

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Amendment of Land and Resource Management Plans in the Southwestern Region

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Revised notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Southwestern Region of the Forest Service is preparing an environmental impact statement on a proposal to amend National Forest land and resource management plans to incorporate standards and guidelines for management of habitat for American peregrine falcon, Little Colorado River spinedace, loach minnow, spikedace, Apache trout, Chihuahua chub, Gila trout, Gila top minnow, razorback sucker, southwest willow flycatcher, cactus ferruginous pygmy owl, Sonora tiger salamander, New Mexico ridgenose rattlesnake, and Pima pineapple cactus. The amendment would add new standards and guidelines that are intended to strengthen and clarify existing direction for the protection of these species. The amendment would apply to all subsequent project-level resource management decisions that involve site-specific environmental analysis and appropriate public involvement. The Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement was published in the **Federal Register** on Monday, June 1, 1998 (63 FR 29692-29695). The Notice announced that a draft environmental impact statement would be available for review in August 1998, and a final environmental impact statement would be available for review in December 1998. The draft environmental impact statement is now expected to be available in December 1999 and a final environmental impact statement should be available by March 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Director of Ecosystem Analysis and Planning, 517 Gold Ave. SW, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102, (505) 842-3251.

Dated: September 21, 1999.

James T. Gladen,

Acting Regional Forester.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Wasatch-Cache National Forest, UT

AGENCY: Forest Service.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement in conjunction with revision of the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest located in Box Elder, Cache, Davis, Duchesne, Morgan, Rich, Salt Lake, Summit, Tooele, Wasatch, and Weber counties, Utah; and Uinta County, Wyoming.

SUMMARY: the Department of Agriculture, Forest Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement in conjunction with a revision of the Land and Resource Management Plan (hereinafter referred to as Forest Plan) for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest.

This notice describes the needs for change identified to this point in the current Forest Plan to be revised, estimated dates for filing the Environmental Impact Statement, information concerning public participation, and the names and addresses of the agency officials who can provide additional information. The purpose of the notice is to begin the scoping phase of public involvement in the revision process.

DATES: Comments concerning the intent to prepare a revised Forest Plan should be received in writing by November 1, 1999. The agency expects to file a Draft Environmental Impact Statement in June of 2000 and a Final Environmental Impact Statement in the December of 2000.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to: Bernie Weingardt, Forest Supervisor, Wasatch-Cache National Forest, 8236 Federal Building, 125 South State Street, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84138.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Melissa Blackwell, Planning Team Leader, Wasatch-Cache National Forest (801) 524-3907.

Responsible official: Jack Blackwell, Intermountain Regional Forester, at 324 25th Street, Ogden, UT 84401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to part 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 219.10 (f) and (g), the Regional Forester for the Intermountain Region gives notice of the agency's intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the revision of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. According to 36 CFR 219.10(g), Land and Resource Management Plans shall

ordinarily be revised on a 10- to 15-year cycle. The existing Forest Plan for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest was approved on September 4, 1985.

The Regional Forester gives notice that the Wasatch-Cache National Forest is beginning an environmental analysis and decision-making process for the proposed programmatic action to revise the Wasatch-Cache Forest Plan. Opportunities will be provided to discuss the Forest Plan revision with the public. The public is invited to help identify issues that will be considered in defining the range of alternatives in the Environmental Impact Statement.

Forest plans describe the long-term direction for managing National Forests. Agency decisions in these plans do the following:

- Establish multiple-use goals and objectives (36 CFR 219.11);
- Establish forest-wide management requirements (standards and guidelines);
- Establish management areas and management area direction through the application of management prescriptions;
- Identify lands not suited for timber production (36 CFR 219.3);
- Establish monitoring and evaluation requirements; and
- Recommend areas for official designation of wilderness.

The authorization of project-level activities on the Forest occurs through project, or site-specific, decision-making. Project level decisions must comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures and must include a determination that the project is consistent with the Forest Plan.

Need for Change in the Current Forest Plan

The Forest completed a monitoring report in 1992. The results of the monitoring report, in addition to public input and Forest Plan implementation experience, indicated that there is a need for change in some management direction in the Forest Plan. Several sources were used in determining the needed changes in the current Forest Plan. These sources include:

- Comments received from employees who have been implementing the Plan.
- Findings from the Forest Plan monitoring report;
- Comparison of regulatory, manual, and handbook requirements with current Plan direction;
- National direction, policy and initiatives;
- New information from research, and
- Public comments received regarding the findings in the

Preliminary Analysis of the Management Situation.

