

**National Advisory  
Committee for  
Implementation of the  
National Forest System  
Land Management  
Planning Rule**

- Mike Anderson, *The Wilderness Society*
- William Barquin, *Kootenai Tribe of Idaho*
- Susan Jane Brown, *Blue Mountains Forest Partners*
- Robert Cope, *Lemhi County Commissioner, ID (Ret.)*
- Adam Cramer, *Outdoor Alliance*
- Daniel Dessecker, *Ruffed Grouse Society*
- Russ Ehnes, *National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council*
- James Magagna, *Wyoming Stock Growers Association*
- Joan May, *San Miguel County Commissioner, CO*
- Peter Nelson, *Defenders of Wildlife*
- Martin Nie, *University of Montana*
- Candice Price, *Urban American Outdoors*
- Vickie Roberts, *Shelton Roberts Properties*
- Greg Schaefer, *Arch Coal, Inc. (Ret.)*
- Angela Sondenaar, *Nez Perce Tribe*
- Rodney Stokes, *Michigan Governor's Office (Ret.)*
- Christopher Topik, *The Nature Conservancy*
- Thomas Troxel, *Intermountain Forest Association*
- Ray Vaughan, *Noted Author and Raconteur*
- Lindsay Warness, *Boise Cascade Company*

August 5, 2016

Tom Vilsack  
Secretary, Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Thomas L. Tidwell  
Chief, U.S. Forest Service  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-0003

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Chief Tidwell:

The National Advisory Committee for Implementation of the National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule (Committee) supports the 2012 Rule's requirements to provide robust, transparent and balanced public participation opportunities within forest planning. Please accept the attached recommendation for a 'Wilderness Public Engagement Info Graphic', describing the opportunities for public participation in wilderness process, to be used by USFS planners.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the National Advisory Committee,



Susan Jane Brown  
Co-Chair



Rodney Stokes  
Co-Chair

USFS Planning Rule Federal Advisory Committee's Recommendation on a 'USFS Wilderness Public Engagement Info Graphic'

**Recommendation: USFS Wilderness Public Engagement Info Graphic  
(Describing the Opportunities for Public Participation in Wilderness Process)**

Problem statement: The directives provide limited information about methods/opportunities for public participation at each stage of the wilderness evaluation process.

Issues: The planning directives require the Forest Service to provide public participation opportunities at each step of the four-step wilderness evaluation process (FSH 1909.12, Sec. 70.61).<sup>1</sup> However, the directives are not prescriptive for what public participation methods are most appropriate and effective during the wilderness evaluation process. For example, the public participation chapter of the directives does not specifically mention the need to factor the wilderness evaluation into the overall plan revision process.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, often there is a relatively high level of public interest and concern in the wilderness issue, along with considerable potential for confusion and misinformation, which has been challenging for planners. Consequently, planners would benefit from additional information about public participation methods and requirements during the wilderness evaluation process.

The Committee's wilderness workgroup has worked with Forest Service planning staff to develop a two-page side-by-side summary of the four-step wilderness evaluation process and the potential public engagement opportunities corresponding to each step. Such a summary will help planners and other public involvement specialists understand the major tasks associated with each step in the process and ways in which the public can effectively engage at each step. The summary should be a living document that is updated based on lessons learned.

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<sup>1</sup> "Maps, analysis, and other documentation developed through each step of the process must be made available timely to the public to increase transparency and enable feedback and input." Sec. 70.61.

<sup>2</sup> See Sec. 42.11 (public participation during assessments) and Sec. 42.12 (public participation during development, revision, or amendment of plan components).

USFS Planning Rule Federal Advisory Committee’s Recommendation on a ‘USFS Wilderness  
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**USFS Wilderness Public Engagement Info Graphic**

**Overarching Principles:**

- Emphasize the importance of early public engagement and during each step
- Describe the four-step Chapter 70 process, how it fits into the overall plan revision process, and how and why it is different from past processes (legal requirements and decision space)
- Clarify where on the public participation spectrum each step is. For purposes of this infographic, public participation also includes intergovernmental participation.
- Clarify to the public the difference between recommended wilderness and congressional designation of wilderness.
- Clarify to the public that there is no requirement within the plan revision process that the Forest Service make recommendations for new wilderness areas.

