

Tribal Roundtable conference call
CALL, MAY 3, 2010, 1:00 EDT

At the historic White House Tribal Nations Conference, President Obama signed a Memorandum on Tribal Consultation, pronouncing tribal consultation "a critical ingredient of a sound and productive Federal-tribal relationship." The US Forest Service joins the President in this recommitment to collaboration, both in spirit and in action, with our nation's Indian tribes as we move forward. In keeping with this directive, and with our agency's policies, we are pleased to invite you to participate in the collaborative process for the development of a new National Forest Planning Rule. Please note that this collaborative process is not itself a consultation; it is an opportunity for information sharing and dialog that will augment the consultation process. The opportunity for formal government-to-government consultation will continue throughout the development of the Rule but separately and in addition to the collaborative process.

Background: USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack has called for a new rule to guide the development of National Forest plans. He specifically charged the Forest Service with creating the new rule using a collaborative process. On December 18, 2009 the Forest Service issued a Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for a new planning rule, outlining the collaborative process and suggesting a set of principles and questions that might be used to help develop the planning rule. The collaborative process provides numerous avenues for contributing meaningful input for the agency's decision making process and allows diverse interests to come together to explore critical issues. The input will be used by the USDA Forest Service rule writing team in the development of the draft environmental impact statement and proposed rule.

In addition to formal consultation with tribes which will happen throughout the process, there are a variety of other opportunities for tribal information sharing and dialogue.

National Tribal Conference Call:

First, we particularly want to alert you to a National Tribal Conference Call on Monday, May 3, from 1:00 – 4:00 pm EDT. The phone number is: 888-603-9640. The passcode is: Tribal.

This format has been used with great success by other federal agencies, and we look forward to offering this opportunity and learning from the experience with all of you. Two clear advantages are cost and equal access. Tribes will not have to bear the expense of traveling to Washington, DC, or other distant location for a meeting. And, all tribes, regardless of size, location and budgets will be able to participate as equals on the call. We want to emphasize that this exchange on May 3 will not be formal government-to-government consultation, but rather a chance for productive information sharing among tribes and the Forest Service.

The focus of the call will be the set of principles and questions found in the NOI and mentioned above. The set of principles are located on the Forest Service Planning Rule Website: <http://fs.usda.gov/planningrule> - under Tribal Conference call.

National and Regional Forums:

Second, you are welcome to participate in other collaborative forums offered in various locations. You can find more details on these events, as well as planned events in your region, by consulting the Forest Service Planning Rule Website: <http://fs.usda.gov/planningrule>

- **National Roundtables:** Three *National Roundtables* are being convened in Washington, DC, by the Forest Service with support from the US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (USIECR) and the Meridian Institute. Dates for these roundtables are April 1-2, April 20-21, and May 11-12. Please pre-register here: www.fsnationalmeetings.eventbrite.com. If you have questions concerning special needs or to request sign language interpretation, contact Danielle Youngblood at (202) 354-6451 or dyoungblood@merid.org at least a week before the scheduled roundtable.

To encourage broad participation the Forest Service, through the National Forest Foundation, is offering the opportunity to apply for travel support (flight and/or ground transportation and/or hotel) to attend the national roundtables. These funds are targeted toward individuals who would not be able to attend without such assistance. This assistance will help ensure that multiple stakeholder perspectives are represented in the planning rule dialogue. Additional information and an application are available at <http://www.nationalforests.org/conserve/learning/planning-rule-travel-assistance>.

- **Regional Roundtables:** Your region will be holding regional roundtables and other opportunities during April. Dates, locations, and registration links are available at the [Forest Planning Rule Website](http://fs.usda.gov/planningrule), or by contacting your Regional Tribal Program Manager.

Again, in the spirit of President Obama's recent commitment to tribal consultation and coordination as expressed in Executive Order 13175, as well as Secretary Vilsack's charge to work collaboratively in the development of the new Forest Planning Rule, we welcome the contributions of tribes in the development of a new national Forest Service planning rule.

Please join in this exciting endeavor. Thank you!