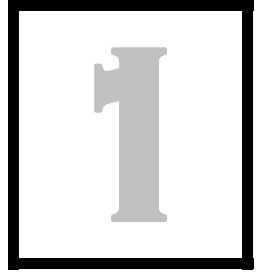


# INTRODUCTION



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## PURPOSE OF THE FOREST PLAN

This Revised National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) directs the management of the Jefferson National Forest. The Forest Plan provides direction to assure coordination of multiple-uses (outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish, and wilderness) and sustained yield of products and services [16 USC 1604 (e)]. It fulfills legislative requirements and addresses local, regional, and national issues and concerns. To accomplish this, the Forest Plan:

### PURPOSE OF THE FOREST PLAN

- ▶ Establishes the management direction and associated long-range goals and objectives of the Jefferson National Forest for the next 10-15 years [36 CFR 219.11 (b)] in Chapter 2.
- ▶ Establishes management areas, which reflect biological, physical, watershed, and social differences in managing each area of land; and management prescriptions, which reflect different desired conditions and provide the specific information used to develop projects to implement the Forest Plan [36 CFR 219.11 (c)] in Chapters 3 and 4.
- ▶ Specifies the standards, which set the sideboards for achieving the goals, objectives and desired conditions, as well as provide meaningful direction when implementing projects [36 CFR 219.13 to 219.27] in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.
- ▶ Identifies lands suitable for various multiple uses including timber production [(16 USC 1604(k) and 36 CFR 219.14)] and establishes the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) ensuring a sustained yield of wood products in perpetuity [16 USC 1611 and 36 CFR 219.16] in Chapter 3 and Appendix F.
- ▶ Recommends to Congress 3 new stand alone wilderness study areas and 12 additions to existing wilderness to Congress [36 CFR 219.17].
- ▶ Establishes the monitoring and evaluation requirements in Chapter 5 needed to ensure that the direction is carried out and to determine how well outputs and effects were predicted [36 CFR 219.11(d)] in Chapter 3.
- ▶ Consents to lease 528,400 acres for Federal oil and gas exploration and development, 195,900 acres with a no surface occupancy stipulation and 140,500 acres with additional stipulations like controlled surface use.

Preparation of the Forest Plan is required by the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) as amended by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA). This Forest Plan represents the Selected Alternative out of 7 alternatives evaluated as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the implementing regulations of NFMA [36 CFR 219]. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) also guides special uses of the National Forest System.

The NFMA, FLPMA, the Code of Federal Regulations, and other guiding documents determined the content of this Forest Plan. Land allocations, management prescriptions, and standards set forth here constitute the management direction the Forest will follow; however, the projected outputs, services, and rates of implementation are dependant on the annual budget process.

**RELATIONSHIP  
TO THE EIS****RELATIONSHIP TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT****SUMMARY OF  
THE AMS**

This Forest Plan represents the selected alternative for managing the land and resources of the Jefferson National Forest. Documentation of this Forest Plan's environmental impacts is contained in the accompanying Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This Forest Plan is the result of extensive analysis and considerations. The planning process, analysis procedures used, and other alternatives considered in developing this Forest Plan are described or referenced in the EIS.

This Forest Plan provides general, program-level direction for projects and activities on the five ranger districts of the Forest. Activities and projects will be implemented to carry out direction in this Plan. These site-specific projects will be tiered to the accompanying Environmental Impact Statement as provided for in 40 CFR 1502.20. All must meet certain legal requirements discussed in Chapter 5 of this document.

**Summary of Analysis of the Management Situation**

The Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) for the National Forests is a determination of the forest's ability to supply goods and services in response to society's demand. The AMS provides a basis for determining the need for change in the existing Forest Plan direction and formulating a broad range of reasonable alternatives. The AMS was completed in August 1996, and a few of the important findings are:

