

APPENDIX A – PROPOSED PLANNING RULE

This is a pre-publication version of the proposed planning rule. There is a possibility of minor editorial differences from the published *Federal Register* copy.

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SUBPART A—NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LAND MANAGEMENT PLANNING

§ 219.1 PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY.

(a) This subpart sets out the planning requirements for developing, amending, and revising land management plans (also referred to as plans) for the National Forest System (NFS), as required by the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600 *et seq.*) (NFMA). This subpart also sets out the requirements for plan components and other content in land management plans. This part is applicable to all units of the NFS as defined by 16 U.S.C. 1609 or subsequent statute.

(b) Consistent with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. 528–531) (MUSYA), the Forest Service manages the NFS to sustain the multiple uses, including ecosystem services, of its renewable resources in perpetuity while maintaining the long-term health and productivity of the land. Resources are managed through a combination of approaches and concepts for the benefit of human communities and natural resources. Land management plans guide sustainable, integrated resource management of the resources within the plan area in the context of the broader landscape, giving due consideration to the relative values of the various resources in particular areas.

(c) The objective of this part is to guide the collaborative and science-based development, amendment, and revision of land management plans that promote healthy, resilient, diverse, and productive national forests and grasslands. Plans will guide management of NFS lands so that they are ecologically sustainable and contribute to social and economic sustainability, with resilient ecosystems and watersheds, diverse plant and animal communities, and the capacity to provide people and communities with a range of social, economic, and ecological benefits for the present and into the future, including clean water; habitat for fish, wildlife, and plant communities; and opportunities for recreational, spiritual, educational, and cultural sustenance.

(d) The Chief of the Forest Service must establish planning procedures for this part on plan development, plan amendment, or plan revision in the Forest Service Directive System in Forest Service Manual 1920—Land Management Planning and in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12—Land Management Planning Handbook.

(e) This part does not affect treaty rights or valid existing rights established by statute or legal instruments.

(f) During the planning process, the responsible official shall comply with Section 8106 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (25 U.S.C. 3056), Executive Order 13007 of May 24, 1996, Executive Order 13175 of November 6, 2000, laws, and other requirements with respect to disclosing or withholding under the Freedom of Information

Act (5 U.S.C. 552) certain information regarding reburial sites or other information that is culturally sensitive to an Indian Tribe or Tribes.

(g) Plans must comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including NFMA, MUSYA, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Wilderness Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

§ 219.2 LEVELS OF PLANNING AND RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS.

Forest Service planning occurs at different organizational levels and geographic scales. Planning occurs at three levels—national strategic planning, NFS unit planning, and project or activity planning.

(a) *National strategic planning.* The Chief of the Forest Service is responsible for national planning, such as preparation of the Forest Service strategic plan required under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (5 U.S.C. 306; 31 U.S.C. 1115–1119; 31 U.S.C. 9703–9704), which is integrated with the requirements of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the NFMA. The strategic plan establishes goals, objectives, performance measures, and strategies for management of the NFS, as well as the other Forest Service mission areas: Research and Development, State and Private Forestry, and International Programs.

(b) *National Forest System unit planning.* (1) NFS unit planning results in the development, revision, or amendment of a land management plan. A land management plan provides a framework for integrated resource management and for guiding project and activity decisionmaking on a national forest, grassland, prairie, or other administrative unit. A plan reflects the unit's expected distinctive roles and contributions to the local area, region, and Nation, and the roles for which the unit is best suited, considering the Agency mission, unique capabilities, and the resources and management of other lands in the vicinity. Through the adaptive planning cycle set forth in this subpart, a plan can be changed to reflect new information and changing conditions.

(2) A plan does not authorize projects or activities or commit the Forest Service to take action. However, a plan may constrain the Agency from authorizing or carrying out actions, and projects and activities must be consistent with the plan (§ 219.15). A plan does not regulate uses by the public, but a project or activity decision that regulates a use by the public under Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 261—Prohibitions, Subpart B—Prohibitions in Areas Designated by Order, may be made contemporaneously with the approval of a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision. Plans should not repeat laws, regulations, or program management policies, practices, and procedures from the Forest Service Directive System.

(3) The supervisor of the national forest, grassland, prairie, or other comparable administrative unit is the responsible official for development and approval of a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision for lands under the responsibility of the supervisor, unless a regional forester, the Chief, the Under Secretary, or the Secretary acts as the responsible official. Two or more responsible officials may undertake joint planning over lands under their respective jurisdictions.

(4) A plan for a unit that contains an experimental area may not be approved without the concurrence of the appropriate research station director with respect to the direction applicable to that area, and a plan amendment applicable to an experimental area may not be approved without the concurrence of the appropriate research station director.

(c) *Project and activity planning.* The supervisor or district ranger is the responsible official for project and activity decisions, unless a higher-level official acts as the responsible official. Requirements for project or activity planning are established in the Forest Service Directive System. Except as provided in the plan consistency requirements in § 219.15, none of the requirements of this part apply to projects or activities.

§ 219.3 ROLE OF SCIENCE IN PLANNING.

The responsible official shall take into account the best available scientific information throughout the planning process identified in this subpart. In doing so, the responsible official shall determine what information is the most accurate, reliable, and relevant to a particular decision or action. The responsible official shall document this consideration in every assessment report (§ 219.6), plan decision document (§ 219.14), and monitoring evaluation report (§ 219.12). Such documentation must:

- (a) Identify sources of data, peer reviewed articles, scientific assessments, or other scientific information relevant to the issues being considered;
- (b) Describe how the social, economic, and ecological sciences were identified and appropriately interpreted and applied; and
- (c) For the plan decision document, describe how scientific information was determined to be the most accurate, reliable, and relevant information available and how scientific findings or conclusions informed or were used to develop plan components and other content in the plan.

§ 219.4 REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

(a) *Providing opportunities for participation.* The responsible official shall engage the public—including Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, other Federal agencies, State and local governments, individuals, and public and private organizations or entities—early and throughout the planning process as required by this part, using collaborative processes where feasible and appropriate. When developing opportunities for public participation, the responsible official shall take into account the discrete and diverse roles, jurisdictions, responsibilities, and skills of interested and affected parties; the accessibility of the process, opportunities, and information; and the cost, time, and available staffing. The responsible official should be proactive and use contemporary tools, such as the internet, to engage the public, and should share information in an open way with interested parties.

(1) *Scope, methods, and timing.* The responsible official shall provide opportunities for participating in the assessment process; developing a plan proposal, including the monitoring program; commenting on the proposal and the disclosure of its environmental impacts in accompanying NEPA documents; and reviewing the results of monitoring

information. Subject to the notification requirements in § 219.16, the responsible official has the discretion to determine the scope, methods, forum, and timing of those opportunities.

(2) *Participation opportunities for individual members of the public and entities.* The responsible official shall encourage participation by interested individuals and entities, including those interested at the local, regional, and national levels.

(3) *Participation opportunities for youth, low-income populations, and minority populations.* The responsible official shall encourage participation by youth, low-income populations, and minority populations.

(4) *Participation opportunities for private landowners.* The responsible official shall encourage participation by private landowners whose lands are in, adjacent to, or otherwise affected by, or whose actions may impact, future management actions in the plan area.

(5) *Consultation with federally recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.* The Department recognizes the Federal Government's trust responsibility for federally recognized Indian Tribes. The responsible official shall honor the government-to-government relationship between federally recognized Indian Tribes and the Federal government. The responsible official shall provide to federally recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations the opportunity to undertake consultation in accordance with Executive Order 13175 of November 6, 2000 and 25 U.S.C. 450 note.

(6) *Participation opportunities for federally recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.* The responsible official shall encourage participation in the planning process by interested or affected federally recognized Indian Tribes or Alaska Native Corporations. The responsible official may participate in planning efforts of federally recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, where practicable and appropriate.

(7) *Native knowledge, indigenous ecological knowledge, and land ethics.* As part of tribal participation and consultation as set forth in paragraphs (a)(5) and (6) of this section, the responsible official shall request information about native knowledge, land ethics, cultural issues, and sacred and culturally significant sites.

(8) *Participation opportunities for other Federal agencies, federally recognized Tribes, States, counties, and local governments.* The responsible official shall provide opportunities for other government agencies to participate in planning for NFS lands. Where appropriate, the responsible official shall encourage federally recognized Tribes, States, counties, and other local governments to seek cooperating agency status in the NEPA process for a plan development, amendment, or revision. The responsible official may participate in planning efforts of States, counties, local governments, and other Federal agencies, where practicable and appropriate.

(b) *Coordination with other public planning efforts.* (1) The responsible official shall coordinate land management planning with the equivalent and related planning efforts of

federally recognized Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments, to the extent practicable and appropriate.

(2) For plan development or revision, the responsible official shall review the planning and land use policies of federally recognized Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments, where relevant to the plan area. The results of this review shall be displayed in the environmental impact statement for the plan (40 CFR 1502.16(c), 1506.2). The review shall include consideration of:

(i) The objectives of federally recognized Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments, as expressed in their plans and policies;

(ii) The compatibility and interrelated impacts of these plans and policies;

(iii) Opportunities for the plan to address the impacts identified or contribute to joint objectives; and

(iv) Opportunities to resolve or reduce conflicts, within the context of achieving the Forest Service desired conditions or objectives.

