

Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Public Meetings
Monday, March 17 – Thursday, April 10, 2014
Meeting Summary

Meeting Purpose and Overview

The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) hosted a series of public information meetings for the Blue Mountains National Forests Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Proposed Revised Land Management Plan (Proposed Forest Plan) in Eastern Oregon and Eastern Washington in March and April 2014 at the following locations:

| Date | City, State | Facility | Approximate # of Attendees |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 3/17/2014 | John Day, OR | Federal Building | 100 |
| 3/18/2014 | Burns, OR | Chamber of Commerce Community Center | 25 |
| 3/19/2014 | Long Creek, OR | Long Creek Community Center | 20 |
| 3/20/2014 | Enterprise, OR | Cloverleaf Hall | 80 |
| 3/25/2014 | Baker City, OR | Baker County Fairgrounds | 150 |
| 3/26/2014 | La Grande, OR | Blue Mountains Conference Center | 275 |
| 3/27/2014 | Halfway, OR | Lion's Hall | 40 |
| 3/31/2014 | Portland, OR | Red Lion Convention Center | 50 |
| 4/1/2014 | Pendleton, OR | Pendleton Convention Center | 80 |
| 4/2/2014 | Heppner, OR | City Hall | 30 |
| 4/3/2014 | Dayton, WA | Fairgrounds Youth Building | 35 |
| 4/4/2014 | Kennewick, WA | Benton PUD | 50 |
| 4/9/2014 | Clarkston, WA | Walla Walla Community College | 25 |
| 4/10/2014 | Ontario, OR | Four Rivers Cultural Center | 30 |

In total, approximately 1,000 members of the public attended the 14 meetings. All meetings were hosted from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. local time.

The meetings provided a combination of formats to accommodate different needs for the meeting participants, including: an open house with opportunities for individual discussions with Forest Service resource specialists, a Forest Service presentation, and a large group question/response/comment session.

The meetings served two purposes: to provide the public an opportunity to learn about the Forest Service's proposals for long-term management of the Malheur, Wallowa-Whitman, and Umatilla National Forests, and to provide information on how the public can comment on the DEIS and Proposed Forest Plan, including how their comments will be used.

The meetings were facilitated and documented by a non-Forest Service, neutral process facilitator and notetaker from EnviroIssues. EnviroIssues was contracted through the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution and is a member of its *Roster of Environmental Conflict Resolution Practitioners*.

Meeting Format

Open House – Session 1

For the first 30 minutes of the scheduled meeting, participants were invited to engage individually with Forest Service resource specialists and other Forest Service staff in an open house format (the key themes from those individual conversations are not reflected in this meeting summary). Each station offered resource-specific handouts. Some participants chose to collect the handouts and review them in the presentation seating area, rather than actively participating in the first open house session.

Presentation

The facilitator opened this segment of the meeting by welcoming participants and explaining the meeting objectives, agenda, and process that would be followed for the evening.

The overview presentation was provided by one of the following from the three National Forests included in the Forest Plan: Steve Beverlin, Acting Malheur Forest Supervisor; John Laurence, Wallowa-Whitman Forest Supervisor; Kevin Martin, Umatilla Forest Supervisor; and Tom Montoya, Wallowa-Whitman Deputy Forest Supervisor. The speaker was determined based on the meeting location. Before the presentation, each Forest Supervisor introduced the Forest Service Forest Plan Revision Team, and local and other elected officials and staff in attendance.

While the presentation focused on the overall DEIS and Proposed Forest Plan, each meeting was tailored to provide maps and examples for the forest in closest proximity to the meeting location (for example, the John Day meeting was more specific to the Malheur National Forest).

The Forest Service presenter provided a general overview of forest planning, a process timeline, and an outline of the following Forest Plan components:

- Goals
- Standards
- Guidelines
- Desired conditions
- Objectives
- Management Areas
- Suitable uses
- Monitoring
- Issues that lead to the range of alternatives; and
- Overview of the Preferred Alternative, including the process for recommending wilderness

An important aspect of the presentation was to describe in detail the Regional Forester's Preferred Alternative (Alternative E), as described in the Proposed Forest Plan, including how the plan meets the identified goals, standards, guidelines, and objectives; issues of access; economic and social well-being; ecological resilience; livestock grazing and grazing land vegetation; recommended wilderness and old forest. The presentation concluded with information on the comment period including how to comment, how the comments will be used in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, as well as where participants can find copies of the documents. Please see Attachment 1 for the presentation slides.

