

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA PLANNING RULE ROUNDTABLE

April 21, 2010

81 Public Attendees – Tables A through I

Participants selected from the following discussion questions:

General Discussion

1. What do you think a great planning rule would look like?
2. What works now; what concepts would you like to continue into the next planning rule?
3. What doesn't work; what concepts would you like to leave behind?

Plan Content

4. What kind of information should be included in Forest Plans, and should they include standards and guidelines? If so what kind?
5. How consistent should plans be across the country?

Process Topics

6. What suggestions do you have for making forest planning faster, simpler, more straightforward and less expensive?
7. When and how should plans be evaluated to see if they are working? What should trigger plan amendments?
8. What is the best way to involve stakeholders in the planning process?
9. How should the Forest Service collaborate with adjacent landowners, partners, and other agencies and governments in developing Forest Plans?

Substantive Topics

10. How can the next planning rule foster restoration of NFS lands?
11. What, if any, climate change assumptions should be used when developing Forest Plans?
12. How should the Forest Service take into account water availability, and water quality factors, that are outside of Forest Service control?
13. How should the planning rule guide monitoring and protection of at-risk species of animals and plants and their habitats?
14. What should the planning rule say about how Forest Plans deal with providing goods and services that contribute to vibrant local, regional, and national economies?
15. What should the planning rule say about recreational access, and visitor facilities and services?
16. Is there anything else you would like to suggest about the forest planning rule?

Table A

1 - Specificity – one rule doesn't apply to every situation. Do we pick from a set of rules tailored to local management? A minimum National concept – zoning, management areas, local flexibility – No industrial work next to residential, as a guideline, for example.

2 - Collaborate with local governments to make decisions. If you don't know about the Tongass, don't expect your comments to have the same weight as people who live there. Local governments would have the opportunity to be granted cooperating agency status. This would create stability over time.

3 - Flexibility to change – the more micromanagement, the worse for local planning. Local solutions and room to make them. Advisory Boards are good because it's harder for people up the bureaucratic chain to micromanage things local groups agree to do.

Privatize our forests. Cut back on dollars and employees. Simplify, spend dollars on the ground.

Right now it's too easy to appeal. We need predecisional involvement. People have to participate if they want to appeal.

Viability rules trip things up. We should not be looking at single species but at the habitat for multiple species. Focus on habitat.

5% mess it up for 95%. Litigation is too easy and too costly.

Sustainability – Social, economic, and environment are a three-legged stool. Each needs to be integrated and coequal.

We are battling over the best available science. Science cannot dictate goals and objectives. Science informs decisions.

Apply reasonable opinions and judgment. No bias toward one leg or the other except in local specific context. Do we have to close the local trail because the FS has no money or do we let local passion and interest dictate the outcome, wherever the means come from (volunteers to keep the trail open).

4 - Recreational issues – how do we incorporate common sense and find balance between different interests? Need education, few standards, more guidelines.

Need severability clauses. You should be able to change parts of plans without going through the whole huge process again, just dealing with the issue at hand.

5 - We need the specific ability to operate at the local level.

6 - We need to respond to science but also have a way to assess what the risk/threat is.

Need predecisional involvement process. Too easy to stop things with .40 cent stamp. Make people litigate if the issue is so important. How can appeals be managed so the very few and the uninvolved have to make the case and must participate with good will?

8 - Have various interests talk early and often (like the National Forest Advisory Boards) where people educate each other about different views and have a way to let people surface and deal with emotions and facts.

9 - Grant cooperating agency status to local governments. Make the offer to give them cooperating agency status.

10 - Be able to respond quickly and site specifically so we don't have to unravel the whole tapestry to change part of the plan.

Find ways to create guidelines to create habitat and community resiliency versus restoration. We don't need to recreate the past but we do need a sustainable future.

Emphasize guidelines over standards. Less standards. Trust that conditions will change, trust local input and collaboration. Standards for water quality perhaps or just very critical things.

11 - Very few standards. Emphasize guidelines.

Outputs and Desired Future Condition – Need to identify outputs; timber, miles of horse trail, need metrics that people can count on. Compromise can happen on outputs. Right now we have 30 miles of rock crawler trail and we need to be able to work with others (and the FS) to expand that if we can do it responsibly.

