

This developing plan content is under construction and is being shared as a snapshot of thinking. Additional changes based on Forest Service and public input are expected.

Lands and Special Uses

Background

This section is under development.

Desired Conditions

- National Forest System lands are consolidated, providing reasonable access and efficiency of land management while protecting resource values.
- Special uses serve a local, regional, or national public benefit and need that cannot be accommodated on non-Federal land.
- Special uses are authorized and managed to support and contribute to the protection of natural resource values and the promotion of public health and safety.
- Special use activities leave little evidence of impacts, and are compatible with other visitor uses.
- Permanent structures associated with special uses are centrally located or concentrated on existing sites or designated corridors to minimize the number of acres encumbered, and are compatible with other resource objectives.
- Boundary lines and property corners are easily locatable and highly visible.

Standards

- Acquired rights-of-way shall provide access to National Forest System lands for public and administrative needs.
- Newly acquired lands shall be assigned a management area that is compatible with the resource values of the acquisition.
- Boundary lines shall be surveyed, marked and recorded in support of land and resource management objectives, litigation, and encroachment resolution.
- Utility corridors and communication sites on NFS lands shall be located, designed and managed to minimize adverse environmental, social, and scenery impacts.
- At developed recreation sites, permitted special uses are compatible with visitor use, site capacity and recreation management.
- Prior to authorizing or re-authorizing new or existing diversions of water from any aquatic resource, instream flow or lake level needed to protect stream processes and aquatic and riparian habitats shall be identified. Water shall not be diverted from these resources when an instream flow or water level assessment indicates the diversion would adversely affect protection of stream processes, aquatic and riparian habitats and communities, or recreation and aesthetic values.
- The Forest shall not designate new recreation residence tracts.

- Existing recreation residences shall continue to be authorized.
- Special uses that can reasonably be met on private lands shall not be approved unless they are clearly in the public interest.
- Place distribution lines for utilities underground except when:
 - Burial within National Forest System lands is incompatible with adjacent overhead lines on private or other public lands, or
 - Burial is not technically feasible, (or) not feasible due to geological or resource conditions, (or) cost prohibitive, or greater long term disturbance would result; and management area objectives can be met using an overhead line.
- Aerial application of herbicides shall not be authorized in special use authorizations as a tool for vegetation maintenance.
- Special use applications for new private domestic, agricultural, or fish production water uses shall not be authorized. Phase out existing uses.
- Authorize collection of federally listed species or species of conservation concern only for approved scientific purposes. Validate other applicable collection permits (e.g. NCWRC, USFWS) prior to issuing.

Guideline

- Landownership adjustments should contribute to maintaining larger intact ecosystems or improve recreational or management access.

Prioritize Land Acquisitions by the following (in no particular order):

- Lands and associated riparian ecosystems on water frontage such as lakes and major streams.
- Critical habitat lands needed for the protection of federally listed endangered or threatened fish, wildlife or plant species. Supports objective of protection of fish and habitats.
- Lands needed for the protection of significant historical or cultural resources, when these resources are threatened or when management may be enhanced by public ownership.
- Lands that enhance recreation opportunities, public access, and protection of aesthetic values.
- Lands needed for protection and management of administrative and Congressionally designated areas including Wilderness, Wild & Scenic River corridors, National Scenic Trails, and National Historic Trails.
- Lands needed to enhance or protect watershed improvements that affect the management of NFS riparian areas.
- Environmentally sensitive lands such as wetlands and old growth.
- Timber resource management.
- Lands that promote more effective management of the ecosystem and reduce administrative expenses through consolidation of national forest system ownership or split estates.

Land conveyances will be guided by the following criteria (in no particular order):

- Parcels that will serve a greater public need in state, county, city, or other Federal agency ownership.
- Inaccessible parcels isolated from other NFS lands. Parcels intermingled with private lands.

- Parcels within major blocks of private land or intensively developed private land, the use of which is substantially for non-NFS purpose.
- Parcels having boundaries, or portions of boundaries, with inefficient configurations (projecting necks or long, narrow strips of land, etc.) Supports more logical and efficient management.

Boundary Lines

- Boundary lines should be surveyed and marked to NFS standard.

Special Uses Program

- Respond to special use requests according to the following priorities (in no particular order):
 - Those related to public safety, health and welfare, i.e. highways, utility transmission, renewable energy development, and public service improvements.
 - Those contributing to the general public benefit. (i.e. public access, transportation efficiency for commerce, a reliable supply of electricity, natural gas, and water, and a communication network.
 - Those that benefit only private users, i.e. road permits, rights-of-way for powerlines, telephones, waterlines, etc.
- In-stream flow or lake level needs sufficient to protect stream processes, aquatic and riparian habitats and communities, and recreation and scenic values should be determined prior to authorizing or reauthorizing special uses that pertain to the collection of water resources on the Forest.
- Towers for 69 kV lines and above, should be self-weathering with non-reflective lines, and where topography allows, should be located in areas that blend in with the terrain or background.
- Low growing vegetation that does not interfere with overhead lines, should be maintained within power line corridors to provide for wildlife habitat and other resource benefits.
- New communication sites should be co-located and/or expand existing sites to reduce the need for new sites.
- Communication site management plans, including site boundaries, should be implemented at each communication site.
- Equipment cleaning practices should be incorporated in special-use authorizations to prevent the introduction and spread of non-native invasive plants.

Management Approaches

- When incorporating beneficial wildlife habitat management into the maintenance of linear rights-of-ways and communication sites, consider Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture's (AMJV) Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the Golden-winged Warbler.