



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Southwestern  
Region



# Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Working DRAFT Land Management Plan

June 15, 2009

DRAFT

## Important Information for Reviewers

This is the first version of the working draft land management plan (Draft) for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNFs). This Draft is meant to provide a foundation for collaborative discussion and feedback before the formal NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process begins. The comments on this Draft will be used to help build the proposed land management plan. The publication of the proposed land management begins the formal NEPA process. The proposed land management plan is expected to be available later this winter and will be subject to a formal 90-day comment and 30-day objection period.

This Draft is much different than the existing 1987 land management plan. It is more strategic and aspirational, focusing on what the ASNFs should look like, and how the forests contribute to ecological, social, and economic sustainability. It is less prescriptive than the current land management plan and does not contain specific project level decisions.

This Draft is organized by the three revision topics: 1) Maintenance and Improvement of Ecosystem Health, 2) Managed Recreation, and 3) Community-Forest Interaction.

This document contains a draft of all five required plan components: desired conditions, objectives, special areas, suitability of areas, and guidelines. The desired conditions are the foundations of the plan, describing what the ASNFs should look like or provide. The remaining plan components help move the ASNFs towards those desired conditions. These draft plan components integrate public comment and Forest Service employee input received since the fall of 2008, as well as information derived from the Comprehensive Evaluation Report and the associated sustainability evaluations for the ASNFs.

**We need your input.** A User's Guide to this Draft is available to assist in your review. It is located on the forests' Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf/plan-revision>. Written comments can be sent to Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Attention: Forest Plan Revision Team, P.O. Box 640, Springerville, Arizona 85938 or E-mail: [asnf.planning@fs.fed.us](mailto:asnf.planning@fs.fed.us). We are also available by phone or can arrange to meet in person, just ask for a planning team member at 928-333-4301 or 928-333-6292 (TTY).

**Note:** Comments received during the planning process, including the names and addresses of those who commented, become part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.



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**Working Draft Land Management Plan**  
**Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests**  
**Apache, Coconino, Greenlee, and Navajo Counties,**  
**Arizona**

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# Background

## Introduction

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNFs) Land Management Plan (hereinafter referred to as Plan or land management plan) covers the [National Forest System](#) (NFS) lands within the boundary of the ASNFs.

The ASNFs are managed as a single administrative unit and include about 2 million acres of generally forested lands on and adjacent to the Colorado Plateau in East Central Arizona (figure 1). The Gila National Forest administers the portion of the Apache National Forest that is located in New Mexico. Vegetation on the ASNFs varies from semi-desert grasslands to piñon-juniper woodlands to ponderosa pine and spruce-fir forests. Elevations range from 3,500 to 11,400 feet.

Ranger District Offices are located in Alpine, Clifton, Overgaard, Springerville, and Pinetop-Lakeside. The Forest Supervisor's Office is located in Springerville. The ASNFs are managed by the Forest Service, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

This Plan responds to the need for change as outlined in the Comprehensive Evaluation Report (CER). The CER summarized the need for change into three revision topics: 1) Maintenance and Improvement of Ecosystem Health, 2) Managed Recreation, and 3) Community-Forest Interaction. The CER, and other detailed assessments, evaluations, reports, and documents associated with this Plan, can be viewed and downloaded from the forests' Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf/>.



**Figure 1. The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests located in east-central Arizona.**

## Purpose of this Land Management Plan

The planning process that created this Plan aims to produce responsible land management for the ASNFs based on useful and current information and guidance. Land management planning guides the Forest Service in fulfilling its responsibilities for the stewardship of the ASNFs to best meet the needs of the American people.

This Plan provides broad guidance and information for project and activity decisionmaking on the ASNFs for approximately the next 15 years. In addition, the Plan has these characteristics:

- The Plan is strategic in nature. It does not include project and activity decisions. Those decisions are made later, after specific proposals are made and analyzed and there is additional opportunity for public involvement.
- The Plan provides a framework that contributes to sustaining native ecological systems by managing towards appropriate conditions that support native plant and animal diversity on the ASNFs.
- The Plan includes the following plan components: desired conditions, objectives, suitability of areas, special areas, and guidelines. These plan components are

- distinguished from other parts of the Plan because they can only be changed by a plan amendment.
- The Plan references additional direction from prior decisions, species recovery plans, conservation agreements, etc. as identified in the Design Criteria chapter in the Other Sources of Information section.
  - The Plan is adaptive, in that new knowledge and information can be analyzed and the Plan changed, if appropriate, at any time. Changes to plan components are made by a formal amendment process.
  - The Plan honors the continuing validity of private, statutory, or pre-existing rights.

## The Plan Components

The important elements of this Plan are the plan components. The plