

General Overview of Forest Plan Revision - Amendment

What is a Forest Plan?

A Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) is a framework for managing a National Forest.

Designed to be comprehensive at a larger scale than an individual project.

The Forest Plan is developed using a public process – not unlike a typical project level NEPA document where we scope for public input, ask for collaboration, and issue draft documents where the public has the opportunity to shape the final document.

NFMA requires plans to be revised at least every 15 years (16 USC 1604 (f)(5)).

The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (https://openei.org/wiki/National_Forest_Management_Act_of_1976), requires the United States Forest Service (https://openei.org/wiki/United_States_Forest_Service) (USFS) to develop, revise and amend Land Management Plans (LMPs) for units of the National Forest System (NFS). See 16 U.S.C. 1600 et seq. (https://openei.org/wiki/Title_16_USC_1600_Congressional_Findings) LMPs provide a framework for managing NFS unit resources and guide project and activity decision making for national forests. See 36 CFR 219.2(b) (https://openei.org/wiki/Title_36_CFR_219_Planning). 36 CFR 219.15(d) (https://openei.org/wiki/Title_36_CFR_219_Planning) requires all projects and activities approved on USFS-managed land to be consistent with the applicable LMP. If a project is not consistent with the applicable LMP, a revision may be required. If a change to the LMP is necessary in order to accommodate a proposed project, a revision is initiated. A revision replaces the current LMP for the applicable land unit, while an amendment adds, modifies or removes one or more plan components. As a practical matter, most renewable energy or transmission projects will require an amendment, not a revision. If a plan already exists in your area and an amendment is required, see

Legal Basis for Developing a Forest Plan

Regulations

National Forest Management Act of 1976
(https://openei.org/wiki/National_Forest_M

National Environmental Policy Act
(https://openei.org/wiki/National_Environn

16 U.S.C. 1600
(https://openei.org/wiki/Title_16_USC_160

36 CFR 219
(https://openei.org/wiki/Title_36_CFR_219

36 CFR 220
(https://openei.org/wiki/Title_36_CFR_220
(NEPA)_Compliance)

40 CFR 1502
(https://openei.org/wiki/Title_40_CFR_150

40 CFR 1503
(https://openei.org/wiki/Title_40_CFR_150

40 CFR 1505
(https://openei.org/wiki/Title_40_CFR_150

Goals, Objectives, Standards and Guidelines

Goal: Describe desired end results and are normally expressed in broad general terms. Goals link broad Agency goals set forth in law, executive orders, regulation, and Agency directives.

Objective: Concise statements of measurable desired results intended to promote achievement of Forest Plan goals. For example – desired resource conditions and/or desired levels of goods and services.

Standard: Limitations on management activities that are within the authority and ability fo the Forest Service to meet or enforce. Standards are mandatory and an amendment to the Forest Plan is necessary to deviate from a specified standard.

Guideline: Preferred or advisable courses of action. Deviations from guidelines are permissible if the responsible official documents the reasons for the deviation.

Management Areas

Management areas represent a spatial definition of the kinds of resource and use opportunities available to the public and where different management practices may be carried out.

Eight general categories of management areas

Management area themes

Management area desired conditions

Management area goals and objectives (example: Structural stages)

Management area standards and guidelines

Planning Rules

Planning rules are regulations which prescribe how land and resource management planning is to be conducted on National Forest System lands.

1982 Planning Rule -- The resulting plans shall provide for multiple use and sustained yield of goods and services from the National Forest System in a way that maximizes long term net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner.

2012 Planning Rule -- require plans to provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses - Plans will guide management of NFS lands so that they are ecologically sustainable and contribute to social and economic sustainability; consist of ecosystems and watersheds with ecological integrity and diverse plant and animal communities; and have the capacity to provide people and communities with ecosystem services and multiple uses that provide a range of social, economic, and ecological benefits for the present and into the future. These benefits include clean air and water; habitat for fish, wildlife, and plant communities; and opportunities for recreational, spiritual, educational, and cultural benefits.

Revision Vs. Amendment

Amendment

- Monitoring results suggest a need to change the desired forest condition or projected timber outputs.
- A need to change the plan is identified that cannot be made through administrative changes (36 CFR 219.13) or by changing management practices rather than plan components.
- The Responsible Official may rely on a monitoring report or other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances to identify a need to change the plan (36 CFR 219.13(b))
- A plan amendment is required to add, modify, or remove one or more plan components, or to change how or where one or more plan components apply to all or part of the plan area (including management areas or geographic areas).
 - **(e) Plan components. Plan components guide future project and activity decision making.** The following plan components are required (36 CFR 219.7): desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, and suitability of lands. Goals may be included as an optional plan component.
- Plan amendments may be broad or narrow, depending on the need for change, and should be used to keep plans current and help units adapt to new information or changing conditions.
- Base an amendment on a preliminary identification of the need to change the plan. The preliminary identification of the need to change the plan may be based on a new assessment; a monitoring report; or other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances

Revision Vs. Amendment

Revision

- National Forest Management Act requires plan revision "at least every 15 years." 16 USC 1604 (f)(5)
- Currently working under a 1997 Forest Plan as amended.
- The last significant amendment was approved in 2005.
- How much of the content of the plan must change in the revision process is the "need to change the plan" inquiry.
- (a) *Plan revisions*. A plan revision creates a new plan for the entire plan area, whether the plan revision differs from the prior plan to a small or large extent. A plan must be revised at least every 15 years. But, the responsible official has the discretion to determine at any time that conditions on a plan area have changed significantly such that a plan must be revised (16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(5)).