Questions and Answers/Comment Session (Q&A)

After the presentation, a 45-minute Q&A/comment opportunity was provided, with additional time for a second round following a short break as needed for remaining questions and comments (not all meeting locations required a second round). The facilitator outlined the Q&A process, including a general two minute time limit for each speaker, an opportunity for follow-up questions, and reserving multiple questions or comments until a second round or second Q&A session. The facilitator also stated that the notetaker would not be capturing comments verbatim, and asked those wishing to submit comments for the forest plan revision record to state their name at the beginning of their comment, and to validate their comment and contact information at the comment table in the open house area prior to leaving for the evening.

Attachments 2-15 include a synopsis of questions (Q), comments (C) and corresponding Forest Service responses (R) from the individual meetings. *As specifically framed by the facilitator in both the meeting opening and orientation to the Q&A process, this synopsis is not intended to be a verbatim transcription of this portion of the meeting; the notetaker captured the essence of the question or comment, as well as the Forest Service response.*

Key themes heard from participants across the meeting series during the Q&A sessions are summarized as follows:

- **NEPA Process:** Clarification on the duration of the comment period; Belief that comments from local interests should be given priority/greater consideration over comments from non-local interests; concern that public comment will have little effect on Forest Service decisions; clarification of the decision-making process and which decisions will be made at the programmatic (Forest Plan) versus site-specific level; and appreciation for the planning effort being undertaken by the local Forest Service staff.
- **Preferred Alternative:** Concern about the Preferred Alternative and whether the other alternatives are still viable; concern about why the Regional Forester's Preferred Alternative was not the alternative developed by local county commissioners; and an expression of support for Alternative A or Alternative D.
- **Roads/Access:** Concern about how the Proposed Forest Plan will impact the current network of motorized roads and trails; skepticism with the Forest Service's assertion that the Proposed Forest Plan will not result in motorized road and trail closures; and concern about how decisions

made in the Forest Plan regarding motorized and non-motorized management areas will shape/constrain future site-specific decisions regarding motorized road and trail access.

- **Wilderness:** Concern that the proposed recommendations for additional wilderness will restrict motorized access to the forests; belief that existing wilderness is already too much, that it limits economic opportunities for local communities and increases risk of catastrophic wildfire due to limitations on timber harvest and access; questions about whether the Forest Service could recommend “undesignating” some of the existing wilderness; conversely, a concern that the wilderness recommendation is too limited/inadequate to protect species, vegetation, and a clean water supply; and belief that a balance between wilderness and non-wilderness interests is possible.
- **Energy:** Concern about energy development, especially the potential for wind energy development on the forests (generally negative perspectives expressed regarding wind energy development).
- **Climate Change:** Disbelief that climate change is “real”; and conversely, concern that climate change and its potential effects are not emphasized enough in the Proposed Forest Plan – that it should be a Forest Service priority.
- **Definitions/Characterizations:** Clarification on how wilderness, management areas, old growth, and inventoried roadless areas are defined and characterized; and how these definitions may limit future economic opportunities and, conversely, compromise environmental integrity.
- **Timber/Old Growth/Old Forests:** Concern and clarification for the Forest Service’s intentions for timber production, old growth/old forests, and personal use firewood; and belief that the proposed increase in timber outputs under Alternative E will be positive for local economies and forest health, and negative for retention of old forests.
- **Wildlife:** Concern that increased timber harvest will negatively impact forest wildlife; and concern that proposed restrictions on pack goats in bighorn sheep habitat are unwarranted.
- **Livestock Grazing:** Concerns that the number of livestock would be affected by a corresponding reduction in grazing utilization standards; and clarification of livestock grazing management in areas with federally listed threatened plant species.
- **Minerals:** Concern that the Forest Service is not meeting its statutory requirements for minerals management.
- **Goals/Monitoring:** Concern about how the three goals (economic well-being, social well-being, and ecological integrity) will be measured for success after the Proposed Plan is implemented.
- **Concerns not specifically related to forest planning:** Concerns for the current level of Forest Service law enforcement (generally felt to be too little); concerns related to specific examples of over-bearing law enforcement behavior; and concerns regarding site-specific, recent road and trail closures, their impacts to users, and access to permitted recreational residences and private lands.