(3) Nothing in this section should be read to indicate that the responsible official will seek to direct or control management of lands outside of the planning area, nor will the responsible official conform management to meet non-Forest Service objectives or policies.

§ 219.5 PLANNING FRAMEWORK.

(a) Planning for a national forest, grassland, prairie, or other comparable administrative unit of the NFS is an iterative process that includes assessment (§ 219.6); developing, amending, or revising a plan (§§ 219.7 and 219.13); and monitoring (§ 219.12). These three phases of the framework are complementary and may overlap. The intent of this framework is to create a responsive and agile planning process that informs integrated resource management and allows the Forest Service to adapt to changing conditions, including climate change, and improve management based on new information and monitoring.

(1) *Assessment.* An assessment is the gathering and integrating of information relevant to the planning area from many sources and the analysis of that information to identify a need to change a plan or to inform how a new plan should be proposed (§ 219.6). The responsible official shall consider and evaluate existing and possible future conditions and trends of the plan area, and assess the sustainability of social, economic, and ecological systems within the unit, in the context of the broader landscape. Based on the results of an assessment, the responsible official may identify a preliminary need to change a plan and begin a plan amendment, plan revision, or new plan development.

(2) *Plan development, plan revision, or plan amendment.* Plan revision (§ 219.7) or plan amendment (§ 219.13) begins with the identification of a preliminary need to change the

existing plan. For newly created planning units, the need for planning arises with the creation of the unit, unless otherwise provided by law.

(i) The process for developing or revising a plan includes: assessment, developing a proposed plan, considering the environmental effects of the proposal, providing an opportunity to comment on the proposed plan, providing an opportunity to object before the proposal is approved, and, finally, approving the plan or plan revision. A new plan or plan revision requires preparation of an environmental impact statement.

(ii) The process for amending a plan includes: identifying a need to change the plan, developing a proposed amendment, considering the environmental effects of the proposal, providing an opportunity to comment on the proposed amendment, providing an opportunity to object before the proposal is approved, and, finally, approving the plan amendment. The appropriate NEPA documentation for an amendment may be an environmental impact statement (EIS), an environmental assessment (EA), or a categorical exclusion (CE), depending upon the scope and scale of the amendment and its likely effects.

(3) *Monitoring.* Monitoring is continuous and provides feedback for the planning cycle by testing relevant assumptions, tracking relevant conditions over time, and measuring management effectiveness (§ 219.12). The monitoring program includes unit-level and broader-scale monitoring. The unit-level monitoring program is informed by the assessment phase; developed during plan development, plan revision, or plan amendment; and implemented after plan approval. The regional forester develops broader-scale monitoring strategies. Biennial monitoring evaluation reports document whether a change to the plan or change to the monitoring program is warranted based on new information, whether a new assessment may be needed, or whether there is no need for change at that time.

(b) *Interdisciplinary team(s).* The responsible official shall establish an interdisciplinary team or teams to prepare assessments; new plans, plan amendments, and plan revisions; and unit monitoring programs.

§ 219.6 ASSESSMENTS.

Assessments may range from narrow in scope to comprehensive, depending on the issue or set of issues to be evaluated, and should consider relevant ecological, economic, and social conditions, trends, and sustainability within the context of the broader landscape. The responsible official has the discretion to determine the scope, scale, and timing of an assessment, subject to the requirements of this section.

(a) *Process for plan development or revision assessments.* One or more assessments must be conducted for the development of a new plan or for a plan revision. The responsible official shall:

(1) Notify and encourage the public and appropriate Federal agencies, States, local governments, other entities, and scientists to participate in the assessment process (§§ 219.4 and 219.16).

(2) Notify and encourage potentially interested or affected federally recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations to participate in the assessment process (§§ 219.4 and 219.16).

(3) Coordinate with the regional forester, Agency staff from State and Private Forestry and Research and Development, and other governmental and non-governmental partners to consolidate existing information and leverage resources for additional information needs.

(4) Document the assessment in a report or set of reports available to the public. Document in the report(s) how the relevant best available scientific information was taken into account (§ 219.3), and include the report(s) in the planning record (§ 219.14).

(5) Identify in the report how a new plan should be proposed, or identify a potential need to change an existing plan, based on the assessment.

(b) *Content of assessments for plan development or revision.* In the assessment(s) for plan development or revision, the responsible official shall:

(1) Identify and evaluate information needed to understand and assess existing and potential future conditions and stressors in order to inform and develop required plan components and other content in the plan (§ 219.7), including plan components for sustainability (§ 219.8), diversity of plant and animal communities (§ 219.9), multiple uses (§ 219.10), and timber requirements based on NFMA (§ 219.11).

(2) Identify and consider relevant information contained in governmental or non-governmental assessments, plans, monitoring evaluation reports, and studies, including relevant neighboring land management plans. Such documents may include State forest assessments and strategies, the Resources Planning Act assessment, ecoregional assessments, non-governmental reports, State comprehensive outdoor recreation plans, community wildfire protection plans, and State wildlife action plans. Relevant private information will be considered if voluntarily provided.

(3) Identify the distinctive roles and contributions of the unit within the context of the broader landscape, considering the roles of the unit in providing multiple uses, including ecosystem services, from the NFS lands to the local area, region, and Nation. The unit's distinctive roles and contributions within the broader landscape are those for which the unit is best suited, considering the Agency mission, unique capabilities, and the resources and management of other lands in the vicinity.

(4) Identify potential monitoring questions or information needs to inform the development or modification of the unit's monitoring program.

(c) *Plan amendment assessments.* (1) A plan amendment must be based on a documented need to change the plan. This documentation may be a new assessment; may be a monitoring report; or may be other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances. Where the responsible official determines that a new assessment is needed to inform the need for an amendment, the responsible official

has the discretion to determine the scope, scale, process, and content for the assessment depending on the issue or issues to be addressed.

(2) When a plan amendment is made together with, and only applies to, a project or activity decision, the analysis prepared for the project or activity may serve as the documented need to change the plan.

§ 219.7 NEW PLAN DEVELOPMENT OR PLAN REVISION.

(a) *Plan revisions.* A plan revision creates a new plan for the entire unit, whether the plan revision differs from the prior plan to a small or large extent. A plan must be revised at least every 15 years (16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(5)). However, the responsible official has the discretion to determine at any time that conditions on a unit have changed significantly such that a plan must be revised. The responsible official shall base development of a proposal for plan revision on the preliminary need for change identified through the assessment process required by § 219.6.

(b) *New plan development.* New plan development is required for new NFS units. The process for developing a new plan is the same as the process for plan revision.

(c) *Process for plan development or revision.* (1) The process for developing or revising a plan includes: public notification and participation (§§ 219.4 and 219.16), assessment (§ 219.6), developing a proposed plan, considering the environmental effects of the proposal, providing an opportunity to comment on the proposed plan, providing an opportunity to object before the proposal is approved (subpart B), and, finally, approving the plan or plan revision. A new plan or plan revision requires preparation of an environmental impact statement.

(2) In developing a proposed new plan or proposed plan revision, the responsible official shall:

(i) Review relevant information from the assessment phase.

(ii) Identify the presence and consider the importance of various physical, biological, social, and cultural resources on the unit, with respect to the requirements for plan components of §§ 219.8 through 219.11.

(iii) Consider conditions and trends and stressors, with respect to the requirements for plan components of §§ 219.8 through 219.11.

(iv) Identify potential wilderness areas and consider whether to recommend any such areas for wilderness designation.

(v) Identify the eligibility of rivers for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, unless a systematic inventory has been previously completed and documented and there are no changed circumstances that warrant additional review.

(vi) Identify the suitability of areas for the appropriate integration of resource management and uses, with respect to the requirements for plan components of §§ 219.8

through 219.11, including identifying lands which are not suitable for timber production (§ 219.11).

(vii) Identify the quantity of timber that can be removed from the plan area (§ 219.11(d)(4)).

(viii) Identify questions and indicators for the unit monitoring program (§ 219.12).

(ix) Identify potential other content in the plan (paragraph (e) of this section).

(d) *Plan components.* Plan components guide future project and activity decisionmaking. The plan must indicate where in the plan area specific plan components apply. Plan components may apply to the entire plan area, to specific management or geographic areas, or to other areas as identified in the plan. Every project and activity must be consistent with the applicable plan components (§ 219.15).

(1) *Required plan components.* Every plan must include the following plan components:

(i) *Desired conditions.* A desired condition is a description of specific social, economic, and/or ecological characteristics of the plan area, or a portion of the plan area, toward which management of the land and resources should be directed. Desired conditions must be described in terms that are specific enough to allow progress toward their achievement to be determined, but do not include completion dates.

(ii) *Objectives.* An objective is a concise, measurable, and time-specific statement of a desired rate of progress toward a desired condition or conditions. Objectives should be based on reasonably foreseeable budgets.

(iii) *Standards.* A standard is a mandatory constraint on project and activity decisionmaking, established to help achieve or maintain the desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements.