<b>USFS Wilderness Public Engagement Info Graphic</b>	
<b>USFS Process</b>	<b>Public Engagement Opportunities</b>
<p><u>Inventory of lands that may be suitable for wilderness</u> (<i>*Work can begin before initiating assessment because the wilderness process may require additional time that would adversely affect the overall timeline</i>)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collect/compile information.</li> <li>2. Review criteria and identify challenges (e.g. “not substantially noticeable”).</li> <li>3. Formulate process/methodology for applying criteria.</li> <li>4. Refine process/methodology based on public feedback.</li> <li>5. Apply criteria to develop draft inventory.</li> <li>6. Revise draft inventory based on public feedback.</li> </ol>	<p><u>Inventory of lands that may be suitable for wilderness</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inform/engage public if any work begins before the assessment starts</li> <li>2. Create a webpage to share information (see below) and solicit public input</li> <li>3. At public meetings, workshops, or open houses:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Show a wilderness process video (e.g. Carson NF).</li> <li>b. Share a process paper on each phase.</li> <li>c. Explain inventory criteria and management of existing uses.</li> <li>d. Explain the difference between recommended wilderness and congressional designation of wilderness.</li> <li>e. Clarify that there is no requirement that the Forest Service make recommendations for new wilderness areas.</li> <li>f. Share criteria (GIS exercise in meeting).</li> <li>g. Discuss challenges.</li> <li>h. Share draft inventory – clarify what feedback is needed.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Refine inventory based on public participation in the process.</li> </ol>
<p><u>Evaluation</u> (<i>*Work can begin once the assessment is finished</i>)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Formulate process/methodology for applying evaluation criteria.</li> <li>2. Refine process/methodology based on public feedback.</li> <li>3. Apply evaluation criteria.</li> <li>4. Develop draft evaluation report.</li> <li>5. Revise evaluation report.</li> </ol>	<p><u>Evaluation</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inform/engage public.</li> <li>2. Explain evaluation process.</li> <li>3. Share model (apply test areas).</li> <li>4. Share draft evaluation report with rationale (explain how public participation is reflected in the draft evaluation). Clarify what feedback is needed.</li> <li>5. Refine evaluation based on public participation in the process.</li> <li>6. Share revised evaluation report</li> </ol>

USFS Planning Rule Federal Advisory Committee’s Recommendation on a ‘USFS Wilderness  
Public Engagement Info Graphic’

<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify lands that, based on evaluation process and public participation, are to be carried forward into one or more alternatives. For lands not carried forward, document reason for excluding from continued analysis. Add documentation for each area included in the alternatives.</li> <li>2. Identify areas for wilderness recommendation in plan alternatives that will be considered during development and review of the DEIS.</li> <li>3. Document process in DEIS appendices.</li> <li>4. Adjust inventory, evaluation, alternatives and recommendation based on public comments and participation following publication of draft plan and DEIS.</li> <li>5. Publish plan subject to objection, FEIS, and draft decision document including proposed final recommendations for wilderness.</li> </ol>	<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Engage public regarding which areas should be analyzed in draft alternatives.</li> <li>2. Develop/share draft plan and draft EIS (with alternatives).</li> <li>3. Seek public comment as part of the 90-day comment period in NEPA. This includes opportunity to comment on wilderness inventory, evaluation, alternatives and recommendation.</li> <li>4. Participate in any opportunities to resolve wilderness issues.</li> </ol>
<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make any necessary final adjustments to wilderness recommendations or supporting documentation in any of the plan documents.</li> <li>2. Identify recommended wilderness (preliminary administrative recommendation) in the plan decision document with appropriate documentation.</li> <li>3. Chief is notified of preliminary administrative recommendation for wilderness designation.</li> </ol>	<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop/share final plan, FEIS and draft decision document with the public.</li> <li>2. Begin objection period and process.</li> <li>3. Resolve objections.</li> </ol>