations are divided into three main categories: general comments for input as plan content, a summary for input on substantive topics, and a summary for input on process topics. The substantive topics are divided into five planning principles. These include:

1. Restoration and Conservation
2. Climate Change
3. Water Quality/Watershed Health
4. Diversity of Species and Wildlife Habitat
5. Contribution to Vibrant Rural Economies

Process topics refer to specific strategies/processes for development of the Rule and subsequent forest management plans and included three additional principles:

6. Collaboration with the Public
7. An "All-Lands" Approach to Planning
8. Basing Plans on the Latest Planning Science

## Meeting Overview

### 1.1. Meeting Location and Participants

- 1.1.1. Date of Meeting: April 6, 2010
- 1.1.2. Location of Meeting (town, state): Redding, California
- 1.1.3. Approximate number of meeting participants: 100 (Many people attended both the afternoon and evening session.)

Please circle the appropriate categories to indicate diversity in attendance at the meeting (to the extent possible):

**Financial Users**

Oil and gas  
Timber users ✓  
Outfitters ✓  
Ecotourism ✓  
Ski Areas  
Grazing permit holders ✓

**Users**

Off-road vehicle ✓  
Mountain Bike  
Horse Riders ✓  
Hiker  
Wilderness ✓  
Neighbor

**Academic**

Science ✓  
Economics  
Planning ✓  
Adaptive Management  
Global Climate Change

**NGOs**

Endangered Species  
Environmental Groups ✓  
Sustainable Communities  
Environmental Justice

**Other Governmental Entities**

Fish and Wildlife Service ✓  
EPA  
BLM ✓  
County Government ✓  
State Government ✓  
Tribal Government ✓

**Forest Service Staff**

Regional FS staff ✓  
National FS staff –including planning staff ✓  
National Grasslands

**Points of Contact for the Worksheet Summarizer**

1.2.1 Was the facilitator a Forest Service staff person or an independent facilitator?

The lead facilitators were independent from the Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP), a neutral facilitator group. Small group/breakout session facilitators were a mix of CCP and Forest Service staff.

1.2.2 Name of person completing these notes: Sam Magill and Heidi Hill Drum, CCP

1.2.3 Phone: 916-445-2079

1.2.4 Email: [smagill@ccp.csus.edu](mailto:smagill@ccp.csus.edu) (Sam Magill) and [heidi@h2dcomm.org](mailto:heidi@h2dcomm.org) (Heidi Hill Drum).

## Recommendations

### What Works

Meeting participants almost unanimously stated that §219.7 of the 1982 Rule (concerning consultation with local government) should be continued or, where appropriate, enhanced to provide increased coordination with local governments and other stakeholders.

### What Doesn't Work? Summary of Input for Plan Content

#### Concerns/Problems

Participants had a number of concerns about the current Rule and future planning efforts:

- Local government is not a stakeholder in the same way that private organizations or the general public is. Local government should be included in direct, government-to-government consultations from the beginning of any planning process.
- Recreation does not *specifically* appear in the principles as written.
- Local stakeholders' (i.e., private organizations, general public, the recreation community, grazing permit holders, etc) do not believe their concerns are reflected in planning documents or the rule planning process. There is a high level of distrust or confusion about how their input will or will not be incorporated into the Rule and subsequent forest management plans.
- Forest users perceive a lack of transparency regarding the way the Forest Service develops information for the Plans and how that data affects policy decisions.
- An emphasis on a multi-purpose approach to land management does not specifically appear in the principles.
- Funding streams for trail maintenance fluctuates and leads to trail closures, signage issues, and access (generally and for specific communities such as seniors and the disabled) problems.
- Planning rule revisions (and the forest management plans they produce) are too costly and take too long to implement.
- Injunctions, litigation, and appeals against actions on Forest Service land discourage entrepreneurs from investing in industries like co-generation facilities that could benefit to local economies.
- The permitting process for private businesses operating on Forest Service land (i.e., logging, grazing, wilderness outfitting, etc) is too time consuming and confusing.

- Wilderness designations are left to the discretion of individual managers or the political process instead of sound science.
- Coordination between land management agencies (Forest Service, BLM, state/federal Parks, etc) is lacking. In some cases, forest users could inadvertently cross onto another agency's land and be subject to a different set of regulations without knowing it.