- ▶ **Land Allocations:** Management areas in the 1985 Forest Plan are not designed to represent ecological and social differences across the Forest. Land allocations in the Revision will be clearly linked to physical, biological, and social conditions on the ground. These land allocations need to be applied across the landscape to achieve desired conditions that take into account management practices and intensities. Land allocations need to be coordinated across national forest boundaries.
- ▶ **Biological Diversity:** The 1985 Forest Plan recognized the importance of maintaining biological diversity by providing a variety of habitat components. The Plan called for maximum dispersal of vegetative age classes. The Revision, through more specific land allocations, will focus on the spatial relationship of different habitat components as opposed to the concept of maximum dispersal. Designations of rare communities and other special biological areas are important needs for change to ensure conservation of species, as well as adoption of recovery and conservation plans for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. The 1985 Plan identified featured species which over-represented game species and early successional wildlife. The Revision will develop an array of management indicator species that represent a broader range of species and habitats.
- ▶ **Ecosystem Restoration:** The Revision will emphasize restoration of damaged ecosystems, natural disturbance regimes, old growth areas, watersheds, and air quality. The Revision needs to consider the effects of wildland fire, prescribed fire, non-native invasive species, native and non-native insects and diseases, and air pollution on forest ecosystem health.
- ▶ **Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Backcountry Recreation:** The Revision needs to consider additional wilderness study recommendations and eligibility of Forest streams for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. The Revised Plan needs to provide further emphasis and protection for backcountry areas on the Forest that are not recommended for wilderness.
- ▶ **Scenery:** The 1985 Plan was developed using the Visual Management System. The Revision needs to reflect the new Scenery Management System. One of the key

changes in the new system is the increased emphasis on scenery in backcountry areas, as opposed to the focus of the old system only along primary and secondary travelways.

- ▶ **Mount Rogers National Recreation Area:** The 1985 Forest Plan adopted the Mount Rogers NRA Final Management Plan (1980) as a separate management area. The Revision will more fully incorporate the NRA into the Forest Plan in accordance with its special designation and purpose. Special attention needs to be paid to the popular Crest Zone, incorporating the information and desires gathered through the Limits of Acceptable Change process.
- ▶ **Timber Production:** The Revision needs to reevaluate the quantity of timber allowed to be sold on the Forest, considering changes in demand for wood products and compatibility with other resources.
- ▶ **Oil and Gas Leasing:** Since the approval of the Forest Plan in 1985, the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987 was passed. The Revision needs to decide which lands are available for oil and gas leasing and which lands the Forest Service consents to lease in accordance with this Act.

RELATIONSHIP  
TO THE EIS

SUMMARY OF  
THE AMS

SUMMARY OF  
SIGNIFICANT  
ISSUES

## Summary of Significant Issues

Public involvement is a key part of the planning process. Our goals for public involvement associated with this planning process were: to ensure that all individuals and groups interested in or affected by the management of the Jefferson National Forest have the opportunity to be informed and participate in the revision process; to reach an informed understanding with the public of the varying interests; and to consider these interests in developing this revised plan.

Citizen comments were used to identify what direction management of the forest should take in the future, including what goods and services would be provided and what the environmental conditions should be. Many opportunities were provided for people to get involved in the planning process and to provide comments. Issues submitted by the public, as well as from within the Forest Service, guided the need to change current management strategies.

The first public scoping period for revision of the Jefferson Forest Plan began in June of 1993. Issues were determined from citizen meetings and written comments. The Forest began updating resource inventories. In February of 1994, the Regional Forester of the Southern Region decided to conduct the Southern Appalachian Assessment in order to support the revision of forest plans in the southern Appalachians. Along with the Jefferson National Forest, the Cherokee, Chattahoochee/Oconee, Sumter, and Alabama National Forests issued a new Notice of Intent in the Federal Register in August of 1996. The significant issues developed as a result of this public scoping period are as follows:

1. **Terrestrial Plants and Animals and their Associated Habitats.** How should the national forest retain/restore a diverse mix of terrestrial plant and animal habitat conditions while meeting public demands for a variety of wildlife values and uses?
2. **Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive/Locally Rare Species.** What levels of management are needed to protect and recover the populations of federally listed threatened, endangered, and proposed species? What level of management is needed for Forest Service sensitive and locally rare species?
3. **Old Growth.** The issue surrounding old growth has several facets, including: 1)

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**RELATIONSHIP  
TO THE EIS**

how much old growth is desired; 2) where should old growth occur; and 3) how should old growth be managed?

