

US Forest Service

Region 5 Roundtable on National Planning Rule

Location

San Bernardino National Forest
Forest Supervisors Office
602 South Tippecanoe Avenue,
San Bernardino, CA

April 6, 2010

Summary Report Prepared By:

Julia Lee
Center for Collaborative Policy
California State University, Sacramento
815 S Street, Floor 1
Sacramento, CA 95811
T 916-445-2079

Executive Summary

Meeting participants in the US Forest Service (Forest Service) Region 5 Planning Rule Roundtable at the San Bernardino National Forest, Forest Supervisors Office, represented a range of interests and concerns. Representatives from the following national forests also attended: Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, San Bernardino, and Sequoia. Over the course of two meetings on April 6, 2010, (one in-depth daytime planning session and one shorter evening session) participants provided valuable input on proposed principles for the Planning Rule (Rule) revision.

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

1. A need to build in local flexibility for Forest Plans (Plans).
2. A strong interest in incorporating collaboration into the Rule as it provides a foundation for all the work done.
3. A need to articulate priorities between multiple uses including recreation and habitat concerns.
4. A mistrust of the current process as recreation is not adequately recognized in the draft Rule.
5. A need for public processes to build greater acceptance of outcomes in order to reduce litigation of Plans.
6. A need for the Rule to require that Plans address budget priorities.

Introduction

The Rule meeting (both the day and evening) at the San Bernardino National Forest, Forest Supervisors Office, started with a presentation via a live videoconference from Sacramento on the Planning Rule and the collaborative process supporting its development. Presentations regarding other efforts to solicit input on the Rule including the National Roundtables and Science Panel were also given. Questions and answer periods followed the presentations.

Participants in the day meeting then broke into small groups to discuss the Rule followed by a plenary. At the evening meeting participants received a summary of the day meeting and also had the opportunity to provide input into the Rule. The evening session was not nearly as well attended as the day, perhaps due to the fact

that the Forest Plan has recently been completed so interest in the region may not be as high as other areas of California that are yet to embark on this effort.

Concerns, comments, and recommendations for the rule writing team consideration 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

*Note: A new proposed principle on recreation is also included.

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: San Bernardino National Forest, Forest Supervisors Office, 602 South Tippecanoe Avenue, San Bernardino, CA

1.1.3. Approximate Number of Meeting Participants: 34

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
Timber users
Outfitters
Ecotourism
Ski Areas
Grazing permit holders
Shooting Range: **X**

Users

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

Academic

Science,
Economics
Planning
Adaptive Management
Global Climate Change

NGOs

Endangered Species
Environmental Groups: **X**
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: **X**
National FS staff –including
planning staff: **X**
National Grasslands

Private Sector

Consultants: **X**

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 facilitator was 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: Julia Lee

1.2.3 Phone: 916-445-2079

1.2.4 Email: je.lee@verizon.net

Recommendations

What Works

A number of successful strategies for public involvement used in four forests in southern California commonly call the “Southern Province” may be of interest to the rule writing team including:

- *A Multi-Forest Planning Approach*: Four forests in the region worked together, providing efficiencies to develop the most recent Forest Plan.

- *Land Use Zoning:* Concepts such as “zones” and “suitable use” were incorporated into public meetings, making it easier for everyone to communicate.
- *“Place-Based” Outreach:* Extensive public participation was attributed to meetings held in locations familiar and accessible to public. This resulted in high turnout.
- *“Desired Conditions:* Incorporating “desired conditions” into discussions with the public was helpful.

What Doesn’t Work

The public now has input, but not collaboration. The current process leads to adversarial relations. A top-down approach from Washington to the forests does not work. The writing team could consider decentralizing the writing of the Rule beyond Washington.

Summary of Input for Plan Content

Roundtable participants identified a number approaches for the plan writing team to consider as outlined below. The team is also encouraged to be open and brave in adopting new ideas.

PRIORITY SETTING: The Rule should require Forest Plans that clearly articulate priorities between multiple uses. However, recognizing that priorities in forests can change, there is a need be adaptive.

BUDGETING: The Rule should require that Forest Plans address budget priorities.

SCALE AND TIMEFRAMES: Decision making needs to be done in terms of geographic scale and timeframes.

RECREATION/TOURISM/SOCIAL: Interest is strong for recreation to be a priority in the Rule. Recreation, however, should be only one of the uses considered. Concern was expressed that recreation is not in the initial draft principles. Participants commented that recognition of recreation is critical. The signage of the Forest Service has traditionally reflected “land of many uses” which would include recreation. *See additional notes on recreation.*

COLLABORATION: Collaboration needs to be in the Rule as it provides a foundation for all the work done. *See Principle #6 for the full comments on this.*

LITIGATION REDUCTION: To minimize opposition to outcomes in Plans, a public processes is needed that builds in more consent as they are developed.

FLEXIBILITY: Local flexibility for Plans needs to be built in, however the Rule needs to contain non-negotiables as well.

FOREST PLAN REVISIONS: The Rule could contain guidance on mechanisms to periodically review Forest Plans that include the public. Shorter time frames for updating Plans may be useful. Forests could form Forest Plan Monitoring Groups to keep an ongoing dialogue open with the public to periodically review efforts. The Rule could include ways to course correct as needed. Monitoring can help determine need for changes. Elimination of the EIS requirement was suggested.

FORMAT: The Rule needs to be simplified and much shorter to make it easier to implement.

