

Appendix C

Overview of Forest Plan Revision Process and Project Level Decision-making

Mark Twain National Forest Revised Forest Plan

Forest Plans set out management area prescriptions with standards and guidelines for future decision-making and are adjustable through amendment and revision. The Forest Plan management area prescriptions and forest-wide direction are the “zoning ordinances” under which future decisions are made. Forest Plan approval establishes multiple-use goals and objectives for the planning unit. Project decisions are not authorized, carried out, or funded by Forest Plan approval, amendment, or revision except as specifically authorized in the Record of Decision or Decision Notice.

The Forest Service Planning Handbook provides for systematic stepping down from the overall direction provided in the Forest Plan when making project or activity level decisions:

“Planning for units of the National Forest System involves two levels of decisions. The first is the development of a Forest Plan that provides direction for all resource management programs, practices, uses, and protection measures... The second level planning involves the analysis and implementation of management practices designed to achieve the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan. This level involves site-specific analysis to meet NEPA requirements for decisionmaking” (FSM 1922). Site-specific projects and activities are proposed, analyzed, and carried out within the framework of the Forest Plan.

In addition to consistency with the Forest Plan, each project must be in compliance with NEPA, CWA, CAA and other laws. Simply being consistent with the Forest Plan does not fulfill the site-specific requirements of Federal law. Project level analysis is to “determine findings for NFMA, to ensure compliance with NEPA, and to meet other appropriate laws and regulations.” (Forest Service Land and Resource Management Planning, FSM 1920 and Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, 5.31).

One of the laws with which site-specific projects must comply is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. Potential effects on TES will be analyzed in a Biological Evaluation for each site-specific project proposed to implement the Revised Forest Plan. Informal consultation will be conducted with USDI Fish and Wildlife Service for all proposed projects. Consultation for projects with a “No Effect” determination will be considered complete when the “no effect” determination is made. Concurrence from USDI Fish and Wildlife Service will be requested for all projects with determinations of “May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect” determinations, except those which are completed under the Alternative Consultation Agreement. Formal consultation will be requested for all projects with “May Affect – Likely to Adversely Affect” determinations.