How can the new rule help with the idea of certainty in outputs?

Collaboration and Involvement – We need to complete plans in 2 years, not 10. People have to have a reasonable expectation of accomplishment. Limit the time.

The 1982 Rule was largely OK. Use our previous experience and history to inform our process.

13 - Focus on habitat – not individual species. Create the habitat – the animals will come.

14 - Need to make provisions for local people to pitch in and help implement plans. Find ways to allow locals with specific interests to help define where we'll do work, and what we work on.

15 - Recreationists need access and a reasonable expectation to take things on, make improvements, focus passion on specific areas.

Difference between commercial interests and recreation interests. We could not operate w/out the timber industry. People who want to provide horseback rides or whatever. You can value a board foot or an AUM but how do you value a recreation experience (by willingness to pay?).

16 - The Forest Supervisor should be the decision maker. Keep Supervisors in place longer, build more trust. Collaborate with advisory boards to make final decisions. We have no choice about who runs the forests so we need local voices.

Future – have our little group at Table A keep the conversation going.

Table B

- 15 – Recreation access, visitor facilities, and services
 Balance of voice small and local vs. large and quiet.
 Recreation needs should have same emphasis as environmental and other uses.
 1982 Planning Rule looks good on this point but wasn't applied locally.
 Don't put facilities restrictions in Rule. Let local forests make that decision.
 "More the better"
 "Don't let money drive infrastructure (maintenance)"
 Fees are OK if feasible
 Like that issue as a whole is addressed in Rule, but leave interpretation local.
 Services should be on-line.
- 14 – Economics needs to be high on priority in Rule.
 Local forests should be allowed the flexibility to manage their local lands.
 Goods and services that bolster local economies should be on even footing with
 environmental, cultural resources, and other interests (like single species).
 Too many hoops FS has to jump through to get process (legal issues cause limbo and
 prevent swift action).
 Give land managers the ability to move swiftly – quick action.
- 13 – Use of research in the field and less modeling (unverified).
 Researchers should be in the field outside – disconnect with ground.
 Models are important to determine sustainability – models need to be verified locally.
 Single species management is not conducive to managing large areas.
 Rule shouldn't require species to be managed for viability – habitat type of ecosystem.
 At what point should the FS stop worrying about a population of a given species? – what
 are the impacts on the local economy?
 Greater flexibility to manage for species assemblages.
 Species have survived so far – can't make assumptions of viability without a thorough
 understanding of the ecology of the species.
- 11 Climate Change - Assumptions should not be addressed in the Rule, that is too big of an
 issue for FS to address.
- 9 NOIs should be sent out to the larger region as a whole, not just adjacent communities.
 For Future Rule meetings: Cartoon (graphic) of current planning process so public can
 understand.
 Keep local agencies in control of local decisions.
 Allow locals to have greater weight in comment period.
 Litigation gets in the way of effective management.
 Take advantage of Regional newspapers and websites for information dissemination.
 Keep websites up to date and links working.
 FS website and search functionality leave a lot to be desired.
 Emphasize website info sharing – this means keeping websites functional and up to date.
 Objections work better than appeals – keep the process moving
 TV/Radio announcements not just newspapers – each Forest have a list serve of new
 actions.

Table C

- 2 - Concept of the comment period works well; need a template to check if what they agree
 with or don't agree with; open houses are great; likes the presentations at these open houses; like

the information sharing at open houses; designating certain areas to be wilderness and others something else is working well; some areas having more than one theme is working well; areas are easier to understand; management areas are working great!

3. Appeals – can't go forward, not constructive, stop things too easily; over a million dollars of work can come to a halt; iron things out before the decision is made; process is way too cumbersome; needs to be addressed. Agency Recommended Wilderness – Needs to be a lot more stringent; more collaboration; has a place but more adaptive management; don't water down wilderness; stay with the meaning of wilderness; have evaluation more stringent, fully meet all those principles. Decision making at the local level; local person is the one in touch, closest to the decision. Have local communication.

6 - Eliminate regulations; too many contradictive things; easier said than done; making it less expensive doesn't always mean all issues will be addressed; more backbone in management.