(iv) *Guidelines.* A guideline is a constraint on project and activity decisionmaking that allows for departure from its terms, so long as the intent of the guideline is met. (§ 219.15(d)(3)). Guidelines are established to help achieve a desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements.

(v) *Suitability of lands.* Specific lands within a plan area may be identified as suitable for various multiple uses or activities based on the desired conditions applicable to that area. The plan may also identify lands within the plan area as not suitable for uses that are not compatible with desired conditions for those lands. Suitability does not need to be determined for every multiple use or activity, but every plan must identify those lands not suitable for timber production (§ 219.11).

(2) *Optional plan component: goals.* A plan may include goals as plan components. Goals are broad statements of intent, other than desired conditions, usually related to

process or interaction with the public. Goals are expressed in broad, general terms, and have no specific dates by which they are completed.

(3) *Requirements for the set of plan components.* The set of plan components must meet the requirements set forth in this part for sustainability (§ 219.8); plant and animal diversity (§ 219.9), multiple uses (§ 219.10), and timber (§ 219.11).

(e) *Other content in the plan.* (1) Other required content in the plan. Every plan must:

(i) Identify watershed(s) that are a priority for maintenance or restoration;

(ii) Describe the unit's distinctive roles and contributions within the broader landscape (§ 219.6(b)(3));

(iii) Include the monitoring program required by § 219.12; and

(iv) Contain information reflecting proposed and possible actions that may occur on the unit during the life of the plan including the planned timber sale program; the expected timber harvest levels, as required by NFMA (16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(2)); and the proportion of probable methods of forest vegetation management practices expected to be used. Such information is not a commitment to take any action and is not a "proposal" as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1508.23, 42 U.S.C. 4322 (2)(C)).

(2) *Optional content in the plan.* A plan may include additional items, including potential management approaches or strategies; partnership opportunities or coordination activities; or criteria for priority areas or activities to achieve objectives of the plan.

§ 219.8 SUSTAINABILITY.

Within Forest Service authority and consistent with the inherent capability of the plan area, the plan must provide for social, economic, and ecological sustainability, as follows:

(a) Ecological sustainability. (1) *Ecosystem plan components.* The plan must include plan components to maintain or restore the structure, function, composition, and connectivity of healthy and resilient terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and watersheds in the plan area, taking into account:

(i) Landscape-scale integration of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems;

(ii) Potential system drivers, stressors, and disturbance regimes, including climate change; how they might affect ecosystem and watershed health and resilience; and the ability of those systems on the unit to adapt to change;

(iii) Air quality; and

(iv) Wildland fire and opportunities to restore fire adapted ecosystems.

(2) *Ecosystem elements.* The plan must include plan components to maintain, protect, or restore:

- (i) Aquatic elements, such as lakes, streams, wetlands, stream banks, and shorelines;
- (ii) Terrestrial elements, such as forest stands, grasslands, meadows, and other habitat types;
- (iii) Rare aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal communities, consistent with § 219.9;
- (iv) Public water supplies, sole source aquifers, source water protection areas, groundwater, and other bodies of water (including guidance to prevent or mitigate detrimental changes in quantity, quality, and availability, including temperature changes, blockages of water courses, and deposits of sediments); and
- (v) Soils and soil productivity (including guidance to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation).

(3) *Riparian areas.* The plan must include plan components to maintain, protect, or restore riparian areas. Plans must establish a default width for riparian areas around all lakes, perennial or intermittent streams, and open water wetlands, within which these plan components will apply. The default may be a standard width for all lakes, perennial or intermittent streams, and open water wetlands, or may vary based on ecologic or geomorphic factors, or the type of waterbody. The default width will apply unless the actual riparian area for a waterbody or a site has been delineated based on best available scientific information.

(b) *Social and economic sustainability.* The plan must include plan components to guide the unit's contribution to social and economic sustainability, taking into account:

- (1) Social, cultural, and economic conditions relevant to the area influenced by the plan and the distinctive roles and contributions of the unit within the broader landscape;
- (2) Sustainable recreational opportunities and uses;
- (3) Multiple uses, including ecosystem services, that contribute to local, regional, and national economies in a sustainable manner; and
- (4) Cultural and historic resources and uses.

§ 219.9 DIVERSITY OF PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITIES.

Within Forest Service authority and consistent with the inherent capability of the plan area, the plan must include plan components to maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities, as follows:

(a) *Ecosystem Diversity.* The plan must include plan components to maintain or restore the structure, function, composition, and connectivity of healthy and resilient terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and watersheds in the plan area, consistent with § 219.8(a), to maintain the diversity of native species.

(b) *Species Conservation.* The plan components must provide for the maintenance or restoration of ecological conditions in the plan area to:

- (1) Contribute to the recovery of threatened and endangered species;
 - (2) Conserve candidate species; and
 - (3) Maintain viable populations of species of conservation concern within the plan area. Where it is beyond the authority of the Forest Service or the inherent capability of the plan area to do so, the plan components must provide for the maintenance or restoration of ecological conditions to contribute to the extent practicable to maintaining a viable population of a species within its range. When developing such plan components, the responsible official shall coordinate to the extent practicable with other Federal, State, tribal, and private land managers having management authority over lands where the population exists.
- (c) *Diversity of tree and other plant species.* The plan must include plan components to preserve, where appropriate, and to the degree practicable, the diversity of native tree and other native plant species similar to that existing in the plan area, as required by NFMA (16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(B)).

§ 219.10 MULTIPLE USES.

In meeting the requirements of §§ 219.8 and 219.9, and within Forest Service authority, the capability of the plan area and the fiscal capability of the unit, the plan must provide for multiple uses, including ecosystem services, outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish, as follows:

- (a) *Integrated resource management.* When developing plan components for integrated resource management, to the extent relevant to the plan area and the public participation process and the requirements of §§ 219.7, 219.8, 219.9, and 219.11, the responsible official shall consider:
- (1) Aesthetic values, air quality, cultural and heritage resources, ecosystem services, fish and wildlife species, forage, geologic features, grazing and rangelands, habitat and habitat connectivity, recreational values and settings, riparian areas, scenery, soil, surface and subsurface water quality, timber, trails, vegetation, viewsheds, wilderness, and other relevant resources;
 - (2) Renewable and nonrenewable energy and mineral resources;
 - (3) Sustainable management of infrastructure, such as recreational facilities and transportation and utility corridors;
 - (4) Opportunities to coordinate with neighboring landowners to link open spaces and take into account joint management objectives where feasible and appropriate;
 - (5) Habitat conditions, subject to the requirements of § 219.9, for wildlife, fish, and plants commonly enjoyed and used by the public, such as species that are hunted, fished, trapped, gathered, observed, or needed for subsistence;
 - (6) The landscape-scale context for management as identified in the assessment;

- (7) Land ownership and access patterns relative to the plan area;
- (8) Reasonably foreseeable risks to ecological, social, and economic sustainability; and
- (9) Potential impacts of climate and other system drivers, stressors and disturbance regimes, such as wildland fire, invasive species, and human-induced stressors, on the unit's resources (§ 219.8).

(b) *Requirements for plan components for a new plan or plan revision.* (1) The plan components for a new plan or plan revision must provide for:

(i) Sustainable recreation, considering opportunities and access for a range of uses. The plan should identify recreational settings and desired conditions for scenic landscape character.

(ii) Protection of cultural and historic resources;

(iii) Management of areas of tribal importance;

(iv) Protection of wilderness areas as well as the protection of recommended wilderness areas to protect the ecologic and social values and character for which they might be added to the National Wilderness System;

(v) Protection of wild and scenic rivers as well as the protection of those rivers eligible for inclusion in the national wild and scenic river system to protect the values for which they might be included in the system until their suitability is determined; and

(vi) Protection and appropriate management of other designated or recommended areas that exist in the plan area, including research natural areas.

(2) Other plan components for integrated resource management to provide for multiple uses that should be included as necessary.

§ 219.11 TIMBER REQUIREMENTS BASED ON NFMA.

In meeting the requirements of §§ 219.8 through 219.10 and within Forest Service authority, the capability of the plan area, and the fiscal capability of the unit, the plan must provide for multiple uses and ecosystem services, including timber, as follows:

(a) *Identification of lands as not suitable and suitable for timber production.* (1) *Lands not suitable for timber production.* The responsible official may determine, considering physical, economic, and other pertinent factors, that lands are not suitable for timber production. On lands so designated, timber harvest, other than salvage sales or sales necessary to protect other multiple-use values, shall be prohibited for a period of 10 years. In addition, the plan must identify lands within the plan area as not suitable for timber production if any one of the following factors applies:

(i) Statute, executive order, or regulation prohibits timber production on the land;

- (ii) The Secretary of Agriculture or the Chief of the Forest Service has withdrawn the land from timber production;
- (iii) Timber production would not be compatible with the achievement of desired conditions and objectives established by the plan for those lands;
- (iv) The technology is not currently available for conducting timber harvest without causing irreversible damage to soil, slope, or other watershed conditions or substantial and permanent impairment of the productivity of the land;
- (v) There is no reasonable assurance that such lands can be adequately restocked within 5 years after final regeneration harvest; or
- (vi) The land is not forest land as defined at § 219.19.