## **Recommendations**

- Where possible, revise and enhance the 1982 Rule as opposed to “reinventing” planning rules. In the interest of making the Rule digestible for forest users, simplify language and requirements wherever possible.
- Develop robust collaboration/communications requirements in the Rule that clearly illustrate how stakeholder/public input will be incorporated into plans. Clarify where data will come from and how it will be used in future management plans.
- Recognize or enhance the Forest Service's use of §219.7 of the 1982 Rule to coordinate local forest plans with local governments. Recognize the need for local government input from the outset of planning activities.
- Create enough flexibility in the Rule to allow local districts to develop management plans that meet the unique needs of each forest.
- Develop consistent terminology for all data presented to the public and ensure that all presentations are consistent with other data. Participants felt that at times, staff from different offices might present on the same topic but deliver conflicting messages.
- Develop requirements that plans have both the regulatory authority to address the problems they seek to resolve, while at the same time creating a narrow focus for plans to ensure that managers don't have interpretive authority on a wide range of issues.
- Create standardized rationale for wilderness designations based on sound science.
- Develop a system for mitigation of lost revenue to local governments in the event of a reduction of recreation opportunities, grazing permits, timber sales, etc.
- Ensure land use regulations are consistent between different agencies wherever possible.
- Management plans should be designed in such a way that they can be updated as needed instead of redone from scratch (i.e., “living documents”).

## **Summary of Input for Substantive Topics**

### Principle #1: Restoration and Conservation

- The Rule should address the role of fire in the forest ecosystem. This includes fuel reduction and mechanical thinning to avoid stand-replacing, catastrophic fires. Fire

plays an important role in natural ecosystem, but existing conditions may lead to unnatural, catastrophic fire and poses a serious threat to structures, roads, and people.

- Clearly define what “restoration,” “resilience,” and “sustainability” mean from an agency perspective in the Rule; these terms have very different meanings depending on who you talk to.
- The Rule should require that plans address noxious weeds and invasive species and their effect on the forest ecosystem.
- Local and regional flexibility must be maintained for all restoration project planning; the Shasta-Trinity National Forest has different needs than others elsewhere in the country and state.

#### Principle #2: Climate Change

- Incorporate a range of assumptions about climate change that represent the full scale of climate change estimates.
- Acknowledge that the “science of climate change” is not hard and fast. Additional studies may determine that enough uncertainties exist that it shouldn’t be included in plans.
- Require that local management plans maintain enough flexibility to adapt to changes in information about climate change in the future.

#### Principle #3: Maintenance and Restoration of Watershed Health

- Require that plans make a clear linkage between water supply, the health of the watershed, and the broader concerns of the state. Water supply is a serious issue in the West and in California in particular.
- Recognize and manage for impacts on water quality caused by certain activities without restricting those activities.
- Educate both upstream and downstream users of the effects of their activities on watershed health and the forest/water users around them.
- Develop protections for municipal and agricultural supplies originating in Forest Service lands.

#### Principle 4: Diversity of Species and Wildlife Habitat

- Maintain viability language in the Plan regarding species and the ecosystem as a whole system.
- Encourage cooperation between the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), Forest Service, counties, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

- Where possible, require plans to take an “ecosystem-wide” approach as opposed to relying on single-species indicators.
- Develop sustainable funding sources for species monitoring programs.

Principle 5: Contribution to Vibrant Rural Economies

- Require that a multi-use philosophy be embraced in local plans that balance recreation, grazing, timber sales, and other uses.
- Include recreation explicitly in this principle. Recreation on national forest lands is a major contributor to many rural economies.
- Improve access and maintain stable funding sources for access maintenance.
- Ensure that local management plans balance national and local recreation uses. While some uses such as subsistence fishing and hunting are generally done primarily by locals, others such as the development of ski resorts apply to a much broader user base.
- Require that plans provide funding for county roads that provide access to Forest Service lands.
- Maintain Resource Advisory Council (RAC) funding.
- Acknowledge competing uses of Forest Service lands and encourage collaborative solutions the conflicts wherever possible. The RAC is one venue these discussions can take place in.

## **Summary of Input for Process Topics**

Principle 6: Collaboration with the Public

- Participants believe that collaboration with all users of Forest Service lands in the development of management plans is critical for the long term success and implementation of those plans. Participants expressed a need to be engaged in planning processes from their outset instead of in pre-determined comment periods.
- Education of the public is necessary to ensure clarity on what information they are being asked to provide, how that information will be used, and what to expect in the final plan(s) in question.
- Local and tribal governments must be consulted with in government-to-government consultations and coordinated with as partners in the planning process.



- Management plans should seek to honor the stakeholder input provided for them.

#### Principle 7: “All Lands” Approach to Management Plans

- The Forest Service should focus on the lands it already has and not expand its management practices to adjacent private lands.
- Fire management must be included as a component of any management plan.

#### Principle 8: Latest Planning Science

- Acknowledge that “best available science” means many things to many people, and when possible seek to develop a mutual understanding of data with affected stakeholders.
- Require that management plans define and apply science at the local level instead of relying on “global” information whenever possible.

## **Conclusion**

Stakeholders in Northern California want to be fully engaged in any future discussions related to the National Planning Rule as well as Forest Plan updates in their area. They provided input that the Rule Writing Team should consider, especially as it relates to local flexibility in planning and in simplifying not reinventing the 1982 Planning Rule.