

Region 2 Planning Rule Roundtable

Cheyenne, Wyoming on April 14, 2010

The Cheyenne roundtable meeting was at Little America on Wednesday, April 14, 2010. Approximately 60 people attended the session, and 44 people stayed for the small group discussions, representing the following categories:

- **State government: 9**
- **Federal government, non-forest service: 2**
- **Local government: 1**
- **Commercial: 12**
- **Non profit: 9**
- **Citizen: 11**

Participants were randomly separated into four groups (yellow group, blue group, red group, green group). Each group selected questions for discussion from a list of 16 questions (see appendix).

Following are notes from each of the groups.

Yellow Group Discussion

4. What kind of information should be included in Forest Plans, and should they include standards and guidelines? If so, what kind?

- Plan should be adequate to allow site specific actions.
- Definitely include standards and guidelines in the Plans.
- Provide over-arching directions.
- Move away from “aspirations”; keep LMP components concrete.
- The Rule should define where flexibility should be allotted in the LMP and where it should be eliminated. This should help with efficiency.
- Forests, Grasslands and Recreation Areas should have separate plans. Stakeholders and mgmt. objectives are too different for these areas to share a single plan.

5. How consistent should plans be across the country?

- Maintain consistent framework – don’t go much further. Need to be adaptive.
- Maintain flexibility to allow forest mgmt.
- Need consistency in planning process.
- Standards and guidelines need to be included in the Plan. They will differ by forest.

6. What suggestions do you have from making forest planning faster, simpler, more straightforward and less expensive?

- Instead of identifying cooperators from state and federal agencies, find representatives from local gov., state gov., private companies and interest groups.
- Combine collaboration efforts to include all groups rather than separating the public from established “cooperators”.
- Employ NEPA only on site specific actions, not an entire forest plan.
- Limit public involvement to the right parts of plan development, strategically involving the public. The 82 rule has more strategic points for public engagement.
- Simplify the content of Forest Plan. Use plain language, make it available to public.
- Utilize cooperating agencies and data. Counties have socio-economic data. Other resource information is available from outside.
- Define what “best available science” is. Eliminate the possibility of litigation on this issue.
- Limit the detail in the LMP. Use project planning for the detail.
- Provide enough structure that cooperators feel like a legitimate part of the process.

8. What is the best way to involve stakeholders in the planning process?

- Use the Farm Bill as an example for how to evaluate qualifications and experience of collaborators.
- It’s possible for FS to identify stakeholders – give authority to FS planning staff to pick out the collaborators that will really contribute and invite them to participate on a higher level. Pick ones that have a demonstrated dedication to planning.
- Define stakeholders and their weight. Give credit to locals and those directly impacted.
- Allow people different weights for their opinions – not all stakeholders and collaborators are created equal.
- Invite local practitioners to specific events where the need for their knowledge is identified.
- Provide framework for collaboration with minimums and maximums and a mechanism to extend the maximum if necessary.

9. How should the Forest Service collaborate with adjacent landowners, partners and other agencies and governments in developing Forest Plans?

- Include local landowners in Plan development
- Analyze impacts to adjacent lands.
- Utilize adjacent landowners as resources for local information, perspective. For example, they can point out noxious weeds in grazing allotment.
- Local governments and conservation districts have info on water, etc. Utilize their expertise.
- Define collaboration. Identify the appropriate time and process phases to involve agencies/organizations/publics. Define phases for involvement.
- Treat organizations at same level on all forests.
- Include monitoring.

11. What, if any, climate change assumptions should be used when developing Forest Plans?

- NONE. Base LMP and mgmt. on what is happening on the ground. Look at trends to make decisions.
- Science is too inexact to base a 15 year plan on.
- Mitigate where feasible and where supported by science AND on-the-ground experience.
- Needs to be addressed via adaptive mgmt. and trend studies, but don't base anything on assumptions.
- Should not try to change or adapt the landscape for climate change. Maintain the forest character until monitoring info. Suggests a change.
- Climate change needs to be addressed, with **tight sideboards**. It can't drive other issues.
- Find ways to inform stakeholders of the local impacts and allow them to participate in decisions for on-the-ground mgmt.

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?

- LMP must recognize how important the Forest is to local economies
- FS should demonstrate how they can help keep communities vibrant.
- Should look at the effect of management on providing clean water, including fire suppression.
- Local input should be given credence to guide forest mgmt. Management will provide jobs, recreation, services etc.
- Ecosystem services impact communities – these may be a way to identify collaborators.
- Planning Rule should require each LMP to address the provision of goods and services from the forest. Economic analysis should include non-market ecosystem services.
- IMPLAN or other economic models should go down to the community level rather than only to county level impacts.