Preliminary Analysis of the Management Situation

In April, 1999, the Wasatch-Cache National Forest published Preliminary Analysis of the Management Situation (PAMS). The PAMS summarized the current management and resource conditions of the Forest, outlined a new ecosystem management framework for the Forest Plan, and disclosed eight significant "needs for change" forest managers and resource specialists identified. The PAMS was mailed and distributed to nearly 500 interested individuals, non-government organizations, city, county, state and other federal agencies. A series of 11 information forums were held that over 200 people attended. Public comments were encouraged regarding the findings disclosed in the PAMS. The Forest Supervisor has identified two additional "needs for change" that will be included in the revision of the Forest Plan. The "needs for change" topics include:

1. Watershed Health

- Need to set objectives and direction for using a watershed approach to land management planning and watershed restoration.
- Need to develop watershed health goals for management areas.
- Need to set direction for establishing priority watersheds for restoration and for setting individual project priorities within watersheds.
- Need to set direction for protection of forest wetland.

2. Biodiversity and Viability

- Need to use the broader approach as identified in the ecosystem management framework based on research and new best science.
- Need to develop direction for habitat connectivity, links between landscapes, corridors, habitat edge, and horizontal and vertical diversity (structural stages).
- Need to develop forest management direction that address appropriate stocking levels, stand structure, and species composition that incorporates the extent and frequency of all types of disturbances.
- Need for guidance on the use of native plant species (including the collection of seed) in revegetation and/or rehabilitation activities on the forest.
- Need to consider and recognize the frequency, size, intensity and severity of disturbance processes in determining vegetative conditions and how management practices have altered

them. The positive effects of prescribed fire and wildland fire use also needs to be recognized.

- Need for management direction that addresses important soil processes (erosion rates, mass stability, infiltration, nutrient cycling, etc.) as they relate biological diversity.
- Need for snag and coarse woody debris guidance that help maintain ecosystem structure and function. Guidance needs to develop and refine information to ensure an adequate diversity of size and decay class of snags and coarse woody debris.
- Need to develop management direction that describes desired structure and density for each structural stage, from opening to mature and old growth.
- Need to provide integrated management guidance and direction for species and communities in which they occur (the whole instead of pieces). This includes TES, Fish and Wildlife Service candidate species, species (and habitats) at risk, MIS, and other rare and unique plant, fish and animal species.

3. Road/Trail/Access Management

- Need to incorporate goals and direction of the new transportation policy as appropriate.
- Need for the appropriate forest road system to be a primary component of the desired future for a management area.
- Need goals to achieve an integrated transportation system with multiple functions not serving a single resource need.
- Need adaptive standards for road construction rather than a static, outdated list.
- Need to delete road density standards as a stand-alone requirement, rather use them as a component of desired future.
- Need to delete specific travel management guidelines and establish criteria (standards) for making future site-specific travel management decisions.

4. Recreation Niche

- Need to address the trends in population growth and how the Wasatch-Cache can best meet growing demands for outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Need to provide guidance for resource use preference within a management area or prescription area.
- Need to determine the Wasatch-Cache niche as a outdoor recreation provider.
- Need to address management of dispersed recreation in order to sustain healthy eco-systems.

5. Wild and Scenic Rivers

- Need to provide for interim protection of eligible segment values until suitability studies are completed. Suitability will not be addressed in the Forest plan revision.

6. Roadless Areas/Wilderness Recommendations

- Need to make wilderness recommendation for roadless areas thought to be appropriate addition.
- Need to develop management direction to protect roadless values where appropriate.

7. Appropriate Timberlands

- Need to reassess tentatively suited/unsuited lands for timber production.
- Need to incorporate new standards and guidelines added for sensitive species habitat (e.g. northern goshawk).
- Need to address correction of growth and yield errors identified in the 5 year monitoring report.

8. Rangeland Capability and Suitability

- Need to reassess rangeland capability.
- Need to reassess rangeland suitability.

9. Research Natural Areas

- Need to identify potential areas in the Forest that could contribute to diversity within the RNA system in Utah.

10. Oil and Gas Leasing

- Need to make leasing decisions for the portion of the north slope of the Uinta Mountains which was not decided in the 1994 Forest Plan amendment.

More detailed information on the "need for change" topics is available upon request.

