

US Forest Service

Region 5 Roundtable on National Planning Rule

Location

Sacramento Convention Center
1401 K Street, Sacramento, 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 in Sacramento 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 and the Planning Rule (Rule) revision.

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

- A need for formal consultation with Tribal governments and integrating the role of tribes in the Rule.
- Participants expressed support for local governments to engage in government-to-government discussions with the Forest Service. Integrating local land use plans into Forest Plans by addressing consistency issues is an important consideration.
- The Rule should attempt to provide consistency and direction for all forests, yet create an opportunity for each forest's different ecosystem, social, and economic uniqueness be addressed.
- Access or recreation as a principle should be added to the Rule. Access references different kinds of use. The vision and values of users as well as offering them a high quality experience should be integrated into the planning process.
- The Rule must expand planning on the spatial and temporal scale. Planning must occur across boundaries to manage water, species migration and climate change. Planning must expand the time horizon to adapt and manage change.
- Robust science is integral to the planning rule. Watershed management is necessary to plan for the forest in a more comprehensive way. Climate and resilience require a scientific, adaptive approach. Striking a balance between in the Rule's detail is a challenge: the Rule can provide sideboards and guidance to the regions to provide consistency and accountability. The Rule should also support flexibility.
- Region 5 is unique in that it has a diversity of landscapes, from the desert to the mountainous Sierra Nevada. The forests of the Sierra Nevada are contiguous so the Rule must somehow consider planning across these boundaries. This geological and biological diversity is matched by the diversity of the interests groups and people of California, both in age, ethnicity and socio-economic status.

Attendees participated in in-depth discussion on each of eight suggested principles for the Rule. In addition, discussion on recreation took place. The Tribal representatives attending the meeting held their own discussion. The notes from that discussion are included in their entirety in this document.

Introduction

The Sacramento Roundtable was divided into two sections. In the afternoon, approximately 150 participants engaged in small and large group discussions to deliberate and provide input on the Planning Rule. In the evening, about 55 stakeholders asked questions and provided input in a large group discussion. The following document describes the collaborative input received through these two meetings.

Concerns, comments and recommendations are divided into three main categories: general comments 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 plus consideration of a principle on access. 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
Access / Recreation as an Additional Principle

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: Sacramento, California
- 1.1.3. Approximate Number of Meeting Participants: 205
- 1.1.4. Please circle the appropriate categories to indicate diversity in attendance at the meeting (to the extent possible):

Financial Users

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

Users

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

Academic

Science,
Economics
Planning
Adaptive Management
X Global Climate Change

NGOs

X Endangered Species
X Environmental Groups
X Sustainable Communities
X Environmental Justice

Other Governmental Entities

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

Forest Service Staff

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

1.2 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 facilitators were a mix of CCP and Forest Service staff.

1.2.2 Name of person completing these notes: Gina Bartlett and Nicole Ugarte, CCP.

1.2.3 Phone: 916-445-2079

1.2.4 Email: gina.bartlett@gmail.com (Ms. Bartlett), nugarte@ccp.csus.edu (Ms. Ugarte)

Recommendations

What Works

Tribal Collaboration from 1982 Rule (the Sierra Nevada Framework as an example)

- Define clear principles and terms that can be applied consistently in all the plans.
- Regional framework was a helpful element of the old rule.

Summary of Input for Plan Content

Concerns/Problems

- Recreation should have been a focal point of this. These are public lands for all of us to use. Providing recreation and protecting those lands for the nation's residents is possible.
- The lack of implementation accountability can lead to mistrust; clear accountability for what happens and what doesn't happen is necessary.
- A tension exists between flexible plans and those that are accountable, implementable and directive. The forest plan should not maintain the amount of detail that requires everything to be reconsidered when a certain aspect changes.
- The Rule could be a tool to balance *or* a tool to prioritize multiple uses.
- The transition between administrations in the executive branch changes the direction provided to the forests and prohibits achieving the goals of collaboration and managing the forests across generations.
- These are national forests to serve everyone. They must serve urban areas and provide opportunities for youth that have never seen forests to recreate and have an outdoor experience.
- Illegal marijuana growing on forest lands is a huge issue.
- Becoming stewards of the lands and the water is critical. The environment is a reflection of the people.

Recommendations

- Incorporate recreation as one of the principles.
- Educate the next generation of forest users.
- Allow management flexibility by communicating desired outcomes rather than concentrating on a plan that requires definitive analysis.
- Reach out to local government to solicit their views to determine how projects are consistent with local plans. Meet with local officials to achieve consistency.
- Adopt a top-down approach to the planning, with sideboards to ensure consistency

- Adopt a bottom-up approach by partnering with those people who live on the landscape. Fire safe councils are an example.
- Utilize scientists to ensure that the interpretation and application of science is made on the national level.
- Write the plan as a living document to be reviewed annually, rather than opening it up every 10-15 years.
- Mandate that the forest plan identify areas of the greatest need to sustain the ecosystem.
- Coordinate between State Parks and off-highway vehicles.
- Incorporate socio-economic impacts, including the origin of forests' visitors and their expectations.
- Address the issue of abandoned mines.

