

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE REVISED FOREST PLAN

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### PURPOSE

This Revised National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan:

-Establishes natural resource management direction for the George Washington National Forest (the Forest) for the next 10 to 15 years. Forest multiple use goals and objectives are contained in Chapter 2. Forest standards are listed under "Common Standards" in Chapter 3.

-Explains, issue-by-issue, how the Revised Plan responds to issues that evolved from concerns of the public, concerns of other agencies, and concerns of Forest staff - Chapter 2.

-Summarizes the management situation in terms of the existing resource conditions and the potential for resource development including the anticipated demand for goods and services from the Forest - Chapter 2.

-Allocates twenty-four roadless areas to management areas which permit a range of uses - Chapter 2 and the management area map for Alternative 8A.

-Specifies what we would like the Forest to be -- physically, biologically -- as we work toward resolution of the issues. Chapter 3 presents each management area and the standards that apply. This chapter includes objectives designed to move the Forest toward its desired future condition.

-Determines what lands are available for leasable mineral development based on the objectives and desired future condition of different management areas - Management Area Standards in Chapter 3.

-Specifies how the Revised Plan will be put into practice - Implementation in Chapter 4. Specifies timetables for reviewing the Revised Plan, for updating it, for amending or revising it - Chapter 4.

-Establishes a quality control system that determines how well direction in the Revised Plan is carried out and determines the accuracy of outputs and effects projected in the Revised Plan - Monitoring and Evaluation in Chapter 5.

-Identifies land that is suitable for timber production - Appendix A. The National Forest Management Act requires that "scheduled timber

sales" using even-aged and uneven-aged regeneration harvest methods be limited to lands that are classified as suitable for timber production.

-Establishes the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) and the Timber Sale Schedule - Appendix A. The allowable sale quantity is the most timber volume that can be harvested during any decade on lands that are classified as suitable for timber production.

The National Forest Management Act, the Code of Federal Regulations, and other guiding documents determined the content of this Revised Plan. Land allocations and standards set forth here constitute the management direction the Forest will follow. The projected levels of forest products and services offered, however, and the associated time frames are dependent on the amount of the budget allocated to the Forest annually.

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## **RELATIONSHIP TO EIS**

This Revised Plan is a detailed description of the Forest Service preferred alternative. The procedures used in developing the Revised Plan and in analyzing all alternatives are described or referenced in the accompanying Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Revised Plan incorporates management direction from four other environmental impact statements:

- Final Environmental Impact Statement for Suppression of Southern Pine Beetle (USDA Forest Service - Southern Region, April 1987)
- Final Environmental Impact Statement as Supplemented [in] 1985-USDA Gypsy Moth Suppression and Eradication Projects (1985);
- Final Environmental Impact Statement-Appalachian Integrated Pest Management (AIPM)-Gypsy Moth Demonstration Project (1989);
- Final Environmental Impact Statement - Vegetation Management in the Appalachian Mountains [USDA Forest Service - Southern Region, July 1989] as supplemented (October, 2002.)

The Revised Plan provides general, program-level direction for projects and activities on the six ranger districts of the Forest. All must meet certain legal requirements that are discussed in Chapter 4 of this document.

**SPECIAL USES AND  
ACCESS EASEMENTS**

235. Existing needed authorizations can continue. Authorizations that expire are reviewed for compliance with management area objectives prior to either extending or issuing a new authorization.

236. Each new request is evaluated on a case-by-case basis for consistency with management area objectives and public need.

237. Authorizations are not granted when suitable alternative facilities can be secured.

238. Expanded use of existing facilities is preferred over development of new facilities.

239. Recreation residences are not allowed.

**THREATENED,  
ENDANGERED AND  
SENSITIVE SPECIES**

240. A biological evaluation of how a project may affect any species Federally listed as threatened, endangered, or proposed, or identified by the Forest Service as sensitive shall be done as part of the site-specific environmental analysis. This evaluation considers available information on threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species populations and their habitat for the proposed treatment area.

241. Requirements and measures for activities affecting threatened or endangered species are detailed in species recovery plans and FSH 2609.23R. Recovery plans have been prepared for the eastern cougar, Virginia northern flying squirrel, bald eagle, American peregrine falcon, shale barren rockcress, swamp pink, James spinymussel, Indiana bat, and Virginia big-eared bat. A recovery plan is pending final approval for northeastern bulrush. A chapter in FSH 2609.23R has been prepared for the bald eagle.

242. If, either with or without informal consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service, it is determined that a proposed project would not affect federal designated threatened or endangered species, the concurrence of the FWS is not required. If it is determined that a proposed project would have beneficial, insignificant or discountable effects to federal designated threatened or endangered species (the "not likely to adversely affect" determination under the Endangered Species Act), the concurrence of the FWS is required prior to making a project decision. If it is determined that a proposed project would have adverse effects to federal designated threatened or endangered species (the "may effect" determination under the ESA), formal consultation should be initiated and completed with the FWS prior to any decision to implement the project.