**SUMMARY OF  
SIGNIFICANT  
ISSUES**

4. **Riparian Area Management, Water Quality, and Aquatic Habitats.** What are the desired riparian ecosystem conditions within national forests, and how will they be identified, maintained, and/or restored? What management direction is needed to help ensure that the hydrologic conditions needed for the beneficial uses of water yielded by and flowing through national forest system lands are attained? What management is needed for the maintenance, enhancement, or restoration of aquatic habitats?
5. **Wood Products.** The issue surrounding the sustained yield production of wood products from national forest has several facets: 1) what are the appropriate objectives for wood product management; 2) where should removal of products occur, given that this production is part of a set of multiple-use objectives and cost effectiveness; 3) what should be the level of outputs of wood products; and 4) what management activities associated with the production of wood products are appropriate?
6. **Aesthetic/Scenery Management.** The issue surrounding the management of visual quality has two facets: 1) what are the appropriate landscape character goals for the national forests; and 2) what should be the scenic integrity objectives for the national forests?
7. **Recreation Opportunities/Experiences.** How should the increasing demand for recreational opportunities and experiences be addressed on the national forests while protecting forest resources? This includes considering a full range of opportunities for developed and dispersed recreation activities (such as nature study, hunting and fishing activities, and trail uses).
8. **Roadless Areas/Wilderness Management.** Should any of the roadless areas on national forest system lands be recommended for wilderness designation? For any roadless areas not recommended for wilderness, how should they be managed? How should areas recommended for wilderness designation be managed? How should the patterns and intensity of use, fire, and insects and diseases be managed in the existing wilderness areas?
9. **Forest Health.** What conditions are needed to maintain the ability of the forest to function in a sustainable manner as expected or desired? Of particular concern are the impacts of non-native species and the presence of ecological conditions with a higher level of insect and disease susceptibility.
10. **Special Areas and Rare Communities.** What special areas should be designated, and how should they be managed? How should rare communities, such as those identified in the Southern Appalachian Assessment, be managed?
11. **Wild and Scenic Rivers.** Which rivers are suitable for designation into the National Wild and Scenic River System, and how should rivers that are eligible, but not suitable, be managed?
12. **Access/Road Management.** How do we balance the rights of citizens to access their national forests with our responsibilities to protect and manage the soil and water resources, wildlife populations and habitat, aesthetics, forest health, and desired vegetative conditions?

13. **Minerals.** How will the mineral resources of the National Forests be managed, considering public demand for a wide variety of minerals? What areas will be made available for the exploration and development of federal leasable minerals and mineral materials?
14. **Special Uses.** How should the Forest Plan address special uses of the National Forest?
15. **Fire Management.** How will fire be used in land management activities such as wildlife management, fuels management, silviculture, and ecosystem restoration and maintenance? What measures should be taken to minimize air pollution impacts from prescribed fire?
16. **The JNF Effect On Local Communities & People's Effect On JNF.** What is the role of the Jefferson in supporting local communities in a changing economic environment? Can a balance be found between commodity-related jobs and tourism-based jobs and the amenity related values important to quality of life? How should the changing demographics, attitudes, and needs of people around the Jefferson National Forest be reflected in a changing mix of goods and services? How will management respond to the changes in population and social structures occurring within and adjacent to the national forest?
17. **Subsurface Property Rights.** How will subsurface property rights, reserved and outstanding, and mineral leases held by production be taken into consideration when looking at alternative land allocations?
18. **Mount Rogers National Recreation Area.** Considering the qualities of the area that established its special designation, what mix of goods and services are appropriate on the Mount Rogers NRA ? How should the Crest Zone be managed?
19. **Lands - Priorities For Acquisition, Deposition, And Exchange.** What are the priorities for land adjustments including acquisition, deposition, and exchange?
20. **Air Quality.** How will the revised Forest Plan guide monitoring and mitigation of air pollution effects on forest resources and facilitate interaction with the regulatory community? How will Forest management prescriptions (desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, and possible management practices) incorporate air pollution considerations?

RELATIONSHIP  
TO THE EIS

SUMMARY OF  
SIGNIFICANT  
ISSUES

RELATIONSHIP  
TO OTHER  
PLANS

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

Development of a Forest Plan occurs within the framework of the USDA Forest Service regional and national planning. The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act program sets the national direction and output levels for National Forest System Lands based on suitability and capability information from each Forest Service Region. Each Region disaggregated its share of the national production levels among Forests of the Region. This distribution is based on detailed, site-specific information gathered at the national forest level.

Each Forest Plan either validates or provides a basis for changing production levels assigned by the Region. Activities and projects are planned and carried out by each National Forest based on direction in the Forest Plan.

**RELATIONSHIP  
TO OTHER  
PLANS**

The George Washington and Jefferson National Forests were administratively combined in 1995. However, each National Forest continues to have its own Forest Plan. This Forest Plan only covers the Jefferson National Forest.