Blue Group Discussion

8. What is the best way to involve stakeholders in the planning process?

- Define stakeholders.
- Need uniform ways for scoping.
- Identify the issues. Rule should mandate that stakeholder input be analyzed.
- Have individual meetings with groups to determine needs and look for similarities.
- Transparency is key to collaboration.
- Need open communication and transparency.

10. How can the next planning rule foster restoration of NFS lands?

- Define restoration; define indicators for ecosystem.
- Do not use restoration for natural occurrences like fire.
- Define what usfs can restore and what it cant.
- Caution on how we define the restoration timeline. Things will never be the way they used to be.

- Look back at current state and changes that have happened; develop adaptive strategies.
- Lots of questions on restoration timeline.

11. What if any, climate change assumptions should be used when developing Forest Plans?

- Research is a key piece. Need to monitor.
- USFS does not have the resources & abilities to determine what is going on.
- Look at impacts, use monitoring .
- Forests can be utilized as carbon sinks.
- Be flexible to adapt to what is changing.

13. How should the planning Rule guide monitoring and protection of at-risk species of animals and plants and their habitats?

- Retain local viability from '82 rule utilizing DNA.
- Conduct active monitoring of presence/absence.
- Support the habitat and then the species.
- MIS should continue.

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?

- Coordinate on larger scale with other agencies.
- Look at larger scale for benefits.
- Balance out people's right to litigate if mgmt. goes against what local interests want.
- Support wind energy. Use best and available technology.

15. What should the planning rule say about recreational access, and visitor facilities and services?

- Make sure that public access is maintained.
- Continue to emphasize multiple use.
- Travel management should be in Forest Plans.
- Management plan should not restrict large areas.
- Have to be able to enforce the rules that are set through travel mgmt.
- Individual plans should dictate where access is available and to what groups.
- Need enforcement and more public education.

16. Is there anything else you would like to suggest about the forest planning rule?

- Funding should be realistic.
- Q. How specific does the Rule have to be? A. Don't get specific, leave it to the local level for control
- Q. what is the appropriate scale for plants and animals? A. Specifics should be in Manual and Handbook.

TOP POINTS FROM EACH PERSON:

- Need more standards in Plans
- Look at regional and national scales for effects on plant and animal species.
- Equal access.
- Planning process should be flexible, scientific and transparent.
- Balance needs for multiple uses across borders.
- Flexibility at the local level.
- Transparency. Need more monitoring and enforcement.
- Best use of natural resources. Utilize acreage. User fees for all.
- Watch out for “buzz word” of the day.
- Define what you are restoring to.
- How do you define sense of place.
- Coordination with other land mgmt. agencies.

Red Group Discussion

3. What doesn't work; what concepts would you like to leave behind?

- The definition of suitable timber. Needs to be looked at as woody biomass.
- Discard the term ASQ.
- There are parts of the 82 Rule that make the FS more prone to appeal and litigation.

6. What suggestions do you have from making forest planning faster, simpler, more straightforward and less expensive?

- No settlement that has not been vetted should be allowed. No backdoor negotiations.
- Need to remove the politics. Roadless: make the Plans make the determination.
- Need to have decisions be made at the most local level possible.
- Road construction in Inventoried Roadless Areas be delegated down to the regional level.

7. When and how should plans be evaluated to see if they are working? What should trigger plan amendments?

- Need to have accurate baseline data – define desired conditions.
- Make changes when desired conditions are not being met or outside influences warrant a change.
- Need to know what the land is capable of to determine how/where to achieve a desired condition.

8. What is the best way to involve stakeholders in the planning process?

- Include the use of a RAC. Provide mgmt. opportunities. Involve local communities.

9. How should the Forest Service collaborate with adjacent landowners, partners, and other agencies and governments in developing Forest Plans?

- Use cooperating agency status – need to expand to local organizations.
- Need to be consistent on applying cooperating agency status.
- Put in Rule the use of local agencies as a Cooperating Agency.
- Look at an all-lands approach – questionable about involvement with private landowners.
- Place more emphasis with County land use plans – local level planning approach.

10. How can the next planning rule foster restoration of NFS lands?

- Restoration to WHAT? How are you going to change?
- Have a hard time understanding how to be adaptable and restore.
- Allow for flexibility and allow to react in an effective manner.

