



ASHLEY NATIONAL FOREST

Forest Plan Revision Public Participation Strategy

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Introduction

The Ashley National Forest (referred to as the Ashley) is revising its 1986 Land and Resource Management Plan (also called the Forest Plan or Plan) in accordance with the 2012 Planning Rule. The Forest Plan is a strategic document that guides resource management activities occurring on the Ashley over the next approximately 15 years. The 2012 Planning Rule specifies opportunities for outreach to the public, from the early stages of preparing for the assessment, to revising the land management plan, and monitoring (2012 Planning Rule, 36 CFR 219.1).

This Public Participation Strategy outlines how the Ashley has been and will continue to engage the public throughout the planning process. This strategy recommends approaches for engaging with the public and identifies when and how the public can participate. This strategy clarifies goals for engagement and explains why public involvement is important. The Ashley is committed to public participation and collaboration during the planning process for plan revision.

The purpose of the strategy is to provide a road map to reach and connect with national forest users and members of the public during plan revision. There are numerous ways to involve people. This strategy outlines activities and actions that will occur during a phase of planning. There are different tools and different desired outcomes along the way.

Public Participation and Collaboration

The 2012 planning rule requires the national forest to provide meaningful opportunities for public participation throughout the forest plan revision process (36 CFR § 219.4). The 2012 planning rule defines a collaborative process as a structured manner in which a collection of people with diverse interest share knowledge, ideas, and resources while working together in an inclusive and cooperative manner towards a common purpose (36 CFR § 219.19).

The Public Participation Strategy should address the most efficient methods to involve the public and provide quality public involvement opportunities. The number of interested stakeholders throughout the process may vary. The 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219) has been translated into directives in Forest Service Manual 1920 and Forest Service Handbook 1909.2. The principles and goals of public participation listed in the Handbook include:

1. Help build and maintain working relationships, trust, capacity, and commitment to the plan.
2. Support shared learning and understanding between the Forest Service and public participants.
3. Promote a common understanding of facts and issues that form the context for planning and the planning process.
4. Help keep the public informed throughout sometimes lengthy and complex planning processes.
5. A defining element of an inclusive, transparent process that strengthens plans and adds clarity to the decision-making process and the rationale for decisions.
6. Help identify or clarify issues, conflicts, constraints, values, beliefs, or expectations.

As part of a collaborative process, the Ashley National Forest will engage people who participate in the forest plan revision process through a spectrum of public participation methods. As the responsible official, the forest supervisor will determine which methods are the most appropriate depending on the

phase of planning, work product being developed, budget, and staff capacity. Public participation methods identified in the 2012 planning rule include informing, consulting, involving, and collaborating, as described here:

Table 1. Spectrum of Public Participation and Related Tools for Public Engagement

Level	Examples of Agency Activities and Tools
Collaborate	Directly engage the public to exchange information with each other and work together on one or more issues during the planning process. Identify where there is agreement and disagreement. Potential tools: Facilitated or mediated discussion among public participants, Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) groups, and partnerships.
Involve	Work closely with interested members of the public to clarify concerns and seek feedback on how to meet challenges presented by the planning process. Potential tools: workshops, partnerships, and public meetings.
Consult	Provide information to the public and seek suggestions as well as feedback on potential issues and concerns. Potential tools: open house, public meeting, notice and comment, news release, and website.
Inform	Provide sufficient objective information to the public to convey an understanding of intended actions, processes, and preliminary issues. Potential tools: fact sheet, newsletter, mailing, news release, and website.

Source: Based on "spectrum of public engagement" in the Council for Environmental Quality's "Collaboration in NEPA: A Handbook for NEPA Practitioners" (see (http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/nepapubs/Collaboration_in_NEPA_Oct2007.pdf))

The Ashley recognizes that when an issue is surrounded by controversy it can require additional time and effort to create a resolution or understanding. In some cases, there may not be a resolution, but an effort should be made to create a mutual understanding or resolution when possible. Efforts to create resolutions should happen as quickly as possible to not unduly impact and timeframe.

Outreach & Communication Methods

General Outreach

The intent of the Forest Service with public outreach is to involve and listen to interested parties so that concerns can be addressed during the revision of the Forest Plan. Reaching out to those who utilize the national forest, and its resources will be an ongoing effort throughout all phases of the planning process. The Ashley will work to communicate with a broad range of individuals and groups representing different interests at a variety of levels including local, regional, and national representation.

Communication methods have changed drastically since the 1986 Forest Plan was developed. It is important to use a variety of methods when distributing information about plan revision. There is not a single method that will reach all who are interested. Sources such as local newspapers and radio will continue to be utilized as these resources are important methods of communication in the communities within the immediate planning area. Those who wish to be alerted by email can subscribe to the Gov Delivery system on the (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/ashley/landmanagement/planning>). The goal and intent will be to utilize all current and future resources to fulfill public engagement needs. In cases of limited access to electronic communications, relying on partners, cooperating agencies, and staff help disseminate information. The implementation of outreach by plan revision phase is outlined in Table 4 through * Internal Staff Briefings should be offered prior to public meetings so USFS Staff is informed and help spread the word about Ashley planning efforts.

Table 6.

Specific Outreach & Communication Methods

Public participation strategy

The public participation strategy is a communication tool designed to assist the planning team, forest leadership and others with implementing the public participation action plan. It clarifies expectations for different stages of the process and serves as a road map for an inclusive plan revision effort. This strategy outlines how and when activities and actions will occur throughout Forest Plan development. People interested in knowing or interacting with the process should be able to use this document to determine which opportunity best fits their interest.