Open House Session 2

At the conclusion of the Q&A Session, the facilitator encouraged participants to return to the open house and speak individually with Forest Service resource specialists. At those locations where some participants wished to provide additional questions and comments, the facilitator, Forest Supervisor, and notetaker reconvened with this subset of participants for an additional 20-30 minutes. At most meetings, the Q&A session concluded after the first session - participants either returned to the open house or visited individually with the Forest Supervisor. As previously noted, the nature of individual meeting participant/Forest Service staff conversations are not captured in this summary.

The open house continued until the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Susan Hayman, Facilitator

Melissa Thom, Notetaker


Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Presentation slides
- Attachment 2: John Day, OR, March 17 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis
- Attachment 3: Burns, OR, March 18 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis
- Attachment 4: Long Creek, OR, March 19 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis
- Attachment 5: Enterprise, OR, March 20 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis
- Attachment 6: Baker City, OR, March 25 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis
- Attachment 7: La Grande, OR, March 26 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis
- Attachment 8: Halfway, OR, March 27 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis
- Attachment 9: Portland, OR, March 31 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis
- Attachment 10: Pendleton, OR, April 1 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis
- Attachment 11: Heppner, OR, April 2 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis
- Attachment 12: Dayton, WA, April 3 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis
- Attachment 13: Kennewick, WA, April 4 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis
- Attachment 14: Clarkston, WA, April 9 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis
- Attachment 15: Ontario, OR, April 10 – Q&A/Comment Synopsis

**Welcome!
Tonight's
Program**


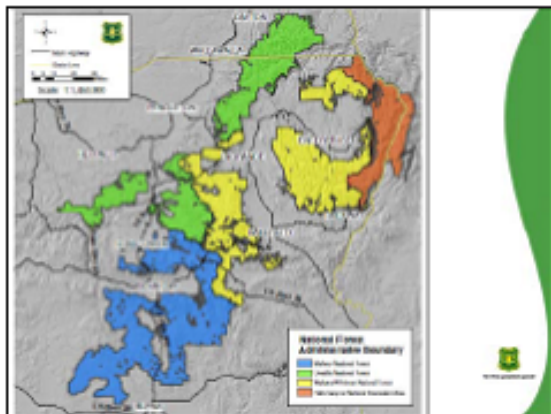


5:30 Open House
6:00 Presentation
Questions, Responses, and Comments
Open House
8:30 Adjourn



**for the
GREATEST GOOD**

Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision
Proposed Revised Forest Plan
and
Draft Environmental Impact Statement

The Documents.....





**A Forest Plan
Does.....**



- ◆ Provide broad-based, strategic direction (programmatic guidance)
- ◆ Provide the basis and context for subsequent site-specific, project-level decisions made after additional detailed analyses and further public engagement
- ◆ Protects and honors Native American Tribal Treaty Rights

Does Not.....

- ◆ Make site-specific or project-level decisions
- ◆ Open or close roads or trails
- ◆ Designate Wilderness




Why Revise the Forest Plans?

- ◆ National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires Forest Plans be revised at least every 10 to 15 years. Current Forest Plans were completed in 1990
- ◆ Economic, social, and ecological conditions have changed
- ◆ New laws, regulations, and policies are in place
- ◆ New information based on monitoring and scientific research
- ◆ Multiple amendments completed to incorporate best available science



Which Planning Rule 1982 or 2012?

- ◆ The 2012 Planning Rule allows:
 - ◆ Continued use of the 1982 Planning Rule
 - ◆ Using the Objection Process, even if the Forest plan is written under a previous planning rule
 - ◆ Monitoring under the 2012 Planning Rule, as is required under Forest Service policy



What's Happened Since 2004?