(2) *Lands suitable for timber production.* All lands not identified in the plan as not suitable for timber production are suited for timber production. Timber harvest on lands suitable for timber production may be authorized for timber production or for other multiple use purposes.

(3) *Review of lands not suitable for timber production.* The responsible official shall review lands identified in the plan as not suitable for timber production at least once every 10 years as required by NFMA (16 U.S.C. 1604(k)), or as otherwise prescribed by law, to determine whether conditions have changed so that they have become suitable for timber production. As a result of this 10-year review, the plan may be amended to identify such lands as suitable for timber production if there has been a change in conditions.

(b) *Harvest of trees on land not suitable for timber production.* (1) Where a plan identifies lands as not suitable for timber production, harvesting of trees for the purpose of timber production is prohibited.

(2) The identification in a plan of lands as not suitable for timber production does not preclude the harvest of trees on those lands for other purposes (16 U.S.C. 1604(k)); in particular, timber harvest may be authorized as a tool to assist in achieving or maintaining one or more applicable desired conditions or objectives of the plan. Examples of using timber harvest on lands not suited for timber production may include improving wildlife or fish habitat, thinning to reduce extreme fire risk, or restoring meadow or savanna ecosystems where trees have invaded.

(c) *Harvest for salvage, sanitation, or public health or safety.* Timber harvest may be approved for salvage, sanitation, or public health or safety, where consistent with the plan.

(d) *Limits on timber harvest on suitable and non-suitable lands.* A plan for a unit on which timber harvest may occur must have plan components to:

(1) Ensure that timber will be harvested from NFS lands only where such harvest would comply with the minimum limits identified in the NFMA (16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(E) and (F)).

(2) Ensure that harvest is carried out in a manner consistent with the protection of soil, watershed, fish, wildlife, recreation, and aesthetic resources.

(3) Establish maximum size limits for areas to be cut in one harvest operation for administrative units that use clearcutting, seed tree cutting, shelterwood cutting, or other cuts designed to regenerate an even-aged stand of timber. Plan components must include standards limiting the maximum size limits for areas to be cut in one harvest operation, according to geographic areas, forest types, or other suitable classifications. This limit may be less than, but must not exceed, 60 acres for the Douglas-fir forest type of California, Oregon, and Washington; 80 acres for the southern yellow pine types of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Oklahoma, and Texas; 100 acres for the hemlock-Sitka spruce forest type of coastal Alaska; and 40 acres for all other forest types except as provided in this paragraph.

(i) Cut openings larger than those specified may be permitted where larger units will produce a more desirable combination of benefits. Specifications for exceptions shall include the particular conditions under which the larger size is permitted and must set a maximum size permitted under those conditions.

(ii) Size limits exceeding those established in paragraphs (d)(3) and (d)(3)(i) of this section are permitted on an individual timber sale basis after 60 days public notice and review by the regional forester.

(iii) The plan maximum size openings shall not apply to the size of areas harvested as a result of natural catastrophic conditions such as fire, insect and disease attack, or windstorm (16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(F)(iv)).

(4) Limit the quantity of timber that can be removed annually in perpetuity on a sustained-yield basis and provide for departure from this limit, as provided by NFMA. The Chief of the Forest Service must include in the Forest Service Directive System procedures for estimating the quantity of timber that can be removed annually in perpetuity on a sustained-yield basis, and exceptions, consistent with 16 U.S.C. 1611.

(5) Limit the regeneration harvest of even-aged stands of trees to stands that generally have reached the culmination of mean annual increment of growth. This requirement applies only to final regeneration harvest of even-aged stands on lands identified as suitable for timber production and where timber production is the primary purpose for the harvest. Exceptions, set out in 16 U.S.C. 1604(m), are permitted only if consistent with the land management plan. If such exceptions are anticipated, the responsible official should include those exceptions in the land management plan as standards or guidelines. The Chief of the Forest Service must include in the Forest Service Directive System, requirements for assuring that even-aged stands of trees scheduled for final regeneration

harvest during the planning period have generally reached culmination of mean annual increment of growth with exceptions as permitted by the NFMA (16 U.S.C. 1604(m)).

§ 219.12 MONITORING.

(a) *Unit monitoring program.* (1) The responsible official shall develop a unit monitoring program for the plan area, and include it in the plan. The development of the monitoring program must be coordinated with the regional forester and Agency staff from State and Private Forestry, and Research and Development. Responsible officials for two or more administrative units may jointly develop their unit monitoring programs.

(2) The unit monitoring program sets out the unit monitoring questions and associated indicators. Monitoring questions and associated indicators must be designed to inform the management of resources on the unit, including by testing relevant assumptions, tracking relevant changes, and measuring management effectiveness and progress toward achieving or maintaining desired conditions or objectives. Questions and indicators should be based on one or more desired conditions, objectives, or other plan component in the plan, but not every plan component needs to have a corresponding monitoring question.

(3) The unit monitoring program should be coordinated and integrated with relevant broader-scale monitoring strategies (paragraph (b) of this section) to ensure that monitoring is complementary and efficient, and that information is gathered at scales appropriate to the monitoring questions.

(4) Subject to the requirements of paragraph (a)(5) of this section, the responsible official has the discretion to set the scope and scale of the unit monitoring program, after considering:

- (i) Information needs identified through the planning process as most critical for informed management of resources on the unit;
- (ii) Existing best available scientific information; and
- (iii) Financial and technical capabilities of the Agency.

(5) Each unit monitoring program must contain one or more monitoring questions or indicators addressing each of the following:

- (i) The status of select watershed conditions;
- (ii) The status of select ecological conditions;
- (iii) The status of focal species;
- (iv) The status of visitor use and progress toward meeting recreational objectives;
- (v) Measurable changes on the unit related to climate change and other stressors on the unit;

- (vi) The carbon stored in above ground vegetation;
 - (vii) The progress toward fulfilling the unit's distinctive roles and contributions to ecologic, social, and economic conditions of the local area, region, and Nation; and
 - (viii) The effects of management systems to determine that they do not substantially and permanently impair the productivity of the land (16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(C)).
- (6) A range of monitoring techniques may be used to carry out the monitoring requirements in paragraph (a)(5) of this section.
- (7) This section does not apply to projects or activities; project and activity monitoring may be used to gather information, but monitoring is not a prerequisite for carrying out a project or activity.
- (b) *Broader-scale monitoring strategies.*(1) The regional forester shall develop a broader-scale monitoring strategy for unit monitoring questions that can best be answered at a geographic scale broader than one unit.
- (2) When developing a monitoring strategy, the regional forester shall coordinate with the relevant responsible officials, Agency staff from State and Private Forestry and Research and Development, partners, and the public. Two or more regional foresters may jointly develop broader-scale monitoring strategies.
- (3) Each regional forester shall ensure that the broader-scale monitoring strategy is within the financial and technical capabilities of the region and complements other ongoing monitoring efforts.
- (4) Projects and activities may be carried out under plans developed, amended, or revised under this part before the regional forester has developed a broad scale monitoring strategy.
- (c) *Timing and process for developing the unit monitoring program and broader-scale strategies.* (1) In the assessment phase, the responsible official shall work with the public to identify potential monitoring needs relevant to inform effective management (§ 219.6).
- (2) The responsible official shall develop the unit monitoring program as part of the planning process for a new plan development or plan revision. Where a unit's monitoring program has been developed under the provisions of a prior planning regulation and the unit has not initiated plan revision, the responsible official shall change the unit monitoring program within 4 years of the effective date of this part, or as soon as practicable, to meet the requirements of this section.
- (3) The regional forester shall develop a broader-scale monitoring strategy as soon as is practicable.
- (4) The responsible official and regional forester shall ensure that scientists are involved in the design and evaluation of unit and broad scale monitoring.

(5) To the extent practicable, appropriate, and relevant to the monitoring questions in the program, unit monitoring programs and broader-scale strategies must be designed to take into account:

(i) Existing national and regional inventory, monitoring, and research programs of the Agency, including from the NFS, State and Private Forestry, and Research and Development, and of other governmental and non-governmental parties;

(ii) Opportunities to design and carry out multi-party monitoring with other Forest Service units, Federal, State or local government agencies, scientists, partners, and members of the public; and

(iii) Opportunities to design and carry out monitoring with federally recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.

(d) *Biennial evaluation of the monitoring information.* (1) The responsible official shall conduct a biennial evaluation of new information gathered through the unit monitoring program and relevant information from the broader-scale strategy, and shall issue a written report of the evaluation and make it available to the public. The evaluation must indicate whether a change to the plan, management activities, or monitoring program may be warranted based on the new information; whether a new assessment should be conducted; or that no amendment, revision, or administrative change is needed.

(i) The first monitoring evaluation for a plan or plan revision developed in accordance with this subpart must be completed no later than 2 years from the effective date of plan approval.

(ii) Where the monitoring program developed under the provisions of a prior planning regulation has been changed to meet the requirements of paragraph (c)(2) of this section, the first monitoring evaluation must be completed no later than 2 years from the date the change takes effect.