Newspaper Releases

News releases are emailed to primary contacts like local and regional media and posted on the Ashley website. They will be emailed to secondary contacts like agencies, stakeholders and interested public who have signed up to receive them, allowing them to forward to others if they desire. In addition, the releases serve as public notices at points prescribed by the 2012 Planning Rule and newspaper of record. Newspapers releases can be printed in foreign languages so that those populations can be notified. They will be used throughout the duration of the Forest Plan Revision and especially before any public meeting, open house, or webinars.

Federal Register

The Federal Register will be used to publish notices at the points prescribed by the 2012 Planning rule, as stipulated in **Error! Reference source not found.** The NEPA process outlines specific obligations to notify the public of key events in the Federal Register. The goal will be compliance with the NEPA regulations.

Radio or Television interviews

Conducted by local or regional radio or TV stations, the intent is to inform the public about upcoming meetings, workshops, or field trips for the plan revision effort. These can be prepared in other languages. Live interviews with Ashley staff will provide current information about specific local concerns. The interviews can provide updates on the revision process and encourage people to participate. The goal is to reach the local community with news that is relevant to the public.

Ashley National Forest Website

The Ashley website (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/ashley>) includes information on the Forest, and includes a site for plan revision (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/ashley/landmanagement/planning>). This page is routinely updated with relevant information such as the public meeting schedule, summary of meeting outcomes, links to a document library and background information (e.g., 2012 Forest Planning Rule) etc. The site links to pertinent collaboration and informational materials—such as documents being released for public comment as well as links for submitting comments. The public is encouraged to check the website often to remain current on the Forest Plan Revision progress. The goal for the website is to keep it current, as it serves as the primary go-to resource for up-to-date information accessible to the general public. The planning website has contact information for the Forest Plan Revision core team.

Social Media

Social media has rapidly become the preferred mode of communication in the United States and specifically for the millennial generation. More people of all ages and demographics are using various

sources of social media for news and communication. The Forest must engage and use these tools if it intends to keep people informed. The rural communities surrounding the Ashley rely heavily on Facebook for news, community events, and communication of all types. The goal for the Ashley's planning team is to work with the Public Information Officer to use our Facebook page to share information, announce upcoming engagement opportunities, and direct individuals to the [planning webpage](#) where they can find additional information.

Congressional Staff Briefings

Periodic updates and briefings with congressional staff will be coordinated with the Capital City Coordinator and be delivered in person or virtually by the Forest Supervisor or staff. Congressional staff should be encouraged to subscribe to the GovDelivery mailing list to updates on all projects. Updates and briefings with congressional staff or representatives should prepare them for inquiries and help the elected officials to stay up to date on the Ashley's land management planning efforts. Goal is to keep elected officials and their staff informed.

Community Public Meetings

The Ashley has held public meetings in the communities of Green River WY, Manila UT, Vernal UT, Duchesne UT, and the regional metropolitan area of Salt Lake City UT, during phases of plan revision. These meetings are a key piece in public involvement for the revision process. Thus, the meetings provide the public with opportunities to be heard and express how they feel the Ashley should be managed the future. Additional locations may be suggested and used if the need arises. The Ashley will use a combination of informative, inquiry, and consent building facilitation techniques, during open house style meetings in the early phases. The Forest will use collaboration techniques during the need for change and alternative development during the Plan development phase. The monitoring phase will use a combination of engagement strategies to best fit the need. The goals of community public meetings are to provide attendees opportunities to ask questions, provide input, and express concerns.

Co-hosted Meetings

Meetings may be coordinated and co-hosted with counties, other agencies, and potentially special interest groups that wish to have a topic-focused discussion with the Forest. These groups may be able to get better attendance from like-minded people concerning specific topics. The Forest will consider co-hosted meetings organized by any group upon request and availability of staff. The goal of this type of meeting is to address the needs of a target group of publics interested in Forest Plan Revision.

Stakeholder Interviews

A diverse representative group of stakeholders will be interviewed to provide input on how to best outreach to their public or special interest group membership. In the case of highly contentious topics, a representative group of stakeholders will be asked to help with an issues assessment. These issue assessment interviews will help a neutral facilitator or mediator design a collaborative or resolution process that best fits the situation. It also helps narrow and identify stakeholders' interests. As time allows, the Forest should conduct issue assessments interviews ahead of convening workshops or full day events.

Internal Information Sharing

Keeping the Ashley's staff updated on the Forest Plan Revision progress will be an essential piece to successful communication of the Forest Plan Revision process. Updates are given during employee meetings held at the district or supervisor's office at key milestones of the process to provide internal staff

an opportunity to hear and learn more about the Plan revision progress and public engagement efforts. Quarterly employee meetings (via teleconference) are another opportunity to provide updates. Goal is to benefit the collaborative processes with successful internal communication.

Mail, Letters, Flyers or Newsletters and Community Posting Boards

Direct letters to tribes, agencies and stakeholders will be used to inform about meetings and communicate additional information. Flyers posted in high-traffic community common areas like post offices or other public areas reach local stakeholders, but hopefully boost the word-of-mouth communication between neighbors or other community members. Whatever the written format is used, it should be specific for the target reader and provide pertinent information in a timely fashion. Comments received by hardcopy mail and should be logged and documented for receipt. These hardcopy submissions will be shared with internal staff for consideration.