Summary of Input for Substantive Topics

Principle 1: Restoration & Conservation

Collaboration needs to focus on addressing the trade-offs between human uses and ecosystem preservation. Plans should contain goals to consider and influence adjacent development that could require fire suppression as an expense to ensure ecosystem resilience. Large-scale disturbance of landscape must be controlled to preserve ecosystems. Plans could address outreach to educate both urban and rural members of the public about the importance of maintaining ecosystems.

Principle 2: Climate Change

Climate change is a macro, large-scale issue with national direction that Plans could tier to. Plans should emphasize and adapt actions and desired conditions that contribute to national climate change objectives. Analytical requirements for climate change at land project levels must be limited to defensible research and be responsive to national standards and goals.

Principle 3: Maintenance and Restoration of Watershed Health

Plans need standards for water quality. Standards should be written to require analysis at the appropriate watershed level. Watershed health should consider impact to marine habitats and species.

Principle 4: Diversity of Species and Wildlife Habitat

A number of themes surfaced in the discussion of the draft principle #4 regarding the diversity of species and wildlife habitat including:

TENSION WITH RECREATION: Species and wildlife habitat has been at odds with recreation. It is also at odds with an increasing infrastructure in the forests.

SCIENCE: An explicit default is needed to protect habitat in the absence of data and where there is uncertainty.

PRIORITIES: The Rule needs to address how priorities are set so that habitat is not considered in isolation. Priorities need to consider what time frames are appropriate to a habitat —short term or long term. Priority needs to be given to sensitive, non-resilient habits over time in order to preserve the resource.

LINKAGE WITH ALL LANDS PRINCIPLE: Habitat protection is linked to the all lands approach. Corridors in forests are also linked to this approach. The all lands approach helps address concerns for species with small and restricted habitat.

MONITORING: Monitoring and evaluation are important. Ecological benefits versus species protection could be used and this type of approach could help move towards collaboration versus litigation and polarization. On the one hand, evaluation could be based on what is feasible/affordable for effective inventory and monitoring of species. On the other hand, inventorying provides the science for a Plan and is needed despite costs. Commodities from the forests could be priced to include monitoring costs.

COMMON SPECIES: The Rule could consider the viability of common species to control loss of endangered species.

COMPATIBLE USES: The Rule could include proactive use of compatibility uses/principles versus exclusion. The overall goal is ecosystem health and benefits.

COLLABORATION: The public now has input but this is not the same as collaboration resulting in a very adversarial process. Collaboration needs to be defined and Forest Service staff trained to use it.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT: A lack of trust and confidence in adaptive management exists in setting goals. The outcomes of adaptive management are not clear and accountability is lacking. Resources are needed for adaptive management to succeed.

Principle 5: Contribute to Vibrant Rural Economies:

This principle was discussed along with a new proposed principle on recreation. See the notes on the proposed recreation principle below.

New Substantive Principle Proposed: Recreation

Recreation needs to be one of the key principles in any Forest Planning. The agency seems to have lost the multiple use focus and needs to bring it back. The Rule itself should be as simple as possible, leaving broad discretion to the local level. Recreation should be incorporated into social/cultural consideration. Recent years have seen a shift from commodity-oriented to tourism focused – recreation is the key to sustainable economies.

Plans should identify the unique recreation opportunities each Forest provides, their recreation niche. The Rule should be explicit that activities such as shooting, hunting, motor vehicles, recreational mining, etc., are legitimate uses of National Forest lands. Plans should identify areas where activities (recreation) are compatible with the land. Plans should provide for local flexibility in developing plans so that new, minor or unique uses can be considered. Tourism is integral to local economic and sustaining communities. Plans need to assess recreation opportunities and quantify use as well as estimate cost to deliver. Additionally should also estimate contribution of recreation to local and regional economics. Plans should address and/or identify key areas of concentrated recreation use and designate accordingly.

Existing laws and regulations already guide activities – the Rule should focus on broader topics/uses rather than specific (redundant) direction. Plans should identify suitable uses that are compatible. Funding needs to be a key consideration on the Rule. Forest Plans should be aligned and better linked to funding.

Summary of Input for Process Topics

Concerns/Problems

Recommendations

Principle 6: Collaboration with the Public

Interest is strong in collaboration serving as a framework for the Rule to guide forests as they develop Plans. Collaboration needs to be defined. The Forest Service needs training to develop capabilities in order to use collaboration tools.

Collaboration could focus on addressing the trade-offs between human uses and ecosystem preservation. Collaboration applies to the development of the Planning Rule as well as the Forest Plans. Top down approaches do not work. *See All Lands Principle also.*

Principle 7: “All Lands” Approach to Management Plans

The Forest Service would need to develop the ability to collaborate with others for this approach. Collaboration with private lands could contribute to flexibility in land management in the forests. The All Lands approach could be used on an as needed basis, tied to defined goals. Habitat protection is linked to the principle of All Lands. Corridors in forests are also linked to the all lands principle. The all lands principle helps address concern for species with small and restricted habitat.

Principle 8: Latest Planning Science

No specific comments address this principle, however, discussions recognized the importance of collaborative processes (see comments in Draft Principle #6 above).

Conclusion

Participants were fully engaged at the meeting and genuinely appreciated the opportunity to provide input into the Rule. They look forward to seeing a written summary of the meeting conveying their concerns, interests and recommendations for the Rule writing team. Interest was expressed for more opportunities to collaborate on the development of the Rule beyond the April 6, 2010 Roundtable.