2004 – 2010:

- ◆ Numerous public meetings and field trips
- ◆ Meetings with local, state, and federal agencies, and tribes
- ◆ Internal meetings and reviews



March 2010 – March 2014:

- ◆ Scoping - Proposed Action released for public comment; public meetings and field trips
- ◆ Alternatives developed based on comments
- ◆ Additional meetings with counties, tribes; and state and federal agencies

March 2014:

- ◆ DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan Released
- ◆ Public Meetings

Key Themes in the Proposed Action

- ◆ Vegetation and Aquatic Habitat Restoration
- ◆ Support to Vibrant Communities
- ◆ Water, Watersheds, Riparian Areas
- ◆ Species Viability
- ◆ Climate Change



What We Heard - Issues

- ◆ Social Well-Being
- ◆ Economic Well-Being
- ◆ Ecological Resilience
- ◆ Access
- ◆ Livestock Grazing and Grazing Land Vegetation
- ◆ Old Forest
- ◆ Recommended Wilderness



The Alternatives

| | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| Alternative A | No Action - 1990 Plan, as Amended |
| Alternative B | Modified Proposed Action |
| Alternative C | |
| Alternative D | |
| Alternative E | Preferred Alternative |
| Alternative F | |




Terms in the Documents (Plan Components)

- ❖ Goals
- ❖ Desired Conditions
- ❖ Standards
- ❖ Guidelines
- ❖ Objectives
- ❖ Management Areas/Special Areas
- ❖ Suitable Uses and Activities
- ❖ Monitoring/Evaluation




Desired Conditions





- ❖ What the National Forest System lands, natural resources, and recreational uses would be like in the future or the conditions we would like to achieve over time
- ❖ Apply Forestwide (not HCNRA) and to all Management Areas

Social Well-being Goal

Examples of Desired Conditions:





- ❖ Sense and Value of Place
- ❖ Culturally important areas
- ❖ Recreational Opportunities
- ❖ Scenic Qualities
- ❖ Wildlife Values

Economic Well-being Goal

Examples of Desired Conditions:





- ❖ Forest Products
- ❖ Livestock Grazing
- ❖ Recreation
- ❖ Mineral and Geological Resources

Ecological Integrity Goal

Examples of Desired Conditions:

- ❖ Healthy Forests
- ❖ Water and Soil Quality
- ❖ Species Diversity
- ❖ Wildland Fire
- ❖ Plant Species Composition

Standards



- ❖ Constraints on project and activity decision making
- ❖ The design of projects and activities must meet a standard requirement in a Forest Plan
- ❖ A Forest Plan amendment must be completed to vary from a standard







Guidelines

- ❖ Constraints on project and activity decision making
- ❖ The design of projects and activities may depart from a guideline requirement as long as intent is met and addressed in a decision document with supporting rationale
- ❖ If deviation from a guideline does not meet intent, a Forest Plan amendment is required




Objectives

- ❖ Projections of outcomes based on social, economic, and ecological indicators


Management Areas/ Special Areas

- ❖ Distinct areas on the land with a unique set of desired conditions, standards, guidelines, and objectives
- ❖ They occur across Districts, mountain ranges, and ecosystems but have features in common that make their land uses similar.

