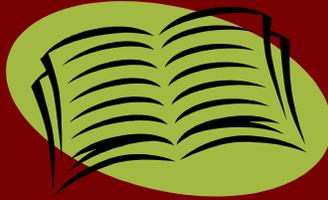




Monongahela National Forest

# Forest Plan Revision Update





## Presentation Overview

Why Have a Plan?

Why and How do You Revise the Plan?

What is the Focus of the Plan Revision?

Where are We Now?

How Can you Participate?

We will discuss the following questions in this presentation.



## Why Have a Plan?

- Provides Forest management guidance
- Provides for the needs of diverse public interests

The Forest Plan provides guidance on how to conduct and implement Forest activities. The Forest Plan provides management direction for managing all Forest resources including wildlife & fish habitat, vegetation, recreation, special use permits, soil, water, minerals, and more. The Plan is an important reference that Forest employees use on a daily basis.

The Plan also provides for the diverse needs of the public including a variety of recreation opportunities and economic activities such as timber harvesting, livestock grazing, oil and gas leasing, and outfitter and guide operations. The Forest Service mission is multiple-use and the Plan must reflect that.



## What Does the Plan Address?

- Desired Conditions, Goals, and Objectives
- Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines
- Management Area Prescriptions
- Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
- Timber Suitability and Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ)
- Recommended Wilderness

These are the 6 major categories that we are required to address in a Forest Plan Revision. The top 2 categories are Forest-wide management direction that is applied to the entire Forest. The Plan describes desired conditions we envision for the forest; what it should look like and how it should function. We set broad goals and more specific objectives to help us achieve the desired condition.

The Forest-wide standards and guidelines help define how we plan and implement projects. Standards are constraints on management actions that control impacts those actions may have to Forest resources. Guidelines are preferred procedures for planning and implementing projects.

Management Area Prescriptions are the way we zone areas on the Forest for different management much like a city creates zones for different city uses. The prescriptions divide the Forest into smaller areas with different management emphasis.

The monitoring and evaluation plan outlines how we determine if forest activities are: achieving forest objectives, goals, and desired conditions; following the standards and guidelines; and managing the Forest according to the prescriptions in the Forest Plan.

Finally, we analyze the amount of suitable timber we can provide on the Forest, and we identify areas on the Forest that have the best potential for wilderness.



## Why Revise the Plan?

- National Forest Management Act
- Take stock of management direction
- Incorporate new science and technology
- Reflect current public interests

Why are forest managers revising the Forest Plan? The simple answer is things change. The National Forest Management Act is the guidebook for forest planning for all our national forests. It says that forest plans should be dynamic and change over time.

There are two ways the Forest Plan can be changed; the Plan can be amended or revised. The Monongahela National Forest has made six amendments to its current plan. Amendments focus on specific parts of the plan like endangered species or mineral leasing. In a Forest Plan Revision, we look at the entire Forest Plan and the cumulative changes that have occurred over a long period of time.

In a Forest Plan Revision there are a number of areas that need to be reviewed and updated. Management direction changes come from federal and state laws and regulations, agency policies, and Forest Service manual and handbooks.

Forest managers also incorporate new science, technology, and information to improve resource management. For instance, in the last few years new research has revealed that the oak-hickory forests on the Monongahela need low intensity prescribed fire to help maintain their ecological composition, structure, and function.

Finally, people change. The demographics of an area change and public needs change. So it's important to involve the public during a plan revision so the Plan reflects changing public interests.

The fact sheet *A Forest Plan Overview* provides a brief explanation of the purpose of the Forest Plan and how it can be changed.



## How do we Know What to Revise?

### Determine Need for Change:

- Review changes in direction
- Review new science and technology
- Review forest monitoring information
- Gather employee input
- Gather public comments

The 1986 Forest Plan has a lot of good direction in it and we will bring forward appropriate portions into the revised Plan. We are also reviewing changes in management direction, the latest science and technology, and looking at the forest monitoring plan to integrate needed changes. Forest employees have to implement the Plan and use it on a daily basis, so they are also providing input as to what is working, what is not, and what needs to change.

That initial planning stage was completed about 2 years ago. From this initial stage, six major topics were identified that needed to be changed. These findings were published in a Notice of Intent (NOI) and public comments were requested. Over 700 comments were received. These public comments were reviewed, and then helped refine the focus of the Forest Plan Revision into four broad Need for Change (NFC) topics and several other topics.



## How do We Revise the Plan? Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

- Need for Change Topics/Issues
- Alternatives based on Issues
- Forest Plan represents the Preferred Alternative
- Draft, Final, Record of Decision (ROD)

The next stage of the planning process, according to the National Forest Management Act, is to analyze the Need for Change issues into an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This is a public disclosure document that describes what we intend to change, and what the potential effects these changes may have on Forest resources.

Within the EIS, the Need for Change topics/issues are built into management alternatives. Some alternatives will emphasize some topics/issues more than others. Currently, four draft alternatives are proposed. These may change depending on public and internal input. We are scheduled to publish a Draft EIS and Forest Plan in November 2004. The Draft EIS will identify the preferred alternative that will represent the revised Forest Plan. The public will then have an opportunity to comment on both the Draft EIS and Forest Plan. We will consider public comments, make adjustments, then publish the Final EIS and Forest Plan in August of 2005.



