

## Draft All-Lands Approach for the Proposed Forest Service Planning Rule

America's watersheds, wildlife, water resources, and wild lands exist not only within national forest and grassland boundaries but across broad landscapes of varying ownerships and jurisdictions. All national forests and grasslands are connected in some way to lands beyond their jurisdictional boundaries. The threats facing National Forest System (NFS) lands, like fire, insects and disease, air pollution, and drought don't recognize property boundaries. Nor do many of the species dependent on NFS lands, or the benefits coming from them like water, and clean air.

These realities lead us to the conclusion that NFS managers and the 2011 planning rule must take an all-lands approach to planning, in order to understand the unique role each unit plays (ecologically, socially, and economically) within the broader landscape, how threats and resources are crossing boundaries, how pressures and management of surrounding lands may impact resources or activity on NFS lands, and how each unit's management plan could be revised or amended as a result.

It is important to note that this approach does **not** mean that NFS managers would seek to direct or control management of non-NFS lands. Nor does it mean that NFS managers would conform management to meet non-NFS goals. It does mean that NFS managers would seek to ground planning and management of each unit in an understanding of the roles, values and contributions of NFS lands within a broader, all lands context.

### How would an all-lands approach work?

An all-lands approach to [assessment](#) would feature [collaboration](#), engaging the public early and often to build a common understanding of the roles, values and contributions of NFS lands within the broader landscape. This phase would include evaluation of existing assessments to understand the condition and trends of natural resources across the region, social/economic indicators in the relevant landscapes, and the management intentions of neighboring landowners. Examples of existing assessments or plans which responsible officials might review include: state forest resource assessments, state wildlife assessments, regional scientific assessments, regional types and availability of recreational access, state and local government plans, and tribal management plans.

Also in this phase, responsible officials may assess how and where stressors and resources cross ownership boundaries: for example, the assessments may review fire conditions across boundaries, how water moves across the landscape, where critical wildlife corridors exist, or where invasive species or outbreaks of disease are occurring. New social, economic and ecological assessments that set the context for planning may be prepared if necessary for moving forward with the planning process and subject to available funds.

It is important to note that the goal of these assessments would **not** be to conduct an exhaustive review or take on a huge new research and assessment agenda – taken too far, this new approach could overwhelm managers and the public. The goal is to implement a workable, practical, and achievable approach to understanding and grounding management within the broader all-lands

context. Managers of each unit would work with the public to identify what assessments and contextual understanding are the most important and could be the most useful in informing the need for and direction of proposed plan amendments or revisions.

Based on the information from the assessments, the responsible official, engaging the public, would identify the unit's unique role and contributions within the landscape context and potential areas for plan revisions or amendment as a result.

When [revising, and in some cases, amending](#) land management plans, the responsible official would consider the knowledge gained in the assessment phase and would work with the public to revise or amend management plans. This phase would include the creation of proposed actions and alternatives in accordance with NEPA and APA, with managers building on relationships developed in the assessment phase to actively engage the public early and often. In this phase, the unit would identify goals, objectives, and requirements based on managing for the critical roles, contributions, and values of the unit within the landscape. For example, a plan might describe how the unit will contribute to a regional recovery plan for a far ranging threatened species like the grizzly bear; it might provide guidance for sustainable recreational access based on an understanding of demand in the region; or it might characterize the kinds of areas that might be the highest priority for projects or activities such as hazardous fuel reduction treatments.

[Monitoring](#) in the all-lands context means that monitoring plans would 1) take into account regional data to understand impacts to and changes on the unit, 2) seek to contribute to monitoring goals for the broader landscape. Unit-level monitoring would be focused on detecting changes on the unit and determining how well the land management plan is being implemented and how effective management actions are in achieving objectives and moving toward desired conditions. Each NFS unit would be responsible for creating and implementing the unit-level monitoring plan, in conjunction with partners and scientists. NFS unit supervisors would participate in landscape-scale monitoring plans and strategies, which may be developed collaboratively by one or more regional foresters, Forest Service research station directors, other government entities, private landowners, and others, and would be designed to detect changes caused by stressors outside the control of an individual NFS units. Landscape level and unit level monitoring would complement each other and would be focused on questions related to land management plan implementation.

### **What are the benefits of this approach?**

(1) The all-lands approach will increase mutual understanding of complex issues across landscapes as well as regional conditions and trends.

(2) The all-lands approach will ground planning and management of each unit in an understanding of the roles, values and contributions of NFS lands within the context of the broader landscape.

(3) The all-lands approach will foster up-front collaboration that engages the Forest Service with local, state, tribal, and other Federal government agencies as well as with private landowners and citizens groups to build relationships and common understanding BEFORE the NEPA process for plan amendment or revision even begins.

### **Could “all-lands” planning affect private property or other landowner rights or plans?**

The Forest Service only makes decisions about management on National Forest System lands – period.

But, management on National Forest System lands will be enhanced by understanding and considering the plans and goals for private, tribal, state, and other surrounding lands. Where there are goals in common, such as providing for healthy watersheds, managing wildfire, controlling the spread diseases and pests, management of the unit may be able to complement or contribute to shared goals. Where management goals are unrelated, different or in conflict, management of the unit can be informed by activity outside the unit boundaries. By looking at the larger picture, managers can better understand how management choices and actions on and off NFS lands relate to the condition of resources on the unit, the role of the unit in providing certain values, and the actions needed to contribute to or achieve identified objectives and goals on and off the unit.

Again, this approach does **not** mean that NFS managers would seek to direct or control management of non-NFS lands. Nor does it mean that NFS managers would conform management to meet non-NFS goals. It does mean that NFS managers would seek to ground planning and management of each unit in an understanding of the roles, values and contributions of NFS lands within a broader, all lands context.

### **So, what’s the catch?**

An all-lands approach is a broader scale than typically undertaken by the Forest Service in land management planning. Realistically, the level of collaboration necessary will require additional time, resources, and training to achieve; it will also generate challenges to overcome barriers and improve levels of trust. Assessments and monitoring across landscapes will likely require adjustments in models, maps, and scientific tools and data. Unit managers will need to work with partners and the public to make sure that this approach remains focused, practical, and achievable. However, investing in collaboration and an all-lands approach can also help land management planning become more effective, efficient, and sustainable, and we believe it is a critical part of responsible stewardship of the National Forest System into the future.