8 - Local advisory boards a good idea; look at sub-groups for the local boards; district boards; major interest groups; local folks, environmental folks; need to learn to market differently; away from publications to marketing; children's groups; 4-H groups; youth groups need to get involved; involve youth more; open houses are good.

9 - The right hand needs to know what the left is doing; communication between agencies needs to be elevated; make sure the agencies know what each of them are doing; more coordination is needed among agencies; need to make a regulation in the new planning rule for agency coordination; using chat rooms between agencies; need to use new technologies more; static forms can be used; forms could be used a lot more; partnership ideas are great; cooperating agency agreements are a good thing; local governments need to be included and improved in the communications; need more direction on including local governments.

12 - Overlap with FS and Bureau of Reclamation is working well in agreements and MOUs; meeting with FS often and would like to keep the communication going; keep up the coordination between the two agencies; working real well as it; collaboration on agreements with private landowners would be very helpful; need agreements with local fire departments; planning rule should include collaboration with the local individuals; ease the pain for the public to let them know we are in this together.

14 - Rule needs to be clear on (Q 14); local communities will need to know this so they can do their planning; tough for businesses to make plans without knowing what to expect; needs to get done on the ground; long range plan needed so you know where you are going; see that goods and services are a priority; keep it as a primary purpose; keep economic groups and chambers of commerce involved.

16 - Can't be the same everywhere; every area is different; ecological areas differ in different areas; see #5; a lot of positions are changing constantly within the FS; new leadership means different ways of managing; just get used to the leadership and then it changes.

Table D -

1 - Rule will provide for plans that are driven by local needs (flexible and adaptable).
Rule should provide vision of the future.
Provide oversight, not micro management.

2 - Multiple-use
Desired condition – looking to the future.

3 - Any concept that only looks at single uses is selfish – multiple-use and sharing public lands are key.

- 4 - We need to take care of our natural resource.
Science based planning would obviously include climate change.
Use best science available today from the local level.
Need the possibility of motorized firefighting in wilderness.
- 5 - Local flexibility most important
Guidance good but not nationally consistent.
- 6 - KISS rule
Keep it on the forest/local level – the people on the district/forest know what to do and or what is needed.
- 8 - Public meetings and hearings.
National Forest Advisory Board – listen and hear what is said and follow through with recommendations.
- 9 - Mutual respect across boundaries and agencies.
- 12 - Tough one – Army Corps of Engineers control over water.
Mining laws (1876) allowed uses create many water quality issues.
Black Hills NF local watershed for entire Rapid City area (Deerfield/Pactola reservoirs).
This is and should be an issue due to population expansion in Rapid City and the Hills.
- 13 - Collaborative – common sense and science-based – sometimes lacking in today’s efforts.
You can’t fence everything out, you can’t protect all.
Science and research should be localized – not from other regions/states/zones.
- 14 - If not broke, don’t fix it. Multiple-use status quo works well.
Black Hills’ fastest regenerating forest, we clean up fast.
Don’t analyse everything – too many details.
KISS – analogy to centralized hiring process – too much upper bureaucracy.
More leeway at the local level – allow local flexibility.
- 15 - Need to account for multiple types of recreational users.
Maintain flexibility and adaptability (speed of response) due to rapid changes in types of recreation.
We need to focus on the Plan, not the Rule.

Table E

General Discussion –

- Keep it simple, maybe it would be easier to identify 3-5 big things the Forest is managing for and focus on those things (recreation, grazing, timber, hunting, etc)
- What’s working – desired future condition. Good to identify the big picture for all resources and uses of what you are managing towards, know the existing condition and where the gaps may be.
- What’s not working –
 - too complicated, micro management focus – better to look at the big picture of what you are managing for, what’s appropriate here and manage for that.
 - Too complicated – limited to no ability to react in a timely fashion to changes, whether they be environmental, monitoring results, changes in sciences, etc.

Plan Context –

- Could set national context or framework of types of things plans should include (goals and objectives, identify desired condition, etc), but plans should reflect local interests/needs.