Email

Email will be used for notification of workshops, meetings, and general stakeholder contact. The Ashley will utilize the Gov Delivery system to keep people informed on the latest plan revision happenings. This method of communication is ideal to target the segment of the population that stepped forward and requested to receive information so they can be involved and informed.

Word of mouth (and phone contact)

This is one of the most common and, most of the time, effective systems of communication in rural areas. In the case of limited electronic communication options, the oldest form of communication still works well to inform a target population. It most often invokes action and response. Verbal conveyance of information can be pre-arranged to use if a membership organization is willing to help. An example is agricultural commodity groups that have members that don't use email communication, yet the parent organization has a staff that works for the group and has electronic contact. Goal is communicating with specific individuals.

Table 2. Summary of Outreach Methods

Information Management Tool	Target population	Objective served
Ashley National Forest Website	Internal & External	General information conveyance and announcement of upcoming events or engagement opportunities
Social Media, Facebook	Internal & External	General information conveyance and announcement of upcoming events or engagement opportunities
Ashley SharePoint	Internal	Internal project data and document management and collaboration
Comment Analysis and Response Application (CARA)	Internal & External	Collect and display comments received during public comment periods
Planning Administrative Reviews & Litigation System (PALS)	Internal	Internal project management and coordination
Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA)	External	Display progress throughout the process and anticipated timeline to completion
Mercury Database	Internal	Develop record & tracking of documents and formal correspondence signed by Forest Supervisor
Gov Delivery (email blasts)	Internal & External	Delivery of information, announcements, and updates to subscribers

Information Management Tool	Target population	Objective served
Federal Register	Internal & External	Formal documentation requirement by law
Newspaper News Release for general information	External	General information conveyance and announcement of upcoming events
Newspaper Legal Notices	Internal & External	Formal documentation requirement by law
Radio	External	General information conveyance and announcement of upcoming events
Posters, Flyers, and Brochures	External	General information conveyance and announcement of upcoming events
Teams Live Events (webinars)	Internal & External	Engage and inform interested parties
Virtual Meeting Platforms e.g., Microsoft Teams, Zoom, WebEx...etc.	Internal & External	Meet and collaborate with interested parties across a larger geographic area

Target Populations and Means of Engaging

Following is a list of stakeholders and the target audiences that make up the public the Ashley intends to engage throughout all phases of the forest plan revision process. These descriptions are general and not intended to identify any specific group or individual by name. There is a brief explanation of the outreach and engagement methods that will be used with the various groups of stakeholders; these are further elaborated on in the Implementation Tables 1, 2, & 3 by plan phase. A detailed list of stakeholders is included in the Communication Plan for the Forest Plan Revision.

Interested individuals, including local, regional & national level (general interests)

Interested individuals – general interest

This target audience includes visitors and residents of communities surrounding the Ashley National Forest in Northeastern Utah and Southwestern Wyoming. This target audience may also include regional metropolitan areas in Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado. The Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area and High Uinta Wilderness areas draw tourist from local, regional, national, and international visitors. These visitors create a broad and diverse set of interests that are important for the Ashley to consider throughout all phases of the planning process. The opportunities for engagement and outreach to this audience should occur during all phases of the planning process and may include public meetings, local media (newspapers, local radio & TV), flyers, email, word of mouth, website, webinars, and potentially co-hosted meetings.

Local/regional/national – special interests and non-governmental organizations

There are several local/regional and national special interest groups that typically monitor the Ashley's webpage and Facebook page as well as receive GovDelivery mailings for all projects on the Ashley. There may be additional or new groups that express an interest in the forest plan revision process, and they will be encouraged utilize the same resources mentioned above. The opportunities for engagement and outreach to this audience should occur during all phases of the planning process and may include public


meetings, local media (newspapers, local radio & TV), flyers, email, word of mouth, website, webinars, and potentially co-hosted meetings.

Youth, low-income populations, and minority populations

Youth

Today's youth are tomorrow's forest users and managers. They will be using the lands in unforeseen ways, much like previous generations could not have anticipated some of today's uses on the Forest. Engaging a younger generation in the forest plan revision process develops a sense of ownership and taps into their unique views concerning management of public land. Bringing them in at the various phases will help the Forest understand how uses may change in the future. Youth involvement should occur during the Assessment phase to allow their input and feedback to be considered in the creation of the needs to change the current plan, which is the basis for revising the plan. Additionally, participation in alternative development and helping with monitoring will help to build a relationship between the youth and the Forest. The best way to reach a diverse population of youth is by enlisting the help of organized groups or organizations that work with the youth e.g., 4H, Future Farmers of America, Youth Conservation Corps, teachers or principles, Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts, churches, advanced placement, and other classes in local schools. The opportunities for engagement and outreach to this audience should occur during all phases of the planning process and may include public meetings, local media (newspapers, local radio & TV), flyers, email, word of mouth, website, social media, webinars, and potentially co-hosted meetings.

Low-income populations

According to the  Census Bureau statistics, from 2021 the poverty level for an individual was defined as an income below \$12,880, and for a family of four it is below \$26,500. The poverty rate for individuals in the communities surrounding the forest range from about 6.5% to 10.8% which is below the national average of approximately 13%. Many within this portion of the population rely on natural resources provided by national Forest lands for part of their subsistence (e.g., firewood, hunting, fishing, etc.). Engagement and outreach to this group can be more challenging due to lack of internet access, and other limiting factors to digital communication. Flyers posted where people congregate, such as county and city buildings, schools, libraries, community centers, grocery, feed, hardware, and sporting goods stores. Newspaper articles, radio advertisements and youth engagement at schools, are among the most effective methods for outreach to this group.