MA 1

- 1A - Wilderness
- 1B - Recommended Wilderness
- 1C - Wilderness Study Area




MA 2 Special Areas

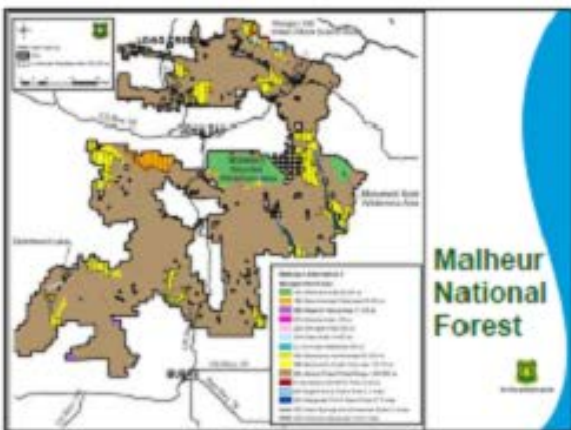
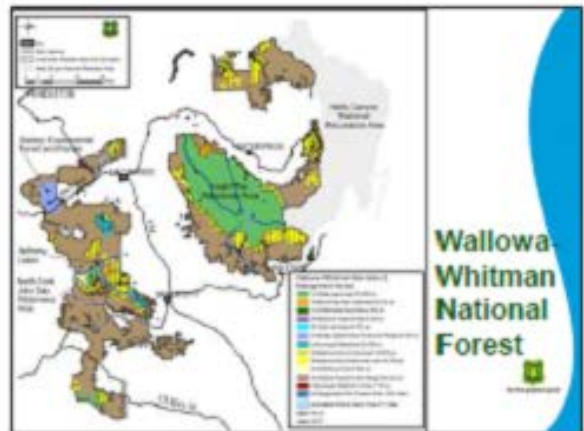
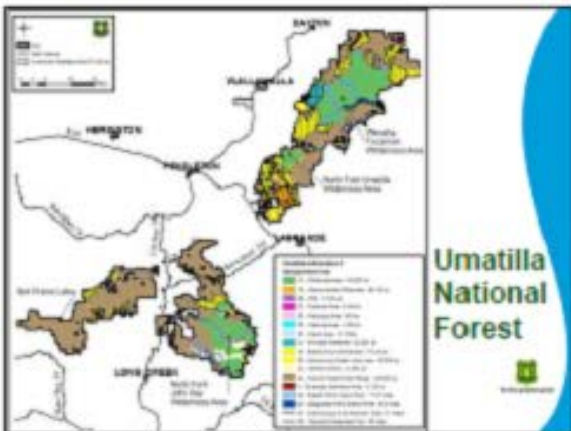
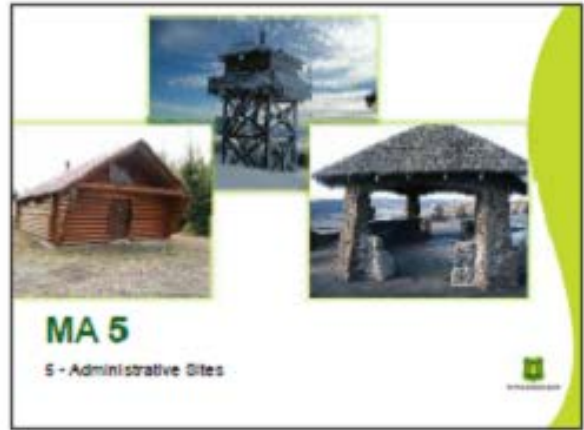
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|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2A - Wild and Scenic Rivers | 2F - Scenic Byways |
| 2B - Research Natural Areas | 2G - Nationally Designated Trails |
| 2C - Botanical Areas | 2H - Scenic Areas |
| 2D - Geological Areas | 2I - Experimental Forests |
| 2E - Historical Areas | 2J - Municipal Watersheds |




MA 3

- 3A - Backcountry - Nonmotorized Use
- 3B - Backcountry - Motorized Use
- 3C - Wildlife Corridor





Suitable Uses/Activities

- ◆ Uses and/or activities that are compatible with desired conditions and objectives for a management area
- ◆ Do not represent a final decision approving activities because site-specific analysis still needs to occur
- ◆ Use or Activity such as (page 97 of the Proposed Revised Forest Plan):
 - ◆ Timber production
 - ◆ Timber harvest
 - ◆ Grazing
 - ◆ Motor vehicle use
 - ◆ Road and trail construction
 - ◆ Energy development





Monitoring

- ❖ Monitoring is part of an adaptive management process that measures the performance of plan implementation against the goals, desired conditions, and objectives
- ❖ Evaluates whether implementation of standards and guidelines are producing the desired results
- ❖ Monitoring and evaluation will occur as Forest Plans are implemented.







Preferred Alternative (Alternative E)

- ❖ Social Well-Being
- ❖ Economic Well-Being
- ❖ Ecological Resilience
- ❖ Access
- ❖ Livestock Grazing and Grazing Land Vegetation
- ❖ Old Forest
- ❖ Recommended Wilderness




Social Well-Being

- ❖ Balances the social and economic with ecological integrity
- ❖ Addresses ecological needs because they, in turn, support social and economic systems, bringing all three closer to sustainability
- ❖ Provides for a variety of uses on public land to meet the social needs of people throughout eastern Oregon and Washington and beyond. Examples include: hunting and fishing, recreation, culturally significant foods, old forest and scenery.