**STRUCTURE OF  
THE FOREST  
PLAN**

The Jefferson National Forest lies within the Southern Appalachians. In 1996, a Southern Appalachian Assessment was completed. Information from this analysis, which crosses State boundaries and involves multiple national forests including the Jefferson, along with the Cherokee National Forest in Tennessee, the Chattahoochee National Forest in Georgia, a portion of the Sumter National Forest in South Carolina, and a portion of the National Forests of Alabama. The Southern Appalachian Assessment was used by these national forests to facilitate the forest planning process.

**FOREST INFOR-  
MATION**

## STRUCTURE OF THE FOREST PLAN

This Forest Plan is based on a subdivision of the Forest into Management Areas, which are based on watershed, ecological, biological, and socio-economic factors. Each Management Area is allocated to management prescriptions designed to specifically address citizen and management issues and concerns, relative to the capability and suitability of lands for various resource activities. Each management prescription is focused on the desired condition of the land, and provides for multiple uses, resources, services, and values. Each National Forest in the Southern Appalachians has similar management prescriptions adjusted to fit local conditions and issues.

The map accompanying this Forest Plan displays the boundaries of the management areas and the allocation of the management prescriptions. This map was generated using a Geographic Information System accurate to a scale of  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch to one mile, therefore the boundaries displayed on this map can be assumed to vary on the ground up to 500 feet in any direction.

**Chapter 2, Forest-wide Direction** describes Forest-wide goals, objectives, and standards.

**Chapter 3, Management Prescriptions** describe desired conditions, objectives, and standards for specific land allocations.

**Chapter 4, Management Area Direction** displays the distribution of land allocations by geographic areas of the Forest, and describes local conditions, as well as additional objectives and standards.

**Chapter 5, Implementation of the Plan** contains information on how the Forest Plan will be implemented, details the requirements for monitoring and evaluating the Forest Plan, discusses how amendments or revisions will occur, and displays budget projections.

**Appendices** contain additional detailed information relating to the Forest Plan.

## FOREST INFORMATION

The Jefferson National Forest extends over 200 miles along the Appalachian Mountains of southwestern Virginia, slightly extending into West Virginia and Kentucky. The area includes an approximate total of 723,300 acres, of which almost 19,000 are in Monroe County, West Virginia and almost 1,000 acres are in Letcher County, Kentucky. The Jefferson National Forest contains the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area and four Ranger Districts: Clinch, Glenwood, New Castle, and New River Valley. The Jefferson National Forest was administratively combined with the George Washington National Forest in 1995.

The National Forest is located in the Blue Ridge, Central Ridge and Valley, and Cumberland Plateau physiographic provinces, providing habitat for a wide variety of species including at least 70 amphibian and reptiles, 180 species of birds, 60 species of mammals, and 100 species of freshwater fishes and mussels. Thirty-five of the plants and animals species found on or near the Forest are listed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as threatened or endangered. The Forest affords excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing, as well as hunting and fishing.

The Jefferson National Forest is a part of the Appalachian Hardwood Forest which is located within the Eastern Deciduous Forest Province. There are over 60 tree species represented on the National Forest. Hardwood-dominated forest types comprise over 70 percent of the acreage. There is much variation in the vegetation and many natural changes are taking place as forest succession progresses.

The Forest is located within seven major river basins -- the James, Roanoke, New (Kanawha), Big Sandy, Holston, Cumberland, and Clinch/Powell (Upper Tennessee) Rivers. The Forest contains 1,053 miles of perennial streams, of which over 500 miles are trout waters. At least 11 communities use water from the Forest for all or part of their water supplies.

The Forest transportation network has nearly 1,202 miles of National Forest System Roads which range from paved highways to non-surfaced roads designed for high clearance vehicles. Many of these roads are available for pleasure driving, the removal of forest products, bicycling and scenic viewing. Interstate 81 and other federal and State highways cross or adjoin the National Forest. The National Forest is also traversed by the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Developed recreation opportunities are offered at over 100 sites on the Forest. The Forest has over 1,100 miles of hiking trails, including about 320 miles of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and seven National Recreation Trails. The Forest manages 11 Wildernesses totaling approximately 57,800 acres.





Photo by Carol Hardy

The Jefferson National Forest protects or actively restores habitat for all native plants and animals with an emphasis on rare species.