Minority populations

The Ashley National Forest is primarily bordered by Uintah, Duchesne and Daggett Counties in Utah and Sweetwater County in Wyoming. The tri-county area which includes Uintah, Duchesne, and Daggett Counties, is known as the Uintah Basin. The Uintah Basin is home to the Uintah and Ouray Indian reservation which is the second largest reservation in the United States, with tribal government offices based out of Ft. Duchesne, Utah. The 2021 Census data estimates between 1 to 16 percent of residents in the counties mentioned above identifying themselves as a member of a minority population (which includes American Indians, Alaska Native, Asian, Pacific Islander, Black or Hispanic). With Duchesne and Uintah Counties, Utah having the highest population of Native Americans, and the largest population of Hispanics or Latino is in Sweetwater County, Wyoming. Bilingual engagement and outreach materials may be needed when working with Sweetwater County residents, the Ashley's plan revision team should work with the county to identify any need for bilingual materials. Some areas within the Uintah Ouray reservation have limited internet capabilities, efforts should be made to utilize non-digital engagement

and outreach tools to create opportunities for tribal member to engaged in all phases of the planning process. The Ashley should also work with tribal leadership and staff to identify potential engagement opportunities. The opportunities for engagement and outreach to this audience should occur during all phases of the planning process and may include public meetings, local media (newspapers, local radio & TV), flyers, email, word of mouth, website, social media, webinars, potentially co-hosted meetings, and any other means identified by local leadership.

Private landowners

Private landowners that are adjacent to or surrounded by National Forest System lands may be impacted by what happens on federal land in a multitude of ways. These landowners should be informed at all phases of the planning process. The Forest Service will need to reach out to these individuals as early as possible in the plan revision process. The 2012 Planning Rule advises Forests to take an “all lands approach” to the planning effort. Involving this group recognizes that even with a delineated boundary, management direction can impact all lands regardless of ownership boundaries. The opportunities for engagement and outreach to this audience should occur during all phases of the planning process and may include public meetings, local media (newspapers, local radio & TV), flyers, email, word of mouth, website, social media, webinars, potentially co-hosted meetings, and direct contact.

Federal agencies, States, counties, and other local governments

County Government

All county governments within or adjoining the Ashley were contacted in November 2015 and solicited to become a cooperating agency for forest plan revision. Those that expressed an interest in participating formalized their role by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). A total of Seven counties have signed agreements, five counties in Utah including: Daggett, Uintah, Summit, Duchesne, Utah Counties and two counties in Wyoming including: Sweetwater and Uinta County. The Forest intends to meet with the cooperating agencies throughout the entire plan revision process. The opportunities for engagement and outreach to this audience should occur during all phases of the planning process and may include public meetings, local media (newspapers, local radio & TV), flyers, email, word of mouth, website, social media, webinars, potentially co-hosted meetings, and direct contact.

State and Federal Agencies

Both the States of Utah and Wyoming were contacted and solicited to become cooperating agencies. Both agreed and signed a Memorandum of Understanding. Additionally, other Federal agencies including the Bureau of Land Management and the United State Fish and Wildlife Service were invited to become cooperating agencies but declined. Communication and contact still occurs with these agencies even though there were no formal agreement signed. Internal communications between State agency personnel and Ashley Forest Plan Revision team or Line Officer Staff will be used to ensure engagement and information is exchanged between the Forest and these agencies. The opportunities for engagement and outreach to this audience should occur during all phases of the planning process and may include public meetings, local media (newspapers, local radio & TV), flyers, email, word of mouth, website, social media, webinars, potentially co-hosted meetings, and direct contact.

State & Federal Congressional Representatives

Both the State and Federal elected representatives for Utah and Wyoming will be regularly informed and notified of public events happening in their respective states. There is a long history of the public notifying their representatives when they feel there has not been sufficient attention given to a matter

important to them or there is a decision they disagree with. Engagement and outreach throughout the process, with this audience will be coordinated through the Forest Service capital city coordinators. The Ashley will work with the capital city coordinators to identify the appropriate method of engagement. Methods that may be used will include email, website updates, news releases, invitation of their field staff to public meetings, briefings and personal briefing as requested.

Interested or affected federally recognized Indian Tribes or Native Corporations

Two tribes have active cultural affiliation with the Ashley National Forest. These tribes include the Ute Indian Tribe occupying the Uinta Mountains and the Uintah Basin, and the Eastern Shoshone occupying the southeast portions of Wyoming, including the Green River Basin in Wyoming and the northern Slope of the Uinta Mountains in Utah. Both tribes have been offered cooperating agency status for Forest Plan Revision. The Ute Indian Tribe signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2019 to become a cooperating agency. The Uintah and Ouray Reservation's current and exterior boundary makes up a large land base on the western two thirds of the Ashley, with a large portion of access primarily through the current Reservation. The Eastern Shoshone has not entered into an agreement with the Ashley. Formal consultation with the tribes will be conducted by the Heritage Resources Program Manager. The Forest's Collaboration Specialist will work to coordinate any needed communication and collaboration with staff and leadership. Engagement and communication will continue throughout all phases of the planning process. Methods used will include email, formal letter, in person presentation, one-on-one contact, direct contact from Forest staff and leadership.

