



Forest Plan Revision Topics

Background

The current Monongahela National Forest (Forest) land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) was approved in 1986. As a result of implementing thousands of activities over the last 16 years, forest managers have learned about changes in the condition of the natural resources on the Forest. In addition, new information on ecosystem management, social change, and analytical techniques have become available. In consideration of new information, public input, and Forest employee input the following topics were developed as the focus of the need for change in the Forest Plan Revision .

The entire process forest managers used to identify the Forest Plan needed changes is documented in the "Assessment of the Need for Change" available in hard copy or on the Web site.

Contact Information

Phone:

304/636-1800 x224

E-mail:

R9_monong_website@fs.fed.us

Web site:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/mnf/plan_revision/plan_revision.htm

MAJOR TOPICS

1. Adjust Amount and Distribution of Remote Backcountry

This issue explores the question of whether the current mix of management emphasis associated with the remote backcountry experience is appropriately distributed across the landscape.

Proposed Direction

Update direction as needed and consider adjusting allocations of MP 6.2 based on roadless/wilderness evaluation and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Map.

2. Adjust Direction and Allocations Related to Vegetation Management within the Suitable Timber Base

Through Forest Plan revision, the Forest will explore long term goals for young, mature, old, and old growth forests. The revised Forest Plan will identify the desired species composition of forest communities, types of forest vegetation communities, and distribution of communities across the landscape.

Proposed Direction:

Provide direction for desired species composition of forest communities, types of forest communities, and distribution across the landscape.

Provide direction for long term forest community sustainability, including discussions on the role of insect and disease, and large-scale disturbances.

Update standards and guidelines to accommodate appropriate silvicultural methodologies.

Identify the long term goals for old growth management, including size, amount and distribution.

3. Adjust Timber Supply Estimates and Direction Related to Commercial Timber Harvest

This issue explores how much timber the Forest can supply without adversely affecting ecosystem integrity and the social and economic needs of people in the long term.

Proposed Direction:

Revisit suitable lands determination, revise demand estimations, and rebuild ASQ determination based on those changes.

4. Adjust Direction and Allocations to Address Riparian Areas, Acid Deposition, and Sedimentation in Order to Protect the Soil and Water Resources

This issue explores the question of whether or not the 1986 Forest Plan adequately protects soil and water resources. It also looks at the location of the assigned management prescriptions across the landscape when considering the erosive nature and acid buffering abilities of certain soils.

Proposed Direction:

Review and update 1999 Interim Riparian Guidelines and incorporate into Forest Plan.

Update standards and guidelines and management area direction to provide for adequate protection of water quality and fish habitat. In addition, risk for soil erosion and soil buffering capacity will be taken into account when assigning management area direction across the landscape.

Review basal area removal limitations as mitigation for flooding concerns and incorporate determination in the Forest Plan.



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Other Revision Topics

In addition to the major revision topics listed, other changes will be made that are important direction for the Forest but which tend to be narrow in scope. These minor changes would not affect multiple use resources or result in significant changes in the plan.

Non-Native Invasive Plant Species

Since the 1986 Forest Plan, the importance of managing and preventing the spread of non-native invasive plant species has become more apparent. Non-native invasive species can spread aggressively across the Forest and displace native species, decreasing species diversity. Current direction for the management of non-native invasive species will be incorporated in the Forest Plan.

Scenery Management System

The Scenery Management System (SMS) is the new method for management of scenic values, replacing the previous Visual Quality Objective management tool. This new system will be incorporated into the Forest Plan.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Through implementation of the monitoring and evaluation direction, the Forest has found that some of the Forest Plan requirements cannot be fully implemented, do not yield meaningful results, are not measurable or scientifically supported, or are not reasonably affordable. The monitoring and evaluation direction will be revised and improved to ensure cost-effective, meaningful surveys are completed.

Heritage Resources

A review of the current Forest Plan indicates that the direction provided in the Plan for heritage resources is not compliant with law. The revised Forest Plan will include direction to ensure all sites are adequately protected and meet the intent of the laws relating to heritage resources.

Land Acquisition

Current land acquisition priorities do not necessarily reflect direction provided in the Forest Plan. This direction will be reviewed and updated. In addition, lands located outside of the proclamation boundary have been purchased. These lands will be assigned a management prescription.

Fire Management

The topic of fire management focuses on the concept of using fire as a management tool. This includes all activities required for protecting natural resources and property from fire, and the use of fire to meet resource and land management goals. The existing Forest Plan addresses both aspects of fire management. However, there is an opportunity to clarify direction and emphasize management across the Forest.

Management Indicator Species

Information gathered on the management indicator species (MIS) identified in the Forest Plan suggests that there may be other species that would better reflect a cause-effect relationship with management activities. The MIS species will be reviewed and revised.

Planning Areas

The current Forest Plan breaks the forest into planning areas called Opportunity Areas. The Opportunity Area boundaries do not necessarily follow geographic boundaries. The revised Forest Plan will use the 5th order watershed boundaries as planning areas.

Minor Editorial Changes

Minor editorial changes will be made in the revision of the Forest Plan. These changes would not represent a change in the direction, goals, or objectives in the Forest Plan.

Species Viability Evaluation

The Forest must ensure that viable populations of species are provided for under the Forest's multiple use management. A species viability evaluation will be completed and recommendations for conservation measures will be developed and incorporated into the revised Forest Plan. In addition, language related to the Regional Forester's Sensitive Species List will be reviewed and updated.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

The existing eligibility determinations made relating to wild and scenic rivers will be brought forward and incorporated into the Forest Plan. A recommendation for designation of wild and scenic rivers will not be brought forward at this time.

National Recreation Area

The National Recreation Area (NRA) is currently assigned several management prescriptions. A management prescription will be developed and assigned to the NRA to meet national Forest Planning direction.