Programmatic Proposed Action

At this early stage in the revision process, the proposed action consists of these elements: (1) Proposed forestwide goals and monitoring; and (2) management prescription maps and highlights of 36 management areas. Details of the proposed action are available upon request. The proposed action is also available on the forest website at www.fs.fed.us/wcnf.

Framework for Alternatives To Be Considered

Through a range of alternatives economic and social community stability will be considered in revising the Forest Plan. The alternatives will address different options to resolve the issues identified in the revision topics listed above. Alternatives must meet the

purpose and need for revision to be considered valid. One of the alternatives to be examined is the "no-action alternative." This is a required alternative that represents continuation of management under the 1985 Forest Plan, as amended. Alternatives are developed in response to public issues, management concerns, and resource opportunities identified during the scoping process. In describing alternatives, desired vegetation and resource conditions will be defined.

Involving the Public

The Forest Service is seeking information and comments from individuals, organizations and federal, state, and local agencies who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action (36 CFR 219.6).

Public participation will be solicited by notifying in person and/or by mail, known interested and affected publics. News releases will be used to give the public general notice, and public involvement opportunities will be offered at various locations. Public participation activities may include written comments, open houses, focus groups and collaborative forums.

Public participation will be sought throughout the revision process and will be especially important at several points along the way. The first formal opportunity to comment is during the scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7). Public open houses are scheduled in four communities at the following locations and dates.

October 12—Weber County Library, 131 South 7400 East, Huntsville, Utah, 4:00–7:00 p.m.

October 13—Salt Lake City-County Building, 451 South State Street, Salt Lake City, 4:00–7:00 p.m.

October 14—Logan Ranger District Office, 1500 East Highway 89, Logan, Utah, 4:00–7:00 p.m.

October 19—School Board Room, 129 2nd Street, Mountain View, Wyoming, 5:00–8:00 p.m.

Release and Review of the EIS

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public comment in June of 2000. At that time, the EPA will publish a notice of availability in the **Federal Register**. The comment period on the Draft EIS will be at least 90 days from the date the EPA publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**, as required by the planning regulations.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings

related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of the Draft EIS must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions; *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the DEIS stage but are not raised until after completion of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) may be waived or dismissed by the courts; *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the comment period so that substantive comments and objectives are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the Final EIS.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed programmatic actions, comments on the Draft EIS should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the Draft EIS or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statements. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

After the comment period ends on the Draft EIS, comments will be analyzed, considered, and responded to by the Forest Service in preparing the Final EIS. The Final EIS is scheduled to be completed in December of 2000. The responsible official will consider the comments, responses, and environmental consequences discussed in the Final EIS, and applicable laws, regulations, and policies in making decisions regarding the revision. The responsible official will document the decisions and reasons for the decisions in a Record of Decision for the revised plan. The decisions will be subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR part 217. Jack A. Blackwell, Intermountain Regional Forester, is the responsible official for this EIS.

Dated: September 21, 1999.

Pam Gardiner,

Deputy Wasatch-Cache Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Transfer of Administrative Jurisdiction; Willow Island Locks and Dam Project, Wayne National Forest, Ohio

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of land interchanges.

SUMMARY: On July 27, 1998, and July 6, 1999, the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of Agriculture, respectively, signed a joint interchange order authorizing the transfer of administrative jurisdiction of 63.12 acres, more or less, lying within the Wayne National Forest in Washington County, Ohio, from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of the Army. Furthermore, the order transfers from the Department of the Army to the Department of Agriculture 23.74 acres, more or less, lying adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Wayne National Forest, Washington County, Ohio, for inclusion in the Wayne National Forest. The 45-day Congressional oversight requirement of the Act of July 26, 1956 (70 Stat. 656; 16 U.S.C. 505a, 505b) has been met. A copy of the Joint Order, as signed, and Exhibits A, B, and C, which describe the lands and interests therein being conveyed, are set out at the end of this notice.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The order is effective September 28, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: David M. Sherman, Lands Staff, Forest Service, USDA, PO Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090–6090, Telephone: (202) 205–1362.

Dated: September 3, 1999.

Gloria Manning,

Associate Deputy Chief, National Forest System.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WILLOW ISLAND LOCKS AND DAM, WAYNE NATIONAL FOREST, WASHINGTON COUNTY, OHIO

Joint Order Interchanging Administrative Jurisdiction of Department of the Army Lands and National Forest Lands

By virtue of the authority vested in the Secretary of the Army and in the Secretary of Agriculture by the Act of July 26, 1956 (70