Public Involvement – By Plan Phases & Timing

The 2012 Planning Rule identifies the three main phases of forest planning: assessment, planning, and monitoring. All phases include varying levels of public participation, with multiple steps to support each of the phases. The objective is to work together to update the Forest Plan, so it remains current and relevant.

This Public Participation Strategy was updated in August 2023 during the period that the planning team is revising the plan and EIS based on public comment on the draft EIS. The timeframe for plan revision is outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. Ashley National Forest Plan Revision Timeframe

Phase	Key Deliverable or Milestone	Date of Release or time period
I	Assessment	10/2017
II	Scoping	9/2019
II	Draft EIS and draft plan	11/2021
II	Comment period	Ends 2/2022
II	Final EIS, final plan, and draft Record of Decision	Projected early 2023
II	Objection Period (filing 60 days, response 90 days, resolution)	6 months
II	Final EIS, final plan, and final Record of Decision	Projected late 2023
III	Plan Implementation	Late 2023
III	Monitoring	On-going

The planning phases utilize different methods of communication and public engagement. The various methods are identified by phase in tables that follow and include the estimated date/quarter of year they will occur, the purpose, the desired outcomes/goals and the methods that will be used to help reach the desired outcomes. These tables are to function as a summary of the ‘who, what, when where and why’ of this public participation strategy. Additional strategies may need to be developed for different target populations, and situations however strategies developed will tie back to the intent developed with this strategy.

The following sections will outline public involvement during the different phases of Forest Plan Revision process and identify the different engagement strategies that best fit. This strategy is not meant to be final or rigid, rather it is meant to be used as guideline to meet desired outcomes and objectives. As explained in Table 1 above, the methods and degree of involvement must fit the level of interest of the public, and their desire for involvement. Additionally, the Ashley must balance the level of engagement and the timeline for completion of the revision process within the four-year timeframe as directed by the 2012 planning rule.

Phase I. Assessment

Before the Ashley could begin the assessment phase of the revision process, the Forest needed to develop strategic relationships with Federal, State, Local, and Tribal Governments. These relationships were formalized with Memorandums of Understanding being created between the Ashley National Forest and the cooperating agencies between the fall/winter of 2015 through the spring 2016. These cooperating agencies have special expertise which will benefit the Ashley, as the lead agency. They may also provide data specific to their county or state that is relevant to planning process. The intent during the assessment phase was to gather as much relevant information as possible to inform the interdisciplinary team during plan development process. Engaging the cooperating agencies early provided them an opportunity to share knowledge and data of existing forest conditions with the planning team, to identify concerns about trends and perceptions of risks to social, economic, and ecological systems. These partnerships during the assessment phase helped to identify the current and available data about resources and conditions across the landscape.

An important component of this early engagement was to inform and educate the public about the planning process and current Forest conditions. The Planning Rule directs the forest supervisor, the responsible official, to tailor participation in a manner directed at recent controversial issues. The goals for this phase are shared learning and information exchange, and clarification and improved understanding of current trends and conditions that establish the foundation for the Plan development phase. One key to accomplishing the goals of this phase will be identification of potential issues that may impede progress or cooperation.

There are several elements of the Assessment that require an opportunity for public participation. Involvement in these elements should be tailored to fit the intensity of the public interest. Public participation during this phase will also support the development of relationships and trust among members of the public and various stakeholders.

Phase 2. Plan and EIS Development

This phase is considered the NEPA phase of the process and there are a number of documents that have been created utilizing comments or input from the public and cooperating agencies. The intent of public participation during the plan development phase is to give the public the opportunity to identify the need for change, develop potential plan components, ensure use of the best available science, and comment on

a proposed plan and accompanying analysis documents. The Ashley's goal with this second phase is to facilitate an inclusive and transparent process that provides opportunities for meaningful public involvement and to collaborate with stakeholders in the development of alternatives. A key to success for this phase will be to keep the focus on identifying desired future conditions.

Several of the topics or issues of greatest concern that were identified during the assessment have been further investigated in workshops which allowed deeper examination into the specific issue or concern and has created a better understanding of stakeholder's needs and interests. A reasonable number of alternatives have been identified and carried forward for analysis in the draft environmental impact statement. This phase has been highly interactive with multiple opportunities for document review and submission of comments.

Once the final EIS is completed and objections and resolution period is completed, we will transition into the third phase in the planning process, implementation of the revised plan, and subsequent monitoring.

Phase 3. Implementation and Monitoring

The FSH 1909.12 Chapter 50 includes the objective of "Allow collaborative approaches to be used, when appropriate or feasible, to inform the Reviewing Official's resolution to objection issues before the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision is approved." It encourages interested persons who have requested to participate in meetings between the Forest Service and objectors to do so. The ability of fulfilling these two objectives will depend on depth and intensity of the objection and the willingness to of all parties to explore options. The intent for public participation at the objection phase is resolution of issues to the greatest extent possible.

The intent of public participation during the Monitoring phase is to review effectiveness of management intentions by developing effective questions and indicators that will comprise the monitoring program. The public will be involved in determining the appropriate scale for monitoring, from broad to specific. They will be given the opportunity to identify where the monitoring program could build from existing efforts, identify where multi-party monitoring is possible or desired, and establish public support for monitoring questions and indicators. The goal of this phase is to develop a shared sense of ownership in the management of National Forest System lands.