11. What if any, climate change assumptions should be used when developing Forest Plans?

- Should not be in Rule. Needs to have the flexibility to be adaptive.

13. How should the planning Rule guide monitoring and protection of at-risk species of animals and plants and their habitats?

- Incorporate the use of baseline data as a starting place.
- Need to tie monitoring with the effects on goods and services.
- Monitoring is required – how well it is implemented is key.
- Need to address desired non-native species at a local level.

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?

- There are resources missing. The energy resources need to be part of the goods and services considered.
- Minerals, livestock timber should all have equal consideration.
- Look at those resources to be managed by the local entities – more involvement.
- Need to include the socio-economic analyses and the available data.
- Determine the cumulative impacts on the uses. Use a consistent approach on the utilization of available data.

15. What should the planning rule say about recreational access, and visitor facilities and services?

- Determine impacts of resources on recreational uses. Need to have equal consideration given to recreation.
- Multiple use concept needs to be preserved and emphasized.

SUMMARY

- Remove ASQ.
- Manage for forest health, no outputs.
- Need accurate monitoring level of AUMs
- Planning process gets bogged down when the NEPA process is the bottleneck when appealed or litigated.
- Rule has to be broad enough for local flexibility
- Need to honor the existing Plan even when the revision process is ongoing.
- Need to make a Rule that allows to plan at a local level.

Green Group Discussion

10. How can the next planning rule foster restoration of NFS lands?

- Restoration: What does it really mean? Word does not need to be part of the Rule.
- Rule would better serve if it talked *generally* about Healthy Ecosystems Concepts
- Rule should direct a Forest Plan to: 1) describe the local healthy ecosystem, 2) recognize local changing conditions i.e. fire, water quality changes, disaster or forest health impacts, 3) allows forest managers—with local input—to decide how best to address restoration needs, and 4) allow forest managers/local leaders to decide at what point the ecosystem is—or was most healthy and manage accordingly
- Rule can and should have provision for “experts” to identify/direct mitigation measures
- Change is inevitable; rule should direct that general ecosystem integrity be maintained based on local situations; natural disturbance will occur
- Current rule provides adequate authority for restoration; desired conditions set a strategy (do away with “restoration” word – use “desired future condition”
- Rule should provide/outline equal access/opportunity for all people without pillaging any forest (ex: should use pine beetle killed timber if you can and use without depleting other forest resource

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?

- Good = pristine place for outdoor recreation w/requirement for take in needs, take out trash, lease resource pristine, unspoiled; timber is good.
- Maintaining what is “good” requires cooperation & planning w/local entities; local entities know appropriate level and benefit of good/services needed within their communities;
- Forest management is complex; expertise is needed from the national level, but the local perspective has huge national value
- FS needs to realize that local/national needs exist within public lands; rule should direct local collaboration; finding a balance of local & national priorities is important
- Rule needs to allow for plans to predict realistic level of outputs;
- Rule needs to allow plans to set limits or consider limits based on local realities
- Rule could direct capacity, management & mitigation for recreation areas

- A rule that provides excess regulation leads to a select few (usually the wealthy) to have access and be able to afford the use; less fortunate people are left/locked out (ex: Yellowstone & snowmobiling—only wealthy can now afford that experience)
- Enforcement and public information are grossly inadequate

15. What should the planning rule say about recreation access, and visitor facilities and services?

- Rule should be general in scope and not exclude some recreation user groups
- Like to see equal opportunities for all recreation users
- Retaining access is vital to all recreation groups—there is a worry that access will become more limited or lost all together—especially to wilderness, special areas, and dispersed camping opportunities; there are competing forces for recreation use; more roads will create more access; law enforcement is sadly lacking;
- Rule should address where recreation use can occur in specially designated management areas (commodity management area should still allow recreation use with designations as to where in that management area recreation can occur)
- Rule needs to be written to accommodate all recreation uses and provide equal opportunities to all user groups; may need to designate specific areas for specific recreation use; population growth will force concentrated use and impacts; rule should address that concept;
- Motorized vs. non-motorized need separate areas to recreate; have not seen much conflict yet, but it helps to get out of other peoples area and into your own;
- Parking needs to facilitate access and be more dispersed across the forest (in some areas, one user group (snowmobiling) uses all the parking, thus pushing out other user groups (cross country skiing). Parking needs to be more dispersed and open across the forest
- Sustainable use is a concern—may not be able to provide unlimited access like some users expect

APPENDIX

Discussion Questions

Participants selected questions for discussion from the following list:

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?