

Planning Rule Team Draft Document: The ideas in this paper are preliminary recommendations by the planning rule team as of 7/28/10. These ideas are for discussion purposes and do not constitute any commitments, approvals or decisions by agency leadership.

Planning Rule Blog Post on Climate Change

as posted at <http://planningrule.blogs.usda.gov/> on 07/28/10

The Forest Service has been committed to understanding and responding to climate change for many years. The recently published “Forest Service Roadmap for Responding to Climate Change” (<http://www.fs.fed.us/climatechange/pdf/roadmap.pdf>) and the accompanying scorecard (http://www.fs.fed.us/climatechange/pdf/performance_scorecard_final.pdf) affirm our commitment to playing a leadership role in climate change adaptation and mitigation, and make the Forest Service better able to bring science and technology into play in order to assess, adapt to and mitigate climate change. As a measure of this goal, National Forests will use the roadmap and scorecard to adapt and manage for climate change across the landscape. The climate change scorecard addresses agency capacity, partnerships, mitigation, and adaptation. These tools will complement the 2011 planning rule and reinforce our commitment to work with our partners and stakeholders to make the nation’s forests and grasslands more resilient.

We recognize that understanding and responding to climate change will play a critical role in the future of land management and our implementation of the new planning framework, especially for maintaining or restoring ecosystem and watershed resilience and health; providing species diversity; and managing for threats and resources that cross ownership and management boundaries. Climate change is a systems driver that impacts stressors, and creates uncertainty about future conditions. Currently, the effects of a changing climate can be seen throughout the nation’s forests and grasslands. Examples of these changes include: longer and more severe fire seasons; reduced snowpack; earlier snowmelt; changes in stream flow patterns; a marked decrease in sap runs in sugar maple trees; shifts in the distribution of some tree species; and increasing stress on some native fish and wildlife species. Future plans will have to mitigate and adapt to these changes, using the framework to anticipate potential conditions or disturbances and respond to and incorporate new information or changing conditions.

We will need to understand more about climate change as a driver for ecological shifts and how changes in climate may impact ecosystem and watershed resilience, species and habitats, and the National Forest System’s ability to provide a range of values and benefits. We will need to understand the climate-related services, such as carbon sequestration and storage or habitat refuges and corridors, provided by each National Forest. Working with the public, we will need to assess ecological conditions and trends in a changing climate, using evolving models to predict possible changes and using monitoring to identify current conditions. We will need to be able to capture and incorporate rapidly changing data, models and information. We will also need to assess how climate-related changes may impact neighboring communities or existing social or economic values.

Managers will work within the planning framework to integrate actions taken and information generated by implementation of the roadmap and scorecard. Likewise, information created throughout assessment, revision, and monitoring phases of the draft Planning Rule Framework

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will help the agency implement the roadmap and work with our partners and stakeholders to make the nation's forests and grasslands more resilient to climate change.

Please see the other blog entries, as well as the National Roadmap and Scorecard, for additional thoughts on integrating climate adaptation and mitigation into the 2011 planning rule. We look forward to your comments.

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