Summary of Input for Substantive Topics

Principle 1: Restoration and Conservation

- Reexamine the current fire suppression policy to restore fire as an ecological process. Educate stakeholders about benefits and risks of fire, especially in the wildland urban interface.
- Some recommend prioritizing the overall health of the forest and ecosystem over economic considerations. Others are not clear if priorities should be set by the Rule or by the local forests.
- Need tribal input on defining restoration.
- The Rule should address mining impacts on water quality, wildlife and human health and recreation issues.
- Threats from human activities (livestock, mining, human, timber, inactivity) should be examined through the rule.

Principle 2: Climate Change

- The Rule should specifically state that climate change is happening and develop an adaptive management framework to deal with it.

- Climate change requires extending the temporal and spatial scales of planning. The Rule can provide guidance to adapt to changing ecosystems and to manage for the evolving risk due to climate change. The timeframe needs to consider a much longer horizon. This risk and challenge transcends forest boundaries.
- Under climate change, water management is key to managing mitigation, migration and economies.
- The Rule should require the use of a combination of climate models at multiple scales. The models should be scenario-based planning to support decision making.
- Climate change is pervasive across many other categories and principles.
- Monitoring should be standard in the planning rule. Evaluating an adaptive management framework is critical.

Principle 3: Maintenance and Restoration of Watershed Health

- Watershed health is a common denominator linking all elements, including air, land, plants, and animals.
- The watershed is a system, and as such it was recommended that those who benefit from the system should contribute to its funding.
- Analyze watersheds instead of management areas.

Principle 4: Diversity of Species and Wildlife Habitat

- Wildlife is an indicator of forest health, and current species viability is a concern.
- Indicator species can prove helpful since number of species can be overwhelming.
- Multiple scales are critical. Wildlife corridors, for example, can be vital to a species. This overlaps with the all lands approach especially when large scale habitat is required. Non-contiguous lands can be a challenge since wildlife cross boundaries.
- America's Heritage Act (HR 2807) is a good example of providing safeguards and measurable objectives for sustaining healthy and robust fish and wildlife
- Support and prioritize indigenous plants and species.
- Examine domestic animal grazing and its negative impacts on wildlife.
- Reinstate lands for wild horses and burros.

- Monitoring is important. Budgets for monitoring needs to be included. Monitoring must occur across space and time.

Principle 5: Contribution to Vibrant Rural Economies

- Prioritize land uses that supports sustainable wildlife and renewable energy. Restoration can benefit local economies.
- A whole system approach is necessary as timber cannot continue to provide sufficient funding.
- Grazing should be addressed in plans.
- Develop biomass plans to ensure the better fire resiliency, as wildfires have a large impact on communities, watersheds, and wildlife.
- Recreation and other uses can benefit local economies.
- Consider impacts to communities and counties. Look at consistency with other plans, General Plans and local plans. Local stakeholders and communities should have an active role in planning decisions.
- Key performance indicators need to be expanded to consider different elements of the economic and ecosystem benefits.

Consider New Principle on Access/Recreation

- Access may be the term of art to reference recreation and other forms of use.
- The vision and values of users as well as offering them a high quality experience should be integrated into the planning process.
- Stakeholders express frustration with restricted access to “public” land.
- Rule should allow for plans to identify appropriate uses and carrying capacity.
- Aviation strips are part of the stakeholder community and planning issues include land, water and air quality.

Summary of Input for Process Topics

Principle 6: Collaboration with the Public

- Clearly communicate the Forest Service’s intent and level of collaboration with the public. The Forest Service should clearly define collaboration and ensure that the process is not one-way communication. The decision space needs to be well defined so stakeholders understand their role and contribution.
- Interest-based collaboration should be encouraged to develop shared visions that increase “ownership” of the plan among stakeholders.
- Collaborative planning processes must go beyond traditional boundaries and continue beyond the “end” of the planning process.
- Effective collaboration should not mean shifting away from pertinent rules, regulations and best available science. Collaboration should occur within defined sideboards. Effective collaboration should mean that all input is fairly and honestly evaluated and considered. Efforts toward reaching consensus and agreement within the legal bounds can occur within a collaborative framework.
- Educational collaboration might include appreciate inquiry to determine the distinct values in the Rule.
- Education should be two-way: the Forest Service should become more familiar with neighboring communities and local and tribal governments, and non-Forest Service stakeholders should learn more about forest management issues, constraints, laws and regulations.
- Balance various interests, ensuring equal stakeholder engagement based on strong science to sort accurate information.
- Educate and engage underserved communities, particularly to provide opportunities to expose youth to public lands. Reach out to youth beyond using social media. Having youth work or recreate in the forests is opportune.
- Work to keep the publics who speak different languages informed and engaged: Hispanic, Hmong and others.
- Local government consultation should occur as early as possible. Local stakeholders and government would like to have input into planning decisions.
- Develop Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with private land owners and Tribes to further utilize local partnerships.
- Prioritize government-to-government consultation and Tribal involvement. Region 5 includes over 100 federally and non-federally recognized Tribes, which presents the opportunity to serve as a model for proper Tribal consultation and respect for Tribal stewardship. The Sierra Nevada Framework is a good model for this.