(iii) The monitoring evaluation report must describe how best available scientific information was taken into account (§ 219.3).

(2) The monitoring evaluation report may be incorporated into other planning documents if the responsible official has initiated a plan revision or relevant amendment.

(3) The monitoring evaluation report may be postponed for one year in case of exigencies, but notice of the postponement must be provided to the public prior to the date the report is due for that year (§ 219.16(c)(5)).

(4) The monitoring evaluation report is not a decision document representing final agency action, and is not subject to the objection provisions of subpart B.

§ 219.13 PLAN AMENDMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES.

(a) *Plan amendment.* A plan may be amended at any time. Plan amendments may be broad or narrow, depending on the need for change, and should be used to keep plans current and help units adapt to new information or changing conditions. The responsible

official has the discretion to determine whether and how to amend the plan. A plan amendment is required for the addition, modification, or removal of one or more plan components or a change in how one or more plan components apply to all or part of the plan area.

(b) *Amendment process.* The responsible official shall:

(1) Document the need to change the plan (§ 219.6(c));

(2) Provide opportunities for public participation as required in § 219.4 and public notification as required in § 219.16. The responsible official may combine processes and associated public notifications where appropriate, considering the scope and scale of the need to change the plan; and

(3) Amend plans consistent with Forest Service NEPA procedures. The appropriate NEPA documentation for an amendment may be an EIS, an EA, or a CE, depending upon the scope and scale of the amendment and its likely effects.

(c) *Administrative changes.* An administrative change is any change to a plan that is not a plan amendment or plan revision. Administrative changes include corrections of clerical errors to any part of the plan, including plan components; changes to other content in the plan other than plan components; or conformance of the plan to new statutory or regulatory requirements.

(1) A change to the monitoring program may be made as part of plan revision or amendment, but also can be made as an administrative change outside of the process for plan revision or amendment. Any change to the monitoring program may be made only after notice to the public (§ 219.16(c)(5)) of the intended change and consideration of public concerns and suggestions.

(2) All other administrative changes may be made following notice (§ 219.16(c)(5)).

§ 219.14 DECISION DOCUMENTS AND PLANNING RECORDS.

(a) *Decision document.* The responsible official shall record approval of a new plan, plan revision, or amendment in a decision document prepared according to Forest Service NEPA procedures (36 CFR 220). The decision document must include:

(1) The rationale for approval;

(2) An explanation of how the plan components meet the sustainability requirements of § 219.8 and the diversity requirements of § 219.9, taking into account the limits of Forest Service authority and the capability of the plan area;

(3) A statement of how the plan, plan revision or plan amendment applies to approved projects and activities (§ 219.15);

(4) A discussion of how the best available scientific information was taken into account and applied in the planning process (§ 219.3);

(5) The concurrence by the appropriate research station director with any part of the plan applicable to any designated experimental forests or experimental ranges (§ 219.2(b)(4)); and

(6) The effective date of the approval.

(b) *Planning records.* (1) The responsible official shall keep the following documents readily accessible to the public by posting them online and through other means: assessment reports (§ 219.6); plan decision documents (§ 219.14); the proposed plan, plan revision, or plan amendment; public notices and environmental documents associated with a plan; the monitoring program and monitoring evaluation reports (§ 219.12); and the plan.

(2) The planning record includes documents that support analytical conclusions made and alternatives considered throughout the planning process. The responsible official shall make the planning record available at the office where the plan, plan revision, or amendment was developed.

§ 219.15 PROJECT AND ACTIVITY CONSISTENCY WITH THE PLAN.

(a) *Application to existing authorizations and approved projects or activities.* Every document approving a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision must state whether the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision allows any prior approval of occupancy and use. If a plan approval document does not expressly allow such occupancy and use, the permit, contract, and other authorizing instrument for the use and occupancy must be made consistent with the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision as soon as practicable, as provided in paragraph (d) of this section, subject to valid existing rights.

(b) *Application to projects or activities authorized after plan approval.* Projects and activities authorized after approval of a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision must be consistent with the plan as provided in paragraph (d) of this section.

(c) *Resolving inconsistency.* When a proposed project or activity would not be consistent with the applicable plan components, the responsible official shall take one of the following steps, subject to valid existing rights:

(1) Modify the proposed project or activity to make it consistent with the applicable plan components;

(2) Reject the proposal or terminate the project or activity;

(3) Amend the plan so that the project or activity will be consistent with the plan as amended; or

(4) Amend the plan contemporaneously with the approval of the project or activity so that the project or activity will be consistent with the plan as amended. This amendment may be limited to apply only to the project or activity.

(d) *Determining consistency.* A project or activity approval document must describe how the project or activity is consistent with applicable plan components developed or revised in conformance with this part by meeting the following criteria:

(1) *Goals, desired conditions, and objectives.* The project or activity contributes to the maintenance or attainment of one or more goals, desired conditions, or objectives or does not foreclose the opportunity to maintain or achieve any goals, desired conditions, or objectives, over the long term.

(2) *Standards.* The project or activity complies with applicable standards.

(3) *Guidelines.* The project or activity:

(i) Is designed to comply with applicable guidelines as set out in the plan; or

(ii) Is designed in a way that is as effective in carrying out the intent of the applicable guidelines in contributing to the maintenance or attainment of relevant desired conditions and objectives, avoiding or mitigating undesirable effects, or meeting applicable legal requirements (§ 219.7(d)(1)(iv)).

(4) *Suitability.* A project or activity would occur in an area:

(i) That the plan identifies as suitable for that type of project or activity; or

(ii) For which the plan is silent with respect to its suitability for that type of project or activity.

(e) *Consistency of resource plans within the planning unit with the land management plan.* Any resource plans (e.g., travel management plans) developed by the Forest Service that apply to the resources or land areas within the planning unit must be consistent with the plan components. Resource plans developed prior to plan approval must be evaluated for consistency with the plan and amended if necessary.

§ 219.16 PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS.

The following public notification requirements apply to plan development, amendment, or revision. Formal notifications may be combined where appropriate.

(a) *When formal public notification is required.* Public notification must be provided at the following times:

(1) To begin the preparation of an assessment for a plan or plan revision, or, when appropriate, a plan amendment;

(2) To initiate the development of a proposed plan or plan revision, or, when appropriate, a plan amendment;

(3) To invite comments on a proposed plan, plan revision, or plan amendment, and associated environmental analysis. For a new plan, plan revision, or a plan amendment for which a draft environmental impact statement is prepared, the comment period is at

least 90 days. For an amendment for which a draft environmental impact statement is not prepared, the comment period is at least 30 days;

(4) To begin the objection period for a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision before approval (§ 219.52);

(5) To approve a final plan, plan amendment, or plan revision; or

(6) To announce and describe how a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision process initiated under the provisions of a previous planning regulation will be conformed to meet the provisions of this part, when appropriate under § 219.17(b)(3).

(b) When a plan amendment is approved in a decision document approving a project or activity and the amendment applies only to the project or activity, the notification requirements of 36 CFR part 215 or part 218, subpart A, applies instead of this section.

(c) *How public notice is provided.* The responsible official should use contemporary tools to provide notice to the public. At a minimum, all public notifications required by this part must be posted online, and:

(1) When the Chief, the Under Secretary, or the Secretary is the responsible official, notice must be published in the *Federal Register*;

(2) For a new plan or plan revision, when an official other than the Chief, the Under Secretary, or the Secretary is the responsible official, notice must be published in the *Federal Register* and the applicable newspaper(s) of record;

(3) For a plan amendment when an official other than the Chief, the Under Secretary, or the Secretary is the responsible official, notices must be published in the newspaper(s) of record. Notification in the *Federal Register* may also be required by Forest Service NEPA procedures;

(4) If a plan, plan revision or plan amendment applies to two or more units, notices must be published in the *Federal Register* and the newspaper(s) of record for the applicable units; and

(5) Public notice of administrative changes, changes to the monitoring program, plan amendment assessments, or other documented need for amendment, monitoring evaluation reports, or other notices not listed in paragraph (a) of this section, may be made in any way the responsible official deems appropriate.

(d) *Content of public notices.* Public notices required by this section must clearly describe the action subject to notice and the nature and scope of the decisions to be made; identify the responsible official; describe when, where, and how the responsible official will provide opportunities for the public to participate in the planning process; and explain how to obtain additional information.

§ 219.17 EFFECTIVE DATES AND TRANSITION.

(a) *Effective dates.* A plan, plan amendment, or plan revision is effective 30 days after publication of notice of its approval, except when a plan amendment applies to only one project or activity. In those instances the amendment and project are implemented concurrently, in accordance with administrative review regulations at 36 CFR 215 and 36 CFR 218.

(b) *Plan amendment and plan revision transition.* For the purposes of this section, initiation means that the Agency has issued a notice of intent or other notice announcing the beginning of the process to develop a proposed plan, plan amendment, or plan revision.

(1) *Initiating plan development and plan revisions.* Plan development and plan revisions initiated after the effective date of this part must conform to the requirements of this part.