Monitoring includes testing assumptions, tracking changes, and measuring management effectiveness and progress toward achieving or maintaining the plan's desired conditions or objectives. Opportunities for collaboration, cooperation, and coordination will be utilized across Forest programs area and with Agency partners. These opportunities include engagement with the public; local, State, and other Federal agencies; and nongovernmental organizations.

Involvement opportunities that will occur during this phase I are newsletters mailed to permittees every 4-5 months, regular web updates, email blasts of updates, TV and Radio interviews, youth involvement, tribes' involvement, local schools, etc. Other engagement strategies for the Assessment Phase are detailed in Table 4 to Table 6.

Table 4. Phase 1 – Assessment

Step or Strategy	Timing	Purpose & Objectives	Desired Outcomes	Method & Tools	Resources
Preparedness The intent is for the Forest Service to be well prepared for Plan revision	Fall – Winter 2015	Strategize Develop materials Identify key stakeholder groups.	Well-planned Forest strategy Identify cooperating agencies Prepare big picture of public involvement for Plan revision duration	Develop mailing lists Set up website Identify Cooperating Agencies and develop Memorandums of Understanding	Forest staff
Initiate meetings with cooperating agencies	June-Sept. 2016	Understanding of plan revision process, discuss unique role of Cooperating Agencies Solicit data and information from Cooperating Agencies Explain the role of different parties	Inform- Mutual understanding of Forest Plan Revision process Consult- Cooperating Agencies their role & expectations Consult- gather relevant data from Cooperating Agencies	Web-posting Email & phone Send to mailing list Set up SOPA One-on-one meetings	Planning team
Federal Register Notice of Initiation of Assessment	July 2016	Meet regulations	Inform public about initiation of assessment	Required: NOI in Federal Register, newspaper of record and on-line. Email distribution list	Forest staff, Public Affairs Officer
Community Meeting Kickoff Intent: 1) gather relevant data and information for use in assessment; 2) allow public to share concerns about trends and perceptions of risks 3) develop relationships and understanding 4) feedback on process.	1st Community Meetings July 2016 Kick-off Meetings for Plan revision	Education and inform about the Plan revision process Consult with the public about preliminary assessment items Allow public to share concerns about trends and perceptions of risks to social, economic, and ecological systems Gather additional data and input	Inform the public on Forest Plan Revision Consult with the public for additional data Consult with the public on how they would like to be involved in Plan revision	Community open house meetings Send invites to mailing list Web-posting Media distribution, radio & TV, Flyers E-mail & hardcopy mail alerts & schedule of events	Planning team Forest Staff

Step or Strategy	Timing	Purpose & Objectives	Desired Outcomes	Method & Tools	Resources
2nd Community meeting	August 2016	Public input on special designated area Engage public in appropriate stages of wilderness evaluation: inventory, evaluation, analysis, and recommendation	Inform public on requirements to review, and consider specially designated areas	Open houses Web posting Field trip open to public to verify wilderness	Plan revision team IDT members FS staff
Internal Staff briefings on Plan revision Repeated throughout Plan revision*	Before & between public meetings	I & E internal FT & PT staff about intent of Plan revision	Inform internal staff so they can effectively answer public questions. Develop FAQ for staff	Web-posting Emails & social media Meeting with staff, FAQ's	planning team
Assessment (Draft) Share knowledge & offer information on trends & conditions of social, economic & ecological systems	Jan. / Feb. 2017	Provide 1st draft to Regional Office & Cooperating agency before release to general public Notify public of availability of draft assessment Solicit public input & review, comment.	Inform the public of the assessment. Provide access to first drafts. Consult the public for input/suggestions and feedback	Web-posting Send to mailing list Social media	Planning team
Assessment Report Study groups on report findings	Winter 2016-17	Information and education on technical reports that support the assessment	Inform & involve the public in better understanding of science assessed for this report	Open house discussions on Assessment information	Planning team
Final Assessment The intent is to Inform public of current conditions	Summer 2017	Inform coop agencies and public of final Assessment availability	Inform the public of the availability	Web posting Social media Send electronic mailing	Planning team
Fed Register Notice of Initiation of planning process	Fall 2017	As per regulations	Inform and update public about initiation	Required in Federal Register, newspaper of record and on-line.	Plan revision, PAO
Preliminary Need for Change. The intent is to focus the planning effort on what needs to be updated in the new plan	Summer 2017	Education on key resource areas, how info. is used to develop new plan Ensure the planning effort focus reflects public	Inform and update public about Plan revision process Consult and gather input/suggestions for a revised Forest Plan	Web posting Social media Send electronic mailing Workshops	Plan revision

Step or Strategy	Timing	Purpose & Objectives	Desired Outcomes	Method & Tools	Resources
		concerns and community needs Gather input/suggestions ID Issues for resolution in proposed plan	Collaborate on the need for change		

* Internal Staff Briefings should be offered prior to public meetings so USFS Staff is informed and help spread the word about Ashley planning efforts.