## What is the Focus of The Revision & EIS ?

### Four Major Topics

- Soil and water
- Remote backcountry
- Vegetation management
- Timber supply

### Other Topics

These are the four major topics/issues on which the Forest Plan Revision will focus. These are considered major topics because each may have major effects on Forest management. These topics are also interrelated and can affect each other. For example, management direction set for soil and water can impact vegetation management and timber supply, and direction for vegetation management can affect soil and water, remote backcountry, and timber supply.

The other topics are important but should not have such far-reaching potential for effects as the four major topics. The entire list of the major and other topic areas can be reviewed in the *Need for Change Assessment* or in the *Need for Change* one-page fact sheet.



## Major Revision Topics

### Soil and Water

Review and revise:

- riparian area management
- sedimentation and acid deposition management



The first major revision topic is soil and water. We have been managing riparian areas through the Forest Plan since 1986. However, additional riparian guidelines were developed in 1999 that have been used but not yet integrated into the Plan. We also have some new ideas on how to manage soil, water, and riparian vegetation, and are exploring ways to combine direction for these interrelated resources. One option we are considering is putting this information in a new riparian management prescription. The *Riparian Conservation Corridor Management Prescription Recommendation* provides the background and describes broad ideas that would go into the development of a new prescription.

Another issue that needs to be addressed in this Plan is the potential effects from sedimentation and acid deposition on soil productivity. We are considering management direction that would include monitoring and mitigation to learn what effects are occurring and what Forest management actions may alleviate them. To learn more about this issue relative to acid deposition, read the fact sheet *A Soil Nutrient Concern*.



## Major Revision Topic

### Remote Backcountry

Review the  
distribution of  
remote backcountry  
recreation options.



Another major revision issue is remote backcountry. These are the areas of the Forest where non-motorized recreation is emphasized, such as hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, etc. There is little or no development and commodity production in these areas. They also have the most potential to be recommended for wilderness.

Forest Plan Revision will look at a range of alternatives that have varying amounts of remote backcountry, and analyze what potential effects these different amounts would have on resources such as recreational opportunities, vegetation management, wilderness areas, public access, and timber supply.



## Major Revision Topics

### Vegetation Management



#### Update management direction:

- Forest composition
- Forest health
- Wildlife habitat

Vegetation management is the third major Need for Change topic/issue. Vegetation management will look at incorporating new research and information that has come to light since the original Plan was published in 1986. Changes will focus on forest composition, including age class diversity, old growth, and tree species diversity. We will also expand direction addressing forest health issues, such as the impacts from insects and disease, wildlife fire, and non-native invasive species. All vegetation provides habitat for a wide variety of species. We will examine the different mixes of vegetation management prescriptions across alternatives and analyze how that may affect habitat for fauna and flora across the Forest.



## Major Revision Topics

### Timber Supply

Revise timber supply estimates.



The final major topic is also one of the six major categories that is required. It will be influenced by management decision made for the other three major topics. The amount of timber production will vary by alternative depending on how much mitigation there is for soil and water, how much remote backcountry is allocated, and the mix of vegetation management prescriptions across the Forest.



## Other Revision Topics

- Non-native invasive species
- Scenery Mgt. System
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Cultural resources
- Land Acquisition
- Fire Management
- Management Indicator Species
- National Recreation Area
- Minor Editorial Changes
- Others .....

This is a partial list of other topics that we are updating in Forest Plan Revision. A summary of each of these topics can be found in the *Need for Change Assessment* or the one-page *Need for Change* fact sheet. In the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) we will look at effects both from and to these issues in the different management alternatives.

A good example of the need for updates is non-native invasive species. In 1986, when our current Plan was written, non-native invasive species was not a big issue. In fact, the 1986 Plan does not address these species. In the revised Plan, this topic will likely be addressed in terms of both the management direction and monitoring sections.



## What About Topics Not Covered?

### Site-specific projects and uses

- Individual roads and trails
- Special use permits
- Timber sales

### Outside scope of authority



In the Forest Plan Revision process, we must consider the management of nearly one million acres of national forest land. Therefore, we are focused on broad strategies for managing all the resources across the Forest. You will not see details in the revised Plan about specific timber sales, trails, or roads. Instead, the Plan will provide guidance for how to manage vegetation and recreation as a whole across the Forest.

There are also some things that are outside the scope of our authority. One good example is wilderness. The revised Plan may recommend but will not create any new wilderness, as only Congress has the authority to do this. Another example is hunting and fishing management. Although the Forest can influence habitat conditions and public access, we have no legal authority to change state hunting or fishing regulations, including seasons, types, and locations of harvestable fish and game.