Economic Well-Being

- ❖ Contributes to the sustainability and vitality of the surrounding communities
- ❖ Predicted increase in jobs help diversify communities and contribute to economic stability
- ❖ Provides for doubling the current rate of restoration for all resources

Ecological Resilience







- ❖ Emphasis on:
 - ❖ Watershed Restoration
 - ❖ Improving hydrologic function and connectivity within Key Watersheds
 - ❖ Managing fire to meet resource objectives
 - ❖ Treating invasive plants



Access

The Proposed Revised Forest Plan:

- ❖ Includes desired conditions to provide motorized and non-motorized access that are compatible with the desired conditions and objectives for other resources.
- ❖ Does not close National Forest System roads, designated off-highway vehicle, or snowmobile trails currently open to the public.
- ❖ Identifies areas that are suitable for the development of additional motorized access.



Process for Recommending Wilderness

- ❖ Required by the 1982 Planning Rule, as amended
- ❖ Evaluate and inventory potential wilderness areas
- ❖ Evaluate the Capability, Availability, and Need for potential additional wilderness
- ❖ Recommend Wilderness through the Forest Plan
- ❖ Final Forest Plan presents Preliminary Administrative Recommended Wilderness Areas
- ❖ **ONLY** Congress can designate Wilderness



Livestock Grazing and Grazing Land Vegetation

- ❖ Permitted livestock levels are similar as the proposed action; no change for cattle
- ❖ Guidelines for sage grouse protection are included, consistent with BLM Sage Grouse DEIS
- ❖ Contributes to local economies by providing forage for cattle and sheep
- ❖ Standards provide separation of domestic sheep from bighorn sheep, which could result in reductions in permitted domestic sheep levels



Old Forest

- ❖ Creates and/or maintains resilient old forests
- ❖ Uses Historic Range of Variability (HRV) as the desired condition for the percent of the landscape in old forest
- ❖ Emphasizes retaining trees with old tree characteristics across the landscape

Timeline

- ❖ **March 14, 2014:** Begin the Public Comment Period
- ❖ **2014 – 2015:**
 - ❖ Comments reviewed, analyzed, and considered when finalizing the Forest Plans and DEIS
 - ❖ Continued engagement with co-conveners, other agencies, Tribes, and public.
- ❖ **Summer 2015:** Notice of Availability for Final EIS and Forest Plan for each Forest. Objection Process begins
- ❖ **Fall 2015:** Resolution of Objections. Sign Records of Decision

Tips for Commenting

- ❖ Help the Forest Service identify what is right for the land, while also enhancing social and economic vitality
- ❖ The Preferred Alternative is a good starting point for commenting, along with comparing it to the other alternatives
- ❖ Submit substantive comments, which could include alternative ways to accomplish what is being proposed, including your rationale of why to do it that way
- ❖ All comments will be analyzed, read, and considered in the development of the Final EIS and Final Forest Plans



How to Submit Comments

- ❖ Electronically
- ❖ US Postal Mail
- ❖ Fax
- ❖ Need Assistance Call:
641-523-1246 or 641-523-1302



When to comment

- ❖ Postmarked or received electronically no later than 90 days from March 14, 2014
- ❖ An extension will be considered before end of first 90 days





Where to get copies...

DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan

We are encouraging the public to view our documents through the following options:

- ❖ Website
- ❖ Compact Disc (CD)
- ❖ Printed Copy
- ❖ Visit and Read in Person at local libraries and Forest Service offices



Question & Answer Time

Opportunity to ask questions about:

- ❖ What you've heard tonight
- ❖ The Forest Plan
- ❖ The DEIS
- ❖ How to Comment
- ❖ The Process



Process for the Q&A Session...

- ❖ Opportunity to ask a question and/or provide a comment;
- ❖ Making a comment for the record? Please say so and state your name – we'll follow up with you after the Q&A session to validate your comment and confirm your contact information;
- ❖ Please provide equal opportunity to your neighbors in the room by keeping your question or comment brief – let's accommodate as many people as possible;
- ❖ At the conclusion of the 45-minute Q&A, Forest Service leadership will remain in the presentation area for any who still wish to make a comment - those with questions will head into the open house area to talk with Forest Service resource specialists.

Please take advantage of the opportunity to ask questions tonight. There will be many other opportunities to provide comments on the Proposed Revised Forest Plan during the 90-day comment period.

