

Forest Service Planning Rule
Tribal Workshops
Southwestern Region 3

Summary of Discussion

Facilitated and summarized by:

Lucy Moore
Lucy Moore Associates, Inc.
lucymoore@nets.com
505.820.2166

Dexter Albert
Intrinsic Consulting
dexter@intrinsicinfo.com
928.522.6015 – phone

US Forest Service, Southwestern Region 3 Tribal Workshops on the Forest Planning Rule

To afford tribal governments in this region an opportunity to learn about and comment on the Forest Planning Rule revision process, Regional Forester Corbin Newman invited the 55 tribes in the region to an informal conversation. This was not intended to be formal government-to-government consultation, but rather an additional forum where tribes and the Forest Service could exchange information and ideas, and where communication and collaboration could be realized. The points raised during these four workshops are summarized in the following document.

Southwestern Region 3 -- Tribal Workshops:

- April 27, 2010 Pojoaque, New Mexico
- April 28, 2010 Albuquerque, New Mexico
- April 28, 2010 Phoenix, Arizona
- April 29, 2010 Flagstaff, Arizona

This report covers the roundtable in Phoenix, AZ.

**FOREST PLAN RULE, SOUTHWESTERN REGION 3
TRIBAL WORKSHOP
Heard Museum, Phoenix, AZ
April 28, 2010**

Facilitator: Dexter Albert

Recorders: Yewah Lau & Jason Hurd

Tribal participant:

Sandra Miller, Dept. of Environmental Quality, Gila River Indian Community

Forest Service staff:

Gilbert Zepeda, Deputy Regional Forester, Southwestern Region

Dan Meza, Office of Tribal Relations Liaison, Southwestern Region

Craig Johnson, Tribal Liaison, Coconino NF

Christine Dawe, FS Region 3, AZ State Liaison

Yewah Lau, Forest Planner, Coconino National Forest

Regis Terney, Forest Service, Environmental Management, Washington, DC

Discussion:

Consultation: Sandra suggested that federal agencies work together to make the consultation process more efficient and share information across jurisdictions. Perhaps agencies could even have the same policy for consultation. She also asked which tribes are consulted – those adjacent to forest lands, or more? The Deputy Regional Forester answered that consultation is initiated with all 55 tribes in the Region. Although Sandra does not work directly with the Forest Service, her understanding is that federal agencies, in general, plan projects and implement them regardless of tribal concerns. It seems to her that priority is given to recreational, economic and timber interests, and that cultural concerns get little attention. Nationally, she felt, federal agencies have little concept of the size and scope of tribal lands.

She added that letters are not an effective way of consulting, and that the Forest Service should put the same effort into tribal consultation that is put into consulting with other agencies and with states. The personal touch is very important. Additionally, when the agency sends written materials to tribes she advised sending directly to appropriate individuals within tribal departments.

Sandra suggested holding a roundtable once a year with tribes. Tribes, and the Gila River Indian Community in particular, want to be at the table and appreciate the opportunity this meeting offers. Sandra also cautioned that perceived animosity or disrespect can lead to tribes' closing doors.

Look to other models: Sandra suggested that the Forest Service look to other agencies for guidance in developing a successful planning role.

EPA project manager visits once or twice a year and has several conference calls a year to stay in touch with local issues. The importance of in-person visits cannot be overemphasized. Some tribes have entered into an MOA with Arizona Game and Fish Department to share resources to get animal counts across jurisdiction and wildlife corridors. This is an important step since tribes are often hesitant to work with state agencies for fear of compromising tribal sovereignty and losing control of data collected on tribal lands.

Cultural considerations: Tribes have a great desire and need for relationships with the federal government that are respectful of tribal history and culture. Many, said Sandra, have concerns about development on lands around the reservation. They value open space and want to maintain views of the mountains and walk along the river, even if the river will never come back. It is important to have these values considered. Cultural leaders, spiritual leaders, and elders hold scientific knowledge equal to western PhDs, and should be respected as such. It is important, she added, for agencies to understand that the cultural needs and the resources available for tribes differ widely throughout the region and the country. Sandra added that tribal data can be sensitive and needs to be handled that way.

Climate change: Sandra said that fires seem to be more frequent. She also said there is more dust than there used to be, and the tribe is in conflict with neighbors who complain about the dust coming from the tribal agricultural fields.

Being a good host: As tribes do, federal agencies should offer refreshments at their meetings. People often have to travel long distances and it means a lot to be offered something.

Collaboration and all-lands approach: Sandra urged increased focus on the inter-connectedness of jurisdictions and an awareness of impacts across boundaries and downstream. Some of the common issues that could benefit from an all-lands approach are prevention and control of wildfires, eradication of invasive species, and protection of wildlife and their corridors. She suggested regular meetings among jurisdictions to keep communications open and to identify how to help each other. Tribes are stretched thin in terms of resources and are always open to new opportunities to collaborate to achieve mutual goals. Joint trainings that include both federal agency and tribal staff can benefit both. The federal government should help tribes build needed capacity and encourage resource sharing.

She also recommended joint proactive planning for lands across jurisdictional boundaries, rather than leaving tribes to react to projects already proposed. An initiative that would lend itself to an all-lands approach is eradication of invasive species, such as the Salt Cedar in many riparian areas. She suggested that the Gila River Indian Community's master land use plan be considered in regional planning efforts and that jurisdictions coordinate their plans and planning processes.

The Gila River Indian Community has just created a Natural Resources Department, which is now coordinating land use with the tribal Department of Environmental Quality. Sandra added that the tribe did not want endangered species issues imposed on them.

Other issues:

Urban rural interface: Gila River in particular suffers impacts from clashes between community development and agricultural lands as well as competition for water resources.

Sustainable building: Sandra said that tribes need to learn more about sustainable building practices.

[summary prepared by Lucy Moore. Please contact her with comments or questions. 505-820-2166, or lucymoore@nets.com]