Process Topics –

- In developing plans, crucial to collaborate with local governments, landowners, agencies, etc. However, collaboration throughout life of plans needs to happen at all levels of government. Example – Congress, USDA, WO can change initiatives, what emphasis for management is (example given was mineral extraction, energy development), this impacts what local FS Plan already says. Now local Forest needs to react, but without collaboration with others.
- Forest Supervisor should be the line officer approving Forest Plans – they have the local tie, know the local concerns, needs, etc.

Recreation/Facilities/Services –

- Currently use ROS – seems to only distinguish motorized and non-motorized. In looking at how to manage/delineate what types of recreational uses should be allowed/developed, etc, need to go beyond just delineating motorized vs non motorized use
- Can see where it is useful to “generally” limit certain activities across broad area; however, still should maintain local flexibility in using other instruments (i.e. Special Use Permits) to allow uses in limited circumstances (i.e. Forest Plan does not allow motorized use in an area – maybe because feel they cannot enforce and could cause resource damage, etc if not overseen, but a group can acquire a SUP for a specific event. This is good because that group is now responsible and accountable for their actions).
- Accessibility – need to increase areas/uses that are accessibly – or at least allow some type of allowance (letter of authorization from local line officer, SUP, etc) on site specific needs.

Monitoring – should be less for “compliance” and more for determining if we are getting where we need to be (DFC). Results catalyst to quickly change actions to go the right direction – be adaptive

Other Comments –

- Increase ability on the implementation side – example was Wildland Firefighting – have really good system of using FS, State, County, VFD resources across boundaries. Need to be able to do this easily in other areas of implementation.
- Provide mechanisms to expedite other legal requirements (NEPA, Section 106, etc) in emergency situations.
- Pride in America – Use National Forests resources to provide needs of Americans (logs, minerals, etc) rather than importing everything – provides jobs, economic stability to local communities, etc)
- No matter the topic we discussed, overall common theme for all was that the process needs to be simple, address local flavors and needs and be adaptive to all types of changes that may occur.

Table F

- 1) Give more weight to local stakeholder comments.
- 2) Use technology for collaboration to save money and time.
- 3) Increase opportunity for public comment
- 4) Allow public comment earlier in the process, creates ownership/trust
- 5) Objection period prior to final decision
- 6) National Forest Advisory Boards on all Forests
- 7) Eliminate advisory boards, they exclude general public concerns and comments.
- 8) Forest Plans need review by independent agency that is not associated with timber production
- 9) Ensure protection of irreversible, irretrievable, impacts to natural resources
- 10) Use current 1982 appeal process
- 11) Let the Forest Service run the Forest Service programs
- 12) Advertise public meetings better
- 13) Planning rule should have a basic national template for all forests
- 14) Forest Plans should have an independent science review
- 15) Forest Plans should focus on ecosystems not specific species
- 16) Forest Plans should focus on a holistic ecological approach.
- 17) Planning Rule cannot be a substitute for NEPA
- 18) Forest Plan amendments and revisions should be triggered by events/circumstances and not to a timeline (ie 15 years) Examples for triggers, beetles, fire, tornado, technology, or thresholds for plant and animal populations
- 19) Allow public to petition for changed circumstances that would initiate a forest plan amendment or revision
- 20) Advisory Boards should be comprised of local stakeholders and interests
- 21) Plan content must include valid science based monitoring/evaluation requirements
- 22) Engage and use public in monitoring
- 23) Weigh all comments equally, regardless of whether they are local or national interest
- 24) Forest Plans should include strict Recreation Opportunity Spectrum and Visual Quality standards.
- 25) Grasslands and wetlands should be addressed with the same priority/focus as timberlands.
- 26) Climate Change should be addressed based on science and not assumptions.
- 27) Clearly defined appeal process.