## What Have We Completed?



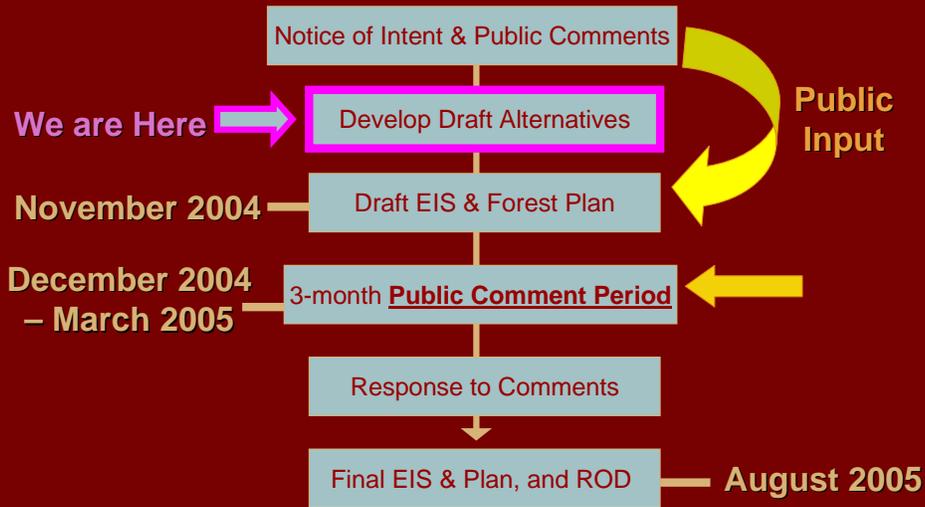
- ✓ Notice of Intent
- ✓ Public Comments
- ✓ Summary of Comments
- ✓ Refine Need for Change Topics
- ✓ Concepts of Draft Alternatives

The Notice of Intent (NOI) was the first public notice in which the Forest Plan Revision changes were proposed. We received over 700 comments on the proposal. All the comments were reviewed and the document called Summary of Public Comments was written. From public comments, the Forest Plan Revision topics were refined into four major Need for Change (NFC) topics/issues. This is documented in the *Need for Change Assessment*. From the Need for Change focus topics/issue four potential draft alternatives concepts were proposed. These draft concepts have been open to public input since February of 2004. The draft alternatives concepts are summarized in the fact sheet *Draft Alternative Concepts*. These draft alternatives concepts do not have a lot of details at this time. The idea of the draft concepts is to get public input to make sure we are on the right track before details are developed.

Since the open houses in February and March, when this presentation was given, we have received valuable input on the Draft Alternative Concepts, and we have begun to work on alternative details. In addition, the *Draft Roadless Area Review and Wilderness Evaluation* and the draft Riparian Management Recommendation have been completed by the revision team. These documents are posted on the Web, or copies can be requested by phone, mail, or e-mail.



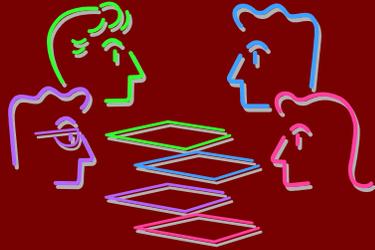
# What are the Steps to a Revised Plan?



Currently, we are working on the development of draft alternatives, management direction and prescriptions. Public involvement is welcomed and encouraged through the development of these drafts. As more drafts become ready this summer and fall, they will be available for public review. In addition, once the Draft EIS and Forest Plan are published in November, the public will have an additional three months to provide comments on the published Drafts.



## What's Next ?



- Public Input on Concepts
- Draft Alternatives and Forest Plan Details
- Public & Employee Feedback

Since the open houses, we have received public input on many subjects including the proposed draft alternatives concepts. Public input is summarized in the *Open House Summary* on the Web. We have considered public input and have begun working on the details of the draft alternatives, as well as management direction and prescriptions. Once we have sufficient details and integration, we will ask for employee and public review. We hope to have this done sometime this summer.



## How Will We Keep You Informed?

### Guiding Principles

- Open Process
- 2-way Communication
- No Surprises



The Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson has set the direction for public involvement. He believes in an open process that means early versions of draft documents are shared throughout the Forest Plan Revision process. In the past, the public only saw two documents before the final: Notice of Intent and Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Forest Plan. By sharing documents often and early, the public can review and provide input during each step of the Plan development. A successful plan is based on sound science but equally important is the consideration of public interests.

By having an open process, we anticipate that there will be less changes needed at the end because the public will have been commenting throughout the process. Additionally, because the public has seen the progression of the Plan, there will be an understanding of how we arrived at the final product. Different members of the diverse public may not agree with all our management decisions, but they should have a better understanding of how we arrived at them. Toward this end, we expect to avoid any surprises for the public and Forest staff.



## How Can You Participate?

### Stay informed

- Newsletter
- Web site

### Send us your input

- E-mail, snail mail, or phone

### Attend meetings



The public can stay informed through the Forest Plan Revision newsletters, web site, and by reading the portions of draft documents in which they have an interest. Public input can be sent to us at any time---you do not have to wait for a meeting to be scheduled. Rather you can submit your input by phone, regular mail or e-mail. Finally, if possible, it is good to attend meetings and have conversations with Forest staff.



Monongahela National Forest

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Please contact us using the information above. In addition, the names and phone numbers of Forest Plan Revision team members are posted on the Web site under Contact Us.