Table 5. Phase 2 – Planning

Step or Strategy	Timing	Purpose & Objectives	Desired Outcomes	Method & Tools	Resources Needed
Identify & develop plan components, ensure best available science is used, solicit comments & feedback on a proposed plan and alternatives.	Fall 2017 – Spring 2019	Begins National Environmental Protection Act process Ensure the planning effort reflects public concerns and community needs Education on key resource areas Focus will be desired future condition (objectives, guidelines strategies) Education on how assessment is used in developing proposed plan ID Issues & needs identification for proposed plan	Inform and update public about Plan revision process Consult and gather input/suggestions for a revised Forest Plan Build a deeper understanding of issues Collaborate on the development of plan components & alternatives	E-mailing list Web-posting Media distribution Workshops	Planning team Forest Staff
Need for Change – identified items to become the focus for revising the Forest Plan	Fall 2017- Spring 2019	Enlist local representation to address and develop options Select some of the “hot-button” issues to be “workshop” focus	Inform & consult on items of community interest Collaborate on means to address and resolve in the future.	E-mailing list Web-posting Media distribution Workshops	
Fed Register NOI of EIS planning process	September 9, 2019	Meet regulations	Inform public about initiation of proposed plan	Required: NOI Federal Register, newspaper and on-line.	Forest Staff & Public Affairs Officer
Scoping Comment Period for Draft Plan, Preliminary Need for Change, Preliminary Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Study and Report and Evaluation of	September 10, 2019 – November 8, 2019	Prepare and notify Collect comments Public Inspection of Proposed Action to Revise Land Management Plan	Inform and update public about Plan revision process Consult and gather input/suggestions for a revised Forest Plan	E-mailing list Web-posting Media distribution Workshops / Virtual Engagement	Planning Team

Step or Strategy	Timing	Purpose & Objectives	Desired Outcomes	Method & Tools	Resources Needed
Potential Wilderness Inventory Areas		Allow offers of additional needed or info. missing	Involve in deeper understanding of issues Collaborate on the development of plan components & alternatives	60 Day Comment Period	
Develop, draft Alternatives, begin analysis	January 2020 - September 2020	Use identified needs for change to drive alternative development Have diversity of interests represented at workgroups	Collaborate on interests and needs and develop alternatives that find mutual benefits.	Email list Workshops Web-posting Virtual Meetings	Planning Team
Prepare DEIS and Draft Plan	September 2020 – November 2021	Prepare draft plan, alternatives, and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for public inspection	Consult and gather input/suggestions for a revised Forest Plan Inform public and stakeholders of availability	Website Media publications Email alerts Webinars Virtual Meetings	Planning Team
DEIS Comment Period	November 2021- February 2022	Prepare and notify 90-day Comment Period Public Inspection draft plan, alternatives, and Draft Environmental Impact Statement	Inform and update public about Plan revision process Consult and gather input/suggestions for a revised Forest Plan Involve in deeper understanding of issues Collaborate on the development of plan components & alternatives	Emailing list Web-posting Media distribution Workshops / Virtual Engagement 90 Day Comment Period	Planning Team
Prepare FEIS, final plan, and Draft Record of Decision	February 2022- December 2022	Prepare Final Environmental Impact Statement, Final Plan and Draft Record of Decision for public inspection and potential objections	Develop a Final Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement	Website Media publications Email alerts Webinars Virtual and in person meeting (If Possible).	Planning Team
Objections Process	Early 2023	Collect and resolve objections to the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Final Plan and Draft Record of Decision	Resolve collected objections and prepare a Final Record of Decision	Website Media publications Email alerts Webinars	Washington or Regional Office Objections Team

Step or Strategy	Timing	Purpose & Objectives	Desired Outcomes	Method & Tools	Resources Needed
		Inform public and stakeholders of document availability		Virtual and in person meeting (If Possible). 60 Day Objection Period	
Final Record of Decision	Late 2023	Prepare and notify	Inform public and stakeholders of availability	Website Media publications Email alerts Webinars	Forest Supervisor, Planning team

* Internal Staff Briefings should be offered prior to public meetings so USFS Staff is informed and help spread the word about Ashley planning efforts.

Table 6. Phase 3 – Implementation and Monitoring

Planning Phase	Timing	Purpose & Objectives	Desired Outcomes	Method & Tools	Resources Needed
Implement the revised Plan	30 days after final Record of Decision is signed	All project planning that commences after implementation utilize the revised plan	Plan implementation and Monitoring Inform Forest Staff of new plan and forest direction.	Website Internal meetings/ trainings and briefings	Forest Staff
Implement developed Monitoring Program The goal is to internal engagement to develop a monitoring program	2023 and beyond	Modify, update, and improve the plan using the developed monitoring plan Identify the effectiveness of the plan and any improvements needed Design and carry out multi-party monitoring Identify relevant or new science of technology to improve resource management	Involve public in monitoring program and incorporation of findings in plan updates Use newest science to update monitoring process Develop common understanding and shared ownership	Website Media publications Email alerts Webinars Virtual and in person meeting	Forest Staff
Begin monitoring the Plan	Throughout implementation	Adaptive management	Biennial monitoring reports	Use of templates to develop reports	Forest Staff

Appendix A: Notification, Comment, and Response Timeline

This table illustrates the notice and comment periods, with the minimum specified timeframes through the NEPA stages. There will be other opportunities to provide input throughout every step. The Forest will strive to provide comment periods for the non-NEPA stages that realistically fit the situational need. Federal laws and regulations stipulate that the public must be officially notified at several major milestones during the Planning process. This matrix below identifies the timing and content of those notifications. It also provides a timeline for when the public is required to respond with comments. These mandatory notice and comment periods provide an opportunity for the Forest to solicit, receive, and incorporate feedback from the public. The Forest may decide to issue additional notices in the Federal Register and Newspaper of Record as necessary.