- Outreach needed to state government agencies. Many state lands are in close proximity to national forest lands.
- Support equality and collaboration within the agency and its interdisciplinary teams.
- Use funding to resolve conflicts.

Principle 7: “All Lands” Approach to Management Plans

- Ensure consistency in planning for adjacent lands and between federal, local, and Tribal forest plans. Evaluate goals across plans to identify consistency and challenges.
- Address how to maintain the ecological and social values of the region’s snow pack, which has a strong impact on Region 5’s forests and surrounding lands.
- Consider that regional guides are especially important on the west coast to provide a framework for the bioregion and to ensure consistency.

Principle 8: Latest Planning Science

- Engage scientists in the creation, validation, and implementation of the Rule. Researchers and scientists should be involved in studying the effects of restoration, interpreting data, discovering trends, and integrated technology.
- Guidelines are preferable to standards in most cases, especially when the guidelines are supported and validated with performance monitoring of anticipated management outcomes.
- The Forest Plans should be done using a whole systems approach (for instance, recreation, fire, biodiversity, and water quality are interactive with one another, not separate).
- Scale-appropriate (temporal and spatial) plans should include scientifically sound and technically feasible performance monitoring that match the management scale and objectives.
- Social science and ecological science should be paramount, with economics a secondary or tertiary choice factor. Economics should not trump ecological science.
- Planning should use multi-criteria decision support tools now available. It should be conducted within clearly noted scales and include vigorous monitoring feedback loops to inform adaptive management based on actual performance.

- The process should be transparent and include measured accountability and be socially equitable.
- Plans should recognize and accommodate landscape scales, such as watersheds, and include effects and partnerships that cross ownership and jurisdictional boundaries
- Acknowledge objective data does not always accurately measure the progress of subjective concepts.
- Emphasize ecosystem-based science.
- Social science and rigorous exploration should be used to look at how forests are used, including population trends.
- Monitoring is a critical aspect of forest land projects.
- Conduct assessments and address inconsistencies in the environmental review process.

Tribal Group

- (1) All lands: allows more consistency within landowners/managers
- (2) New rule should respect and make priority traditional management practices: make a separate priority in plan
- (3) Many thought the eight principles were too ambiguous. This demonstrates a need for more education between a rule and a forest plan.
- (4) Management=bad word, instead use Stewardship, “cultural conservation”
- (5) Need more Tribal perspectives/activities versus science. Think outside the box.
- (6) Past practices have injured Tribal resources.
 - a. Timber priority: herbicides, pesticides hurt fish, water
 - b. Land use plans influenced by recreation, non-Indian constituents
- (7) USFS needs to start hiring Tribes instead of “Good ole boys”
- (8) Recreation for the public devastates Tribal resources

Language

- (1) Traditional knowledge should take priority over recreation
- (2) Language is important: be clear this is not just a rule. For many it is a way of life
 - a. Whose interest or perspective are these rules drafted
- (3) Rule writers need cultural sensitivity training to understand the Tribal perspective
- (4) Mandatory Tribal orientation for all USFS

Tribal Group on Principle #1

- (1) Management is a bad word, needs to be more inclusive
- (2) Why were the ecosystems destroyed? Where are the lessons learned? (Get a copy of the existing plans)

- a. What were the problems?
 - b. Drinking water should be a priority
 - c. Recognize we are all just a part of the ecosystem
 - d. What is healthy? Define it.
- (3) What not adopt Tribal Forest Management Plans?

Other Tribal Feedback on the Rule

- (1) Accountability of existing Tribal policies in a new rule should be incorporated
- (2) Define recreation: right now there is no accountability for resource damage
- (3) Single species management is not good
- (4) Don't compartmentalize the landscape
- (5) Protect culturally sensitive areas with Tribal crews
- (6) USFS Tribal relations people need to be other than archaeologists—they don't have Tribal sensitivity
- (7) Conflict of interest
- (8) Consultation should not be done by contractors

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 robust input for the Rule Writing Team to consider: improving government-to-government consultation and coordination, integrating science into plans, striking a balance between a strategic and directive plan, and embracing the diversity of Region 5's people, wildlife and landscapes.