Table G –

8 - Every forest should have an advisory board to help with monitoring and consensus, tiers back to local vibrant communities, more consistent, long term solutions, long term tie with the land, defines collaborative efforts; helps move process, engages public, represents all extremes, every group got to have input, strategic advisory role at 100,000 foot level; give ownership to the stakeholders before the process begins, up front; decisions based on science including socio-economic; diverse groups and people, (illegible) science, sometimes

intimidated by other advisory board members; forests are coming apart, we are doing something wrong, current process is not working

Encourage cooperating agencies status for state agencies and tribes will allow streamlined approach to planning – increased stakeholder support. Science isn't getting to the ground – mired in the legal system. Stakeholders should have to attend the meetings. Tribal stakeholders and the government have a special relationship – tribal members reluctant to speak at advisory board meetings. Need to trust the local citizens that live near the Forest. Others should have a say but less so. Locals should include people with a connection to that land (tribes and so on). Front-load planning with local stakeholders – others can weigh in during NEPA process. On-going advisory councils may be flywheels.

- 13 - Plans needs to be dynamic, adaptable, more management of species habitat.
- Plans needs to be flexible and respond to changes in environment and responses to things like the Jasper Fire. Have to be easily changeable. Need to have ways to react to plant species whose habitats change or move.
 - Should aim for a desired future condition.
 - We have the science to understand what was here when Custer arrived.
 - What about climate change?
 - Use modeling to move toward desired future condition.
 - All of us want a forest that is functioning and healthy with wildlife and vigorous tree growth.
 - We should manage for more goshawk even when that habitat is resulting in pind beetle infestation.
 - The Advisory Board has encouraged stretching NEPA, treating mountain pine beetles aggressively.
 - Design planning rule to give decision makers ability to respond quickly to changes in the environment.
 - Heavy emphasis on desired future condition will allow more flexibility.
 - Focus on resiliency, on resilient ecosystems, not on restoration. Restoring things means taking something old and making it new. Resiliency means making sure current things can survive coming challenges.
- 14 - Forest is governed by multiple-use sustained yield – should encourage continued goods and services to local/regional/national communities.
- Encourage affirmative action for Native Americans in Forest Service.
 - How to encourage more participation in the process with native American community.
 - Needs to recognize a balance between goods and services and local communities.
 - Forest Service should subsidize tribal industry.
 - The Rule should allow for definition of the niche of goods and services traditionally provided to local communities and tribes like foods and medicines.

Table H

- 3 - Time frame too long
Streamline what is trying to be decided

- Species diversity should be habitat oriented
- Use predecisional objection process for single species – ESA – limit appeal process
- React quickly to emergency situations
- Local vs. National interests – more local weight
- No Advisory Boards
- Adequate science input
- 9 - Give cooperating agency status to counties
- Focus on the healthy forest concept
- Reemphasis on multiple-use and sustained yield and balance
- 10 - “Restoration” needs better definition. Leave restoration out of planning rule
- 11 - No inclusion of climate change in forest planning
- Focus on forest health
- Adaptive management
- Be as proactive as possible
- Get out of crisis management
- 14 - Use multiple-use to find balance in the decision making process
- Outputs should be established for different uses for local economic needs.
- 15 - Consider adjacent lands, “All Lands Approach.” Custer State Park, Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Wind Cave NP, Jewel Cave National Monument

Table I –

FS goes “goosie” when things get political.

- FS needs to make a decision
- Better collaboration in multiple-use
- The Rule should provide direction for latitude to adapt to change
- 3 - Too much time to make plan
 - Appeal rights – people stepping in and shutting down a decision – need better way to address this
 - More monitoring, better monitoring
 - More money for inventory and monitoring.
 - At the Plan level need better description of recreational use etc
 - Broad brush sideboards that allow the forest plans to manage and adapt to local conditions
 - Accountable – these are National lands
 - Can’t have accountability without responsibility
 - Reduce the planning time and get to implementation
 - Species viability needs less individual focus – look at assemblage = allow forest plans to adapt to changed conditions without going through the same process
 - Inventory and monitoring is not happening – improve
 - Funding levels, identical by reduced services and facility conditions
 - Timeline for revision and amendments – some elements need a longer time frame, like old growth.
- 5 - Consistency within reason. Guidelines, not standards
- 6 - Run it more like a business
 - Keep it local – use stakeholders and collaborate
 - Keep personnel in place – institutional memory – continuity

- Objection process might be better than appeal process
- 14 - Non-native fees allow the Forest Plan to work with local communities to improve their economies
 - Sustainability
 - Better language on wetlands and grasslands
 - Include guidance on energy policy
 - Provide for recreational use and adaptive management