



# Lolo Plan Revision Proposed Action Orientation

## What is the Proposed Action, how can I comment, and what are the next steps?

### What is the Proposed Action?

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a proposal means a proposed action at a stage when an agency has a goal, is actively preparing to make a decision on one or more alternative means of accomplishing that goal and can meaningfully evaluate its effects (40 CFR § 1508.1). The proposed action must be clearly described to proceed with analysis. The Lolo National Forest’s (LNF) plan revision proposed action:

- Is a preliminary draft of a revised land management plan,
- Responds to the Preliminary Need to Change,
- Is informed by best available scientific information (BASI) and public input,
- Provides the “building blocks” that the LNF anticipates including in the revised plan; and
- Is a launching point in the process.

### Content of the Proposed Action

The Proposed Action provides detail on all planning topics to support meaningful comments, and its organization is aligned with the 2012 Planning Rule. Changes and refinements are expected during the next phases of planning.

#### Chapter 1: Introduction

Plan component definitions, Forestwide Distinctive Roles and Contributions, and other topics.

#### Chapter 2: Forestwide Direction

##### 2.1: Ecological Sustainability

##### 2.1.1: ECOSYSTEM INTEGRITY

Forested and nonforested vegetation, old growth, connectivity, fire, fuel, and the wildland urban

interface (WUI), invasive species, watershed, riparian management zones and ecosystems, and the conservation watershed network (CWN).

##### 2.1.2: SPECIES DIVERSITY

General species, at-risk plants, at-risk wildlife, and at-risk fish and aquatic species.

##### 2.2: Social & Economic & Integrated Multiple Uses

##### 2.2.1: ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Social and economic sustainability, climate change, carbon storage and sequestration, air quality, soils, and geology.

##### 2.2.2: SUSTAINABLE RECREATION & SCENERY

Recreation opportunities, recreation opportunity spectrum, recreation special uses, and scenery.

##### 2.2.3: TRIBAL TRUST RESPONSIBILITIES & AREAS OF IMPORTANCE

##### 2.2.4: CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

##### 2.2.5: ELIGIBLE WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

##### 2.2.6: DESIGNATED AREAS

Includes research natural areas, inventoried roadless areas, national trails, special areas, and municipal watersheds.

##### 2.2.7: OTHER INTEGRATED MULTIPLE USES

Includes lands ownership, status and uses, acquired land restoration emphasis areas, infrastructure, energy and minerals, grazing, and other forest and botanical products.

##### 2.3: Timber

#### Chapter 3: Geographic Areas (GA)

Plan direction specific to eight GAs. Includes GA-specific Distinctive Roles and Contributions.

#### Chapter 4: Management Areas (MA)

Plan direction specific to five MAs.

## Chapter 5: Plan Monitoring Program

Includes identification of focal species.

### Appendices

- 1 – Maps
- 2 – Suitability Matrix
- 3 – Proposed and Possible Actions and Potential Management Approaches
- 4 – Priority Watersheds and the CWN
- 5 – Scenery Management
- 6 – Vegetation Classification
- 7 – Wild and Scenic Rivers Eligibility Study
- 8 – Wilderness Evaluation
- 9 – Grizzly Bear Plan Direction
- 10 – Lynx Plan Direction
- 11 – Reader’s Guide

### What is the Need to Change?

The Preliminary Need to Change is a separate document that is provided for comment along with the Proposed Action. A draft of this document was posted in September 2023 and provided a foundation for plan development engagements. The goal of the Need to Change is to specify what needs to change from the 1986 Forest Plan and to provide focus for the plan revision effort.

### 2024 Engagement Opportunities

Public forums will be held during the scoping period and throughout 2024. Opportunities are posted on the Web Hub (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/lolo/planrevision>) and shared through electronic mailing lists, social media, and local media outlets. The following is a tentative outline of expected 2024 engagements:

- February 1 – Orientation Webinar
- February 8 – Revision Team Office Hours
- February 13 – Engagement, Saint Regis
- February 15 – Engagement, Missoula
- February 20 – Engagement, Online
- February 26 – Revision Team Office Hours
- March TBD – Revision Team Office Hours.
- April-June – Workshops to refine issues and inform alternative development.

- July-Sept – Events on focused science topics.
- Sept-Dec – Informal touchpoints.

## Plan Revision Expected Schedule

### Scoping (Spring 2024)

A 60-day comment period for scoping on the Proposed Action begins with a legal notice publication in the newspaper of record (the Missoulian) and the Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) published in the Federal Register, expected on January 31, 2024. The count of the 60-day period begins the day after these publications.

### Alternative Development and Analysis (Spring– Fall 2024)

The proposed action is a beginning point in the process. Alternatives will explore other ways of meeting the purpose and need. The NEPA requires the agency to include alternatives in proposals which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

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*“The EIS shall document the examination of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action. An alternative should meet the purpose and need and address one or more significant issues related to the proposed action. Since an alternative may be developed to address more than one significant issue, no specific number of alternatives is required or prescribed.” (36 CFR Part 220.5)*

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Comments received during scoping will be evaluated to identify issues. Issues, in turn, will guide development of a reasonable range of alternatives. Comments that provide input for a specific alternative will be most helpful if submitted during the scoping period.