(2) *Initiating plan amendments.* With respect to plans approved or revised under a prior planning regulation, a 3-year transition period for plan amendments begins on the effective date of this part. During the transition period, plan amendments may be initiated under the provisions of the prior planning regulation, or may conform to the requirements of this part. Plan amendments initiated after the transition period must conform to the requirements of this part.

(3) *Plan development, plan amendments, or plan revisions initiated before this part.* For plan development, plan amendments, or plan revisions that were initiated before the effective date of this part, the responsible official may complete the plan, plan revision, or plan amendment in conformance with the provisions of the prior planning regulation, or may conform the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision to the requirements of this part. When the responsible official chooses to conform an ongoing planning process to this part, public notice must be made (§ 219.16(a)(6)).

(c) *Plans developed, amended, or revised under a prior planning regulation.* This part supersedes any prior planning regulation. For units with plans developed, amended, or revised using the provisions of a prior planning regulation, no obligations remain from any prior planning regulation, except those that are specifically included in the plan.

§ 219.18 SEVERABILITY.

In the event that any specific provision of this part is deemed by a court to be invalid, the remaining provisions shall remain in effect.

§ 219.19 DEFINITIONS.

Definitions of the special terms used in this subpart are set out as follows.

Alaska native corporation. One of the regional, urban, and village native corporations formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

Assessment. A synthesis of information in support of land management planning to determine whether a change to the plan is needed. Assessments are not decisionmaking documents but provide current information on select issues. An assessment report on the need to change the plan may range from a many page broad scale comprehensive report to a one-page report, depending on the scope and scale of issues driving the need to change.

Collaboration. A structured manner in which a collection of people with diverse interests share knowledge, ideas, and resources while working together in an inclusive and cooperative manner toward a common purpose. Collaboration, in the context of this part, falls within the full spectrum of public engagement described in the Council on Environmental Quality's publication: *Collaboration in NEPA—A Handbook for NEPA Practitioners*. The Forest Service retains decisionmaking authority and responsibility for all decisions throughout the process.

Connectivity. Pertaining to the extent to which conditions exist or should be provided between separate national forest or grassland areas to ensure habitat for breeding, feeding, or movement of wildlife and fish within their home range or migration areas.

Conservation. The protection, preservation, management, or restoration of natural environments and ecological communities.

Culmination of mean annual increment of growth. See mean annual increment of growth.

Designated areas. Areas or features within a planning unit with specific management direction that are normally established through a process separate from the land management planning process. Designations may be made by statute or by an administrative process of the Federal executive branch. The Forest Service Directive System contains policy for recognition and establishment of designations. Designated areas include experimental forests, national heritage areas, national monuments, national recreational areas, national scenic trails, research natural areas, scenic byways, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness areas, and wilderness study areas.

Disturbance. Any relatively discrete event in time that disrupts ecosystem, watershed, community, or species population structure and/or function and changes resources, substrate availability, or the physical environment.

Ecological conditions. The biological and physical environment that can affect diversity of plant and animal communities and the productive capacity of ecological systems. Examples of ecological conditions include the abundance and distribution of aquatic and terrestrial habitats, connectivity, roads and other structural developments, human uses, and invasive species.

Ecological system. See ecosystem.

Economic system. The system of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services including consideration of jobs and income.

Ecosystem. A spatially explicit, relatively homogeneous unit of the Earth that includes all interacting organisms and elements of the abiotic environment within its boundaries. An ecosystem is commonly described in terms of its: (1) **Composition.** Major vegetation types, rare communities, aquatic systems, and riparian systems. (2) **Structure.** Vertical and horizontal distribution of vegetation, stream habitat complexity, and riparian habitat elements. (3) **Function.** Ecological processes such as stream flows, nutrient cycling, and disturbance regimes. (4) **Connectivity.** Habitats that exist for breeding, feeding, or movement of wildlife and fish within species home ranges or migration areas.

Ecosystem diversity. The variety and relative extent of ecosystem types, including their composition, structure, and processes.

Ecosystem services. Benefits people obtain from ecosystems, including: (1) **Provisioning services**, such as clean air and fresh water, as well as energy, fuel, forage, fiber, and minerals; (2) **Regulating services**, such as long term storage of carbon; climate regulation; water filtration, purification, and storage; soil stabilization; flood control; and disease regulation; (3) **Supporting services**, such as pollination, seed dispersal, soil formation, and nutrient cycling; and (4) **Cultural services**, such as educational, aesthetic, spiritual, and cultural heritage values, as well as recreational experiences and tourism opportunities.

Environmental assessment (EA). See definition in § 219.62.

Environmental document. Includes an environmental assessment, environmental impact statement, finding of no significant impact, categorical exclusion, and notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

Environmental impact statement. See definition in § 219.62.

Even-aged stand. A stand of trees composed of a single age class.

Federally recognized Indian Tribe. An Indian or Alaska Native Tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community that the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges to exist as an Indian Tribe under the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994, 25 U.S.C. 479a.

Focal species. A small number of species selected for monitoring whose status is likely to be responsive to changes in ecological conditions and effects of management. Monitoring the status of focal species is one of many ways to gauge progress toward achieving desired conditions in the plan.

Forest land. Land at least 10 percent occupied by forest trees of any size or formerly having had such tree cover and not currently developed for non-forest uses. Lands developed for non-forest use include areas for crops; improved pasture; residential or administrative areas; improved roads of any width and adjoining road clearing; and power line clearings of any width.

Geographic area. A spatially contiguous land area identified within the planning unit. A geographic area may overlap with a management area.

Health(y). The degree of ecological integrity that is related to the completeness or wholeness of the composition, structure, and function of native ecosystems existing within the inherent capability of the land.

Landscape. A spatial mosaic of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, landforms, and plant communities across a defined area irrespective of ownership or other artificial boundaries and repeated in similar form throughout.

Landscape character. A combination of physical, biological, and cultural images that gives an area its visual and cultural identity and helps to define a "sense of place." Landscape character provides a frame of reference from which to determine scenic attractiveness and to measure scenic integrity.

Management area. A land area identified within the planning unit that has the same set of applicable plan components. A management area does not have to be spatially contiguous.

Mean annual increment of growth and culmination of mean annual increment of growth. Mean annual increment of growth is the total increment of increase of volume of a stand (standing crop plus thinnings) up to a given age divided by that age. Culmination of mean annual increment of growth is the age in the growth cycle of an even-aged stand at which the average annual rate of increase of volume is at a maximum. In land management plans, mean annual increment is expressed in cubic measure and is based on the expected growth of stands, according to intensities and utilization guidelines in the plan.

Monitoring. A systematic process of collecting information over time and space to evaluate effects of actions or changes in conditions or relationships.

Multiple use. The management of all the various renewable surface resources of the NFS so they are used in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people: making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in the use to conform to changing needs and conditions; recognizing that some lands will be used for less than all of the resources; and providing for harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources, each with the other, without impairment of the productivity of the land, with consideration being given to the relative values of the various resources, and not necessarily the combination of uses that will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output, consistent with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. 528–531). Ecosystem services are included as part of all the various renewable surface resources of the NFS.

National Forest System. See definition in § 219.62.

Native knowledge. A way of knowing or understanding the world, including traditional ecological and social knowledge of the environment derived from multiple generations of indigenous peoples' interactions, observations, and experiences with their ecological systems. Native knowledge is place-based and culture-based knowledge in which people learn to live in and adapt to their own environment through interactions, observations, and experiences with their ecological system. This knowledge is generally not solely

gained, developed by, or retained by individuals, but is rather accumulated over successive generations and is expressed through oral traditions, ceremonies, stories, dances, songs, art, and other means within a cultural context.

Newspaper(s) of record. See definition in § 219.62.

Objection. See definition in § 219.62.

Online. See definition in § 219.62.

Participation. Activities that include a wide range of public involvement tools and processes, such as collaboration, public meetings, open houses, workshops, and comment periods.

Plan or land management plan. A document or set of documents that describe management direction for an administrative unit of the NFS.

Plan area. The National Forest System lands covered by a plan.

Plant and animal communities. A naturally occurring assemblage of plant and animal species living within a defined area or habitat.

Potential wilderness areas. All areas within the National Forest System lands that satisfy the definition of wilderness found in section 2(c) of the 1964 Wilderness Act. Inventory criteria are listed in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 – Land Management Planning Handbook, Chapter 70 – Wilderness Evaluation.

Productivity. The capacity of National Forest System lands and their ecological systems to provide the various renewable resources in certain amounts in perpetuity. For the purposes of this subpart, productivity is an ecological, not an economic, term.

Project. An organized effort to achieve an outcome on NFS lands identified by location, tasks, outputs, effects, times, and responsibilities for execution.

Recreational setting. The surroundings or the environment for the recreational activities. The Forest Service uses the recreational opportunity spectrum that defines six recreational opportunity classes that provide different settings for recreational use: primitive, semi-primitive nonmotorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, rural, and urban.

Resilience. The capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks.

Responsible official. See definition in § 219.62.

Restoration. The process of assisting the recovery of resilience and the capacity of a system to adapt to change if the environment where the system exists has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. Ecological restoration focuses on reestablishing ecosystem functions by modifying or managing the composition, structure, arrangement, and

processes necessary to make terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems sustainable, and resilient under current and future conditions.