243. If it is determined that a project may have adverse effects to individual of a sensitive species, evaluate whether the overall species' survival or population viability on the planning unit, are at risk. Contact appropriate State agencies, Natural Heritage Programs, and other appropriate cooperators or species authorities to identify conservation measures that might be implemented. On the Forest it is recognized that individuals of a sensitive species may be affected but the goal is to prevent negative population trends that would result in Federal listing.

244. Stands that contain a red spruce component are managed to increase the red spruce component. In such an instance, the activities must comply with the recovery plan for the Virginia Northern flying squirrel.

245. The current list of Regional and Forest Sensitive Species is found in Appendix L of the Revised Plan. This list will be updated with additions and/or deletions annually.

246. Eagle nests are protected from disturbance with a minimum of a ½-mile buffer restricting management activity. Refer to the recovery plan for eagle for the specifics on the management in the ½-mile buffer.

TIMBER  
Suitability

247. Any projects involving regeneration harvesting are evaluated to determine if the proposed harvest units are located on lands suitable for timber production as identified in the Revised Plan. This evaluation is documented in the project-level environmental analysis document with a finding of suitability incorporated into the decision document.

248. Any projects involving regeneration harvesting on lands identified as unsuitable for timber production in the Revised Plan are evaluated to determine that (1) such harvesting is necessary to protect or enhance multiple use values other than timber production and (2) such harvesting is consistent with the management direction for the appropriate management area. The decision document contains this finding.

- Cooperative Agreement for Fish and Wildlife Management between the Forest and Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and West Virginia Department of Natural Resources

This Revised Plan supersedes the previous land and resource management plan approved for the Forest in 1986.

The Revised Plan incorporates Records of Decision for the following environmental documents:

- Final EIS on Vegetation Management in the Appalachian Mountains (1989) as supplemented (2002.)
- Final EIS for Suppression of Southern Pine Beetle (1987).
- Final EIS for Gypsy Moth Suppression and Eradication (1985).
- Final EIS for Appalachian Integrated Pest Management (1989).

Subject to existing rights, all other contracts (except as noted below for timber sale contracts) will be brought into compliance with the Revised Plan generally within three years after the Revised Plan is enacted or as otherwise specified in Forest Standards.

## **Timber**

All timber sales offered for sale will be in compliance with management direction in the Revised Plan. Timber sales under contract prior to issue of the Revised Plan will be administered under provisions of the existing contracts. Changes to existing timber sale contracts may be proposed on a case-by-case basis where over-riding resource considerations are present.

All reforestation, timber stand improvement and related silvicultural activities proposed will be in compliance with management direction in the Revised Plan. Existing contracts for nontimber sale silvicultural work issued prior to the approval of the Revised Plan will continue to be administered under provisions of the pre-existing contracts. Changes to pre-existing contracts may be made on a case-by-case basis when over-riding resource considerations exist. Ongoing silvicultural work being accomplished by Forest Service crews will immediately comply with direction upon approval of the Revised Plan.

## **Recreation**

Issue of new recreation special use permits or re-issue of existing annual recreation special use permits will be consistent with the management direction in the Revised Plan on the first issue or re-issue date following implementation of the Revised Plan.

Re-issue of existing term recreation special use permits will be consistent with management direction in the Revised Plan on the first re-issue date or the first proposed permit transfer date following implementation of the Revised Plan.

**Minerals**

New mineral lease applications, permits, contracts and operating plans will be evaluated for consistency with the Revised Plan as they are received or proposed. All existing permits and operating plans will be reviewed for consistency with the standards in the Revised Plan within three months. Operators and permittees will be notified of any necessary, appropriate modifications. The circumstances under which an operating plan can be modified are detailed in 36 CFR 228.

Minerals material sales now under contract will be administered under the provisions of the existing contracts. Changes to these may be proposed on a case-by-case basis where overriding resource protection considerations are present.

The Forest Service has no authority to modify stipulations attached to existing mineral leases.

**Lands**

Issue of new special use permits or reissue of existing special use permits will be consistent with management direction in the Revised Plan. Term permits will be consistent with management direction in the Revised Plan on the first re-issue date or the first proposed permit transfer date following implementation of the Revised Plan.

All future land ownership adjustment proposals will be evaluated for consistency with the Revised Plan as they are received or proposed.

**Facilities**

All new contracts for constructing or reconstructing facilities (including roads and buildings) will be in compliance with management direction in the Revised Plan. Any construction or reconstruction projects under contract prior to issue of the Revised Plan will be administered under provisions of the existing contracts. Changes to existing contracts may be proposed on a case-by-case basis where over-riding resource considerations are present.

**Range**

Issue of new term grazing permits or re-issue of existing term grazing permits will be consistent with Forest Plan direction on the first issue or re-issue date following implementation of the Revised Plan.

**Wildlife**

All Fish and Wildlife Projects included under the Sikes Agreement between the Forest and Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and West Virginia Department of Natural Resources will be consistent with management direction in the Revised Plan.