## Continual Engagements and Science

The LNF anticipates hosting public engagements in 2024 to 1) validate and refine issues; 2) take a “deeper dive” on topics that are emerging, controversial, or may vary by alternative; and 3) discuss science for some focused topics. Refer also to the [BASI FAQ](#) on the Web Hub. Spring engagements may also provide discussion opportunities for alternatives submitted by the public. Comments received during scoping will help the LNF refine the engagement strategy.

## Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Revised Plan (late 2024)

A DEIS will be developed to analyze the effects of alternatives. A formal comment period will be provided for the DEIS and the Draft Revised Plan upon publication of its availability in the Federal register, which is anticipated in late 2024.

## Outyear Schedule

Comments and requirements from regulatory agencies and public comments on the DEIS will result in refinement of the range of alternatives and supporting analysis. These refinements will be presented in a final EIS (FEIS), Draft Plan, and a Draft Record of Decision (ROD), anticipated in late 2025. The release of the FEIS begins the objection phase. Parties that have commented during comment periods have standing to object on issues that they have raised. The objections process will include resolution meetings. The Final ROD and Revised Plan will reflect the outcomes of the objections process and is anticipated to be completed in 2026.

## Commenting on the Proposed Action

Providing comments is one of the best ways you can help shape the future of the LNF.

### When can I comment?

The 60-day comment period is the best time to submit comments. Your comments will be accepted at any time; however, comments posted after the comment period may not be able to be given full

consideration nor will they provide you standing to object later in the process.

### What makes a useful comment?

Comments are substantive when they are within the scope of the proposal, are specific to the proposal, have a direct relationship to the proposal, and include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider. Comments will be most helpful if they provide the “why” to help the LNF understand underlying interests and context. If you submit scientific literature, it helps if you identify specifically how it relates to the material.

### How do I comment?

- Commentors are encouraged to submit comments electronically through the CARA system that will be enabled on the Web Hub.
- You may send written comments to Lolo National Forest Supervisor’s Office, Attn: Amanda Milburn - Lolo Plan Revision, 24 Fort Missoula Rd, Missoula, MT 59804.

Please see also the “[How to Comment](#)” FAQ.

### How will my comments be used?

Comments will be analyzed and used to: complete the Need to Change; complete the wild and scenic rivers eligibility study and wilderness evaluation; identify significant issues which will inform alternative development; inform the DEIS; and refine the 2024 public engagement strategy. If comments are supportive and provide no issues, concerns, or recommendations, they are not analyzed further but are included in the record.

Additional key points include:

- All comments will be uploaded into CARA.
- All correspondence, including names and addresses, will be part of the public record.
- Comments submitted anonymously will be considered; however, they will not establish standing for the objection process.
- Following the comment period, a CARA Reading Room will be publicly available.

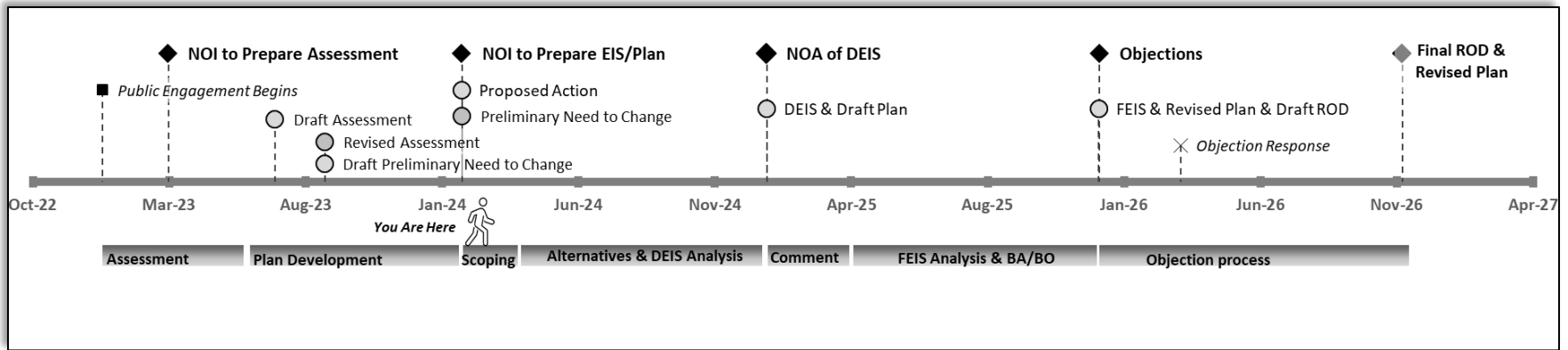


Figure 1: Lolo Plan Revision Expected Timeline



Figure 2: Lolo Plan Revision 2024 Timeline (Draft Environmental Impact Statement Development)

- NOI = Notice of Intent
- EIS = Environmental Impact Statement
- NOA = Notice of Availability
- DEIS = Draft Environmental Impact Statement
- FEIS = Final Environmental Impact Statement
- ROD = Record of Decision