Riparian Areas. Geographically delineable areas with distinctive resource values and characteristics that are comprised of the aquatic and riparian ecosystems.

Risk. A combination of the likelihood that a negative outcome will occur and the severity of the subsequent negative consequences.

Sole source aquifer. A porous geologic formation, usually consisting of sand and gravel, that holds ground water, and designated by the Environmental Protection Agency because it supplies at least 50 percent of the drinking water consumed in the area overlying the aquifer, and where contamination would present both a significant public health hazard and an economic hardship in the high cost of replacing the contaminated water.

Source water protection areas. The area delineated by a State or Tribe for a public water system (PWS) or including numerous PWSs, whether the source is ground water or surface water or both, as part of a State or tribal source water assessment and protection program (SWAP) approved by Environmental Protection Agency under section 1453 of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Species of conservation concern. Species other than federally listed threatened or endangered species or candidate species, for which the responsible official has determined that there is evidence demonstrating significant concern about its capability to persist over the long-term in the plan area.

Sustainability. Capability of meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Sustainable recreation. The set of recreational opportunities, uses and access that, individually and combined, are ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable, allowing the responsible official to offer recreation opportunities now and into the future. Recreational opportunities can include non-motorized, motorized, developed, and dispersed recreation on land, water, and air.

System drivers. Natural or human-induced factors that directly or indirectly cause a change in an ecosystem, such as climate change, habitat change, or non-native invasive species, human population change, economic activity, or technology.

Timber harvest. The removal of trees for wood fiber use and other multiple-use purposes.

Timber production. The purposeful growing, tending, harvesting, and regeneration of regulated crops of trees to be cut into logs, bolts, or other round sections for industrial or consumer use.

Viable population. A population of a species that continues to persist over the long term with sufficient distribution to be resilient and adaptable to stressors and likely future environments.

Watershed. A region or land area drained by a single stream, river, or drainage network; a drainage basin.

Watershed condition. The state of a watershed based on physical and biogeochemical characteristics and processes.

Wild and scenic river. A river designated by Congress as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System that was established in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (16 U.S.C. 1271(note), 1271-1287).

Wilderness. Any area of land designated by Congress as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System that was established in the Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136).

SUBPART B—PRE-DECISIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCESS

§ 219.50 PURPOSE AND SCOPE.

This subpart establishes a pre-decisional administrative review (hereinafter referred to as objection) process for plans, plan amendments, or plan revisions. This process gives an individual or organization an opportunity for an independent Forest Service review and resolution of issues before the approval of a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision. This subpart identifies who may file objections to a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision; the responsibilities of the participants in an objection; and the procedures that apply to the review of the objection.

§ 219.51 PLANS, PLAN AMENDMENTS, OR PLAN REVISIONS NOT SUBJECT TO OBJECTION.

- (a) A plan, plan amendment, or plan revision is not subject to objection when the responsible official receives no formal comments (§ 219.62) on that proposal during the opportunities for public comment (§ 219.53(a)).
- (b) Plans, plan amendments, or plan revisions proposed by the Secretary of Agriculture or the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, are not subject to the procedures set forth in this section. A decision by the Secretary or Under Secretary constitutes the final administrative determination of the Department of Agriculture.
- (c) A plan, plan amendment, or plan revision is not subject to objection under this subpart if another administrative review process is used consistent with § 219.59.
- (d) When a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision is not subject to objection under this subpart, the responsible official shall include an explanation with the signed decision document.

§ 219.52 GIVING NOTICE OF A PLAN, PLAN AMENDMENT, OR PLAN REVISION SUBJECT TO OBJECTION BEFORE APPROVAL.

- (a) The responsible official shall disclose during the NEPA scoping process and in the appropriate NEPA documents that the proposed plan, plan amendment, or plan revision is subject to the objection procedures in this subpart. This disclosure is in addition to the public notice that begins the objection filing period, as required at § 219.16.
- (b) The responsible official shall make available the public notice for beginning of the objection period for a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision (§ 219.16(a)(4)) to those who have requested the environmental documents or are eligible to file an objection consistent with § 219.53.

(c) The content of the public notice for beginning of the objection period for a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision before approval (§ 219.16(a)(4)) must:

(1) Inform the public of the availability of the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision, the appropriate final environmental documents, the draft plan decision document, and any relevant assessment or monitoring evaluation report; the commencement of the 30-day objection period under 36 CFR 219 subpart B; and the process for objecting.

(2) Include the name of the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision and the name and title of the responsible official, and instructions on how to obtain a copy of the appropriate final environmental documents; the draft plan decision document; and the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision.

(3) Include the name and address of the reviewing officer with whom an objection is to be filed. The notice must specify a street, postal, fax, and e-mail address; the acceptable format(s) for objections filed electronically; and the reviewing officer's office business hours for those filing hand-delivered objections.

(4) Include a statement that objections will be accepted only from those who have previously submitted formal comments specific to the proposed plan, plan amendment, or plan revision during any opportunity for public comment as provided in subpart A.

(5) Include a statement that the publication date of the public notice in the applicable newspaper of record (or the *Federal Register*, if the responsible official is the Chief or the Secretary) is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection (§ 219.56).

(6) Include a statement that an objection, including attachments, must be filed with the appropriate reviewing officer (§ 219.62) within 30 days of the date of publication of the public notice for the objection process.

(7) Include a statement describing the minimum content requirements of an objection (§ 219.54(c)).

§ 219.53 WHO MAY FILE AN OBJECTION.

(a) Individuals and organizations who have submitted substantive formal comments related to a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision during the opportunities for public comment as provided in subpart A during the planning process for that decision may file an objection. Objections must be based on previously submitted substantive formal comments unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the opportunities for formal comment. The burden is on the objector to demonstrate compliance with requirements for objection. Objections from individuals or organizations that do not meet the requirements of this paragraph must not be accepted; however, objections not accepted must be documented in the planning record.

(b) Formal comments received from an authorized representative(s) of an organization are considered those of the organization only. Individual members of that organization do not meet objection eligibility requirements solely based on membership in an

organization. A member or an individual must submit formal comments independently to be eligible to file an objection in an individual capacity.

(c) When an objection lists multiple individuals or organizations, each individual or organization must meet the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section. Individuals or organizations listed on an objection that do not meet eligibility requirements must not be considered objectors, although an objection must be accepted (if not otherwise set aside for review under § 219.55) if at least one listed individual or organization meets the eligibility requirements.

(d) Federal agencies may not file objections.

(e) Federal employees who otherwise meet the requirements of this subpart for filing objections in a non-official capacity must comply with Federal conflict of interest statutes at 18 U.S.C. 202-209 and with employee ethics requirements at 5 CFR part 2635. Specifically, employees must not be on official duty nor use government property or equipment in the preparation or filing of an objection. Further, employees must not include information unavailable to the public, such as Federal agency documents that are exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552 (b)).

§ 219.54 FILING AN OBJECTION.

(a) Objections must be filed with the reviewing officer in writing. All objections must be open to public inspection during the objection process.

(b) Including documents by reference is not allowed, except for the following list of items that may be referenced by including the name, date, page number (where applicable), and relevant section of the cited document. All other documents, web links to those documents, or both must be included with the objection.

(1) All or any part of a Federal law or regulation.

(2) Forest Service Directive System documents and land management plans.

(3) Documents referenced by the Forest Service in the planning documentation related to the proposal subject to objection.

(4) Formal comments previously provided to the Forest Service by the objector during the proposed plan, plan amendment, or plan revision comment period.

(c) At a minimum, an objection must include the following:

(1) The objector's name and address (§ 219.62), along with a telephone number or email address if available;

(2) Signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the objection);

(3) Identification of the lead objector, when multiple names are listed on an objection (§ 219.62). Verification of the identity of the lead objector if requested;

- (4) The name of the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision being objected to, and the name and title of the responsible official;
- (5) A statement of the issues and/or the parts of the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision to which the objection applies;
- (6) A concise statement explaining the objection and suggesting how the proposed plan decision may be improved. If applicable, the objector should identify how the objector believes that the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision is inconsistent with law, regulation, or policy; and
- (7) A statement that demonstrates the link between prior formal comments attributed to the objector and the content of the objection, unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the opportunities for formal comment (§ 219.53(a)).

§ 219.55 OBJECTIONS SET ASIDE FROM REVIEW.

- (a) The reviewing officer must set aside and not review an objection when one or more of the following applies:
 - (1) Objections are not filed in a timely manner (§ 219.56);
 - (2) The proposed plan, plan amendment, or plan revision is not subject to the objection procedures of this subpart pursuant to §§ 219.51 and 219.59;
 - (3) The individual or organization did not submit formal comments (§ 219.53) during scoping or other opportunities for public comment on the proposed decision (§ 219.16);
 - (4) None of the issues included in the objection is based on previously submitted substantive formal comments unless one or more of those issues arose after the opportunities for formal comment;
 - (5) The objection does not provide sufficient information as required by § 219.54(c);
 - (6) The objector withdraws the objection in writing;
 - (7) The objector's identity is not provided or cannot be determined from the signature (written or electronically scanned), and a reasonable means of contact is not provided (§ 219.54(c)); or
 - (8) The objection is illegible for any reason and a legible copy cannot easily be obtained.
- (b) When an objection includes an issue that is not based on previously submitted substantive formal comments and did not arise after the opportunities for formal comment, that issue will be set aside and not reviewed. Other issues raised in the objection that meet the requirements of this subpart will be reviewed.
- (c) The reviewing officer must give written notice to the objector and the responsible official when an objection is set aside from review and must state the reasons for not

reviewing the objection. If the objection is set aside from review for reasons of illegibility or lack of a means of contact, the reasons must be documented in the planning record.

§ 219.56 OBJECTION TIME PERIODS AND PROCESS.

(a) *Time to file an objection.* Written objections, including any attachments, must be filed within 30 days following the publication date of the public notice for a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision before approval (§§ 219.16 and 219.52). It is the responsibility of the objector to ensure that the reviewing officer receives the objection in a timely manner.

(b) *Computation of time periods.* (1) All time periods are computed using calendar days, including Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays in the time zone of the reviewing officer. However, when the time period expires on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, the time is extended to the end of the next Federal working day (11:59 p.m. for objections filed by electronic means such as e-mail or facsimile machine).

(2) The day after publication of the public notice for a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision before approval (§§ 219.16 and 219.52), is the first day of the objection filing period.

(3) The publication date of the public notice for a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision before approval (§§ 219.16 and 219.52), is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Objectors must not rely on dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

(c) *Evidence of timely filing.* The objector is responsible for filing the objection in a timely manner. Timeliness must be determined by one of the following indicators:

(1) The date of the U.S. Postal Service postmark for an objection received before the close of the fifth business day after the objection filing date;

(2) The electronically generated delivery date and time for e-mail and facsimiles;

(3) The shipping date for delivery by private carrier for an objection received before the close of the fifth business day after the objection filing date; or

(4) The official agency date stamp showing receipt of hand delivery.

(d) *Extensions.* Time extensions for filing are not permitted except as provided at paragraph (b)(1) of this section.

(e) *Reviewing officer role and responsibilities.* The reviewing officer is the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) or Forest Service official having the delegated authority and responsibility to review an objection filed under this subpart. The reviewing officer is a line officer at the next higher administrative level above the responsible official; except that for a plan amendment, that next higher-level line officer may delegate their reviewing officer authority and responsibility to a line officer at the same administrative level as the responsible official. Any delegation of reviewing officer

responsibilities must be made prior to the public notification of an objection filing period (§ 219.52).

(f) *Notice of objections filed.* Within 10 days after the close of the objection period, the responsible official shall publish a notice of all objections in the applicable newspaper of record and post the notice online.

(g) *Response to objections.* The reviewing officer must issue a written response to the objector(s) concerning their objection(s) within 90 days of the end of the objection-filing period. The reviewing officer has the discretion to extend the time when it is determined to be necessary to provide adequate response to objections or to participate in discussions with the parties. The reviewing officer must notify all parties (lead objectors and interested persons) in writing of any extensions.

§ 219.57 RESOLUTION OF OBJECTIONS.

(a) *Meetings.* Prior to the issuance of the reviewing officer's written response, either the reviewing officer or the objector may request to meet to discuss issues raised in the objection and potential resolution. The reviewing officer must allow other interested persons to participate in such meetings. An interested person must file a request to participate in an objection within 10 days after publication of the notice of objection by the responsible official (§ 219.56(f)). The responsible official shall be a participant in all meetings involving the reviewing officer, objectors, and interested persons. During meetings with objectors and interested persons, the reviewing officer may choose to use alternative dispute resolution methods to resolve objections. All meetings are open to observation by the public.

(b) *Response to objections.* (1) The reviewing officer must render a written response to the objection(s) within 90 days of the close of the objection-filing period, unless the allowable time is extended as provided at § 219.56(g). A written response must set forth the reasons for the response but need not be a point-by-point response, and may contain instructions to the responsible official. In cases involving more than one objection to a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision, the reviewing officer may consolidate objections and issue one or more responses. The response must be sent to the objecting party(ies) by certified mail, return receipt requested, and posted online.

(2) The reviewing officer's review of and response to the objection(s) is limited to only those the issues and concerns submitted in the objection(s).

(3) The response of the reviewing officer will be the final decision of the Department of Agriculture on the objection.

§ 219.58 TIMING OF A PLAN, PLAN AMENDMENT, OR PLAN REVISION DECISION.

(a) The responsible official may not issue a decision document concerning a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision subject to the provisions of this subpart until the reviewing officer has responded in writing to all objections.

(b) A decision by the responsible official approving a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision must be consistent with the reviewing officer's response to objections.

(c) When no objection is filed within the 30-day time period, the reviewing officer must notify the responsible official. The responsible official's approval of the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision in a plan decision document consistent with § 219.14, may occur on, but not before, the fifth business day following the end of the objection-filing period.

§ 219.59 USE OF OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCESSES.

(a) Where the Forest Service is a participant in a multi-Federal agency effort that would otherwise be subject to objection under this subpart, the reviewing officer may waive the objection procedures of this subpart and instead adopt the administrative review procedure of another participating Federal agency. As a condition of such a waiver, the responsible official for the Forest Service must have agreement with the responsible official of the other agency or agencies that a joint agency response will be provided to those who file for administrative review of the multi-agency effort. When such an agreement is reached the responsible official for the Forest Service shall ensure public notice required in § 219.52 sets forth which administrative review procedure is to be used.

(b) When a plan amendment is approved in a decision document approving a project or activity and the amendment applies only to the project or activity, the administrative review process of 36 CFR part 215 or part 218, subpart A, applies instead of the objection process established in this subpart. When a plan amendment applies to all future projects or activities, the objection process established in this subpart applies only to the plan amendment decision; the review process of 36 CFR part 215 or part 218 would apply to the project or activity part of the decision.

§ 219.60 SECRETARY'S AUTHORITY.

Nothing in this subpart restricts the Secretary of Agriculture from exercising any statutory authority regarding the protection, management, or administration of NFS lands.

§ 219.61 INFORMATION COLLECTION REQUIREMENTS.

This subpart specifies the information that objectors must give in an objection to a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision (§ 219.54(c)). As such, these rules contain information collection requirements as defined in 5 CFR part 1320 and have been approved by Office of Management and Budget and assigned control number 0596-0158.

§ 219.62 DEFINITIONS.

Definitions of the special terms used in this subpart are set out as follows.

Address. An individual's or organization's current mailing address used for postal service or other delivery services. An e-mail address is not sufficient.

Decision memo. A concise written record of the responsible official's decision to implement an action that is categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA), where the action is one of a category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment, and does not give rise to extraordinary circumstances in which a normally excluded action may have a significant environmental effect.

Environmental assessment (EA). A public document that provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) or a finding of no significant impact (FONSI), aids an agency's compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) when no EIS is necessary, and facilitates preparation of a statement when one is necessary (40 CFR 1508.9; FSH 1909.15, Chapter 40).

Environmental impact statement (EIS). A detailed written statement as required by section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (40 CFR 1508.11; 36 CFR 220).

Formal comments. Written comments submitted to, or oral comments recorded by, the responsible official or his designee during an opportunity for public participation provided during the planning process (§§ 219.4 and 219.16), and attributed to the individual or organization providing them.

Lead objector. For an objection submitted with multiple individuals, multiple organizations, or combination of individuals and organizations listed, the individual or organization identified to represent all other objectors for the purposes of communication, written or otherwise, regarding the objection.

Line officer. A Forest Service official who serves in a direct line of command from the Chief.

Name. The first and last name of an individual or the name of an organization. An electronic username is insufficient for identification of an individual or organization.

National Forest System. The National Forest System includes national forests, national grasslands, and the National Tall Grass Prairie.

Newspaper(s) of record. The newspaper of record is the principal newspapers of general circulation annually identified and published in the *Federal Register* by each regional forester to be used for publishing notices as required by 36 CFR 215.5. The newspaper(s) of record for projects in a plan area is (are) the newspaper(s) of record for notices related to planning.

Objection. The written document filed with a reviewing officer by an individual or organization seeking pre-decisional administrative review of a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision.

Objection period. The 30-calendar-day period following publication of a public notice in the applicable newspaper of record (or the *Federal Register*, if the responsible official is

the Chief or the Secretary) of the availability of the appropriate environmental documents and draft decision document, including a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision during which an objection may be filed with the reviewing officer.

Objection process. Those procedures established for pre-decisional administrative review of a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision.

Objector. An individual or organization who meets the requirements of § 219.53, and files an objection that meets the requirements of §§ 219.54 and 219.56.

Online. Refers to the appropriate Forest Service website or future electronic equivalent.

Responsible official. The official with the authority and responsibility to oversee the planning process and to approve a plan, plan amendment, and plan revision.

Reviewing officer. The USDA or Forest Service official having the delegated authority and responsibility to review an objection filed under this subpart.