Table 8. Minimum Required Public Notices and Mechanisms for Notice

Year	Phase	Notice Comment period	Online	Federal Register	Newspaper of Record
Summer 2016 - Summer 2017	Assessment	Initiation of the assessment	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Availability of final assessment	Yes	No	No
Fall 2018 – winter 2021	Plan Development	Initiation of the development of the plan revision	Yes	Yes	Yes
	NEPA Requirements	Intent to prepare an EIS	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Scoping results 60 Days	Yes	No	No
		Proposed plan revision and DEIS available for public review and comment 90 Days	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fall 2022	Plan Finalization	Beginning of the objection period 60 Days	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Notice of all filed objections	Yes	No	Yes
		Notice to approve the plan revision	Yes	Yes	Yes
2023 and beyond	Monitoring	Availability of monitoring evaluation reports	Yes	No	No
		Proposed changes to monitoring program	Yes	No	No
		Availability of results of broader scale monitoring	Yes	No	No
	Administrative changes	Administrative changes other than changes to the monitoring program.	Yes	No	No

From FSH 1909.12 – Land Management Planning Handbook, Chapter 40 – Public Participation (36 CFR 219.12(c))

Appendix B: How to Submit Feedback

Table 7. Methods to submit feedback.

Method	Contact Information
Online Comment Portal (during Official Comment Period)	https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=49606
Email	AshleyForestPlan@usda.gov
Phone	435-781-5118
Mail	Ashley National Forest Attn: Forest Plan Revision 355 N. Vernal Ave. Vernal, UT 84078

Appendix C: Goals and Practices of Public Engagement

Goal 1: Identify, build and maintain working relationships, trust, capacity and commitment to the forest plan revision process and the forest plan.

Practices:

1. Design and chart out timely rollout and updates for public involvement and work to date within the forest plan revision process throughout the entirety, adjusting in times of flux and demands for public information.
2. Provide a clear path for public interaction and expectations at the onset of forest plan revision, outline what is within the scope of forest plan revision and clearly discuss what is not and why.
3. Clearly articulate the function forest plan revision holds within the context of future operations and decision-making on the Ashley National Forest.
4. Acknowledge, address, and clarify issues, conflicts, and expectations within the scope of forest plan revision as they arise.

Goal 2: Facilitate, encourage, and support shared learning, understanding, and feedback between the Forest Service and participants in the forest plan revision process.

Practices:

1. Design engagement opportunities such as formal listening sessions, office hours, update calls, public meetings, and opportunities for shared learning throughout the forest plan revision process.
2. Co-host or develop partner/third party hosted meetings with key organizations in communities, fostering a broader understanding from interested constituents and publics.
3. Use electronic communication and social media platforms to facilitate a variety of avenues for sharing and providing feedback.

Goal 3: Provide a strong foundation for work with local, State, Tribal, and federal government entities for consultation and coordination at the start and throughout the entire forest plan revision process.

Practices:

1. Meet with and clearly outline forest plan revision timeline and opportunities for consultation and coordination with local, State, Tribal, and federal government officials.
2. Clearly articulate what is within the scope of forest plan revision and expectations as a local, state, Tribal, or federal government entity for involvement.

Goal 4: Promote a common understanding of facts and figures and facilitate an inclusive, transparent process that provides diverse opportunities for meaningful public involvement in the planning and decision-making process.

Practices:

1. Set clear expectations and timeline of public involvement, when comment periods exist, allow timely discussion and feedback on what is within the scope of forest plan revision.

2. Develop consistent facts and figures through a variety of written methods that are reflected in talking points, key messages, and briefings.

Goal 5: Inform and engage employees in all aspects of forest plan revision, particularly at key milestones in the process.

Practices:

1. Use Forest meetings, staff and line officers and electronic mediums to share Forest Plan messages, updates, and progress.
2. Provide an interactive one-stop-shop web-based opportunity where employees can find updates and information (i.e., Sharepoint or Pinyon).
3. Build shared ownership and knowledge among the leadership team and employees.
4. Develop consistent process and milestone messaging for all employees to use.

Appendix D: Meeting Participation Guidelines

Public meetings are an important component of public engagement during the forest plan revision process. To ensure productive discussions, participants in public planning meetings and webinars will be asked to adhere to the following meeting participation guidelines:

- **Use common conversational courtesy** – Avoid third-party conversations at the table. Actively listen to what is being communicated and work to not interrupt others while they are speaking.
- **Be comfortable** – Please help yourself to refreshments or take personal breaks. If you have other needs, please inform the meeting organizer.
- **Honor time and share the air** – Help everyone stay on track and on time and achieve the meeting goals. Stay aware of the balance between how much other people are speaking and you are speaking.
- **Be honest and candid while treating each other with respect** – Help everyone to clearly understand your comment. Recognize that everyone cares about the forest, brings different experiences, expertise, and insights to the conversation, and deserves respect.
- **All ideas and points of view have value** – All ideas have value in this setting. If you hear someone else say something that you do not agree with, that's okay. The goal is to better understand each other and better communicate.
- **Avoid editorials** – It will be tempting to analyze the motives of others or pass judgement on their actions. Please talk about your ideas and recommendations.
- **Humor is welcome** – It just should not be at another person's expense.
- **Think innovatively and welcome new ideas** – Creative thinking and problem solving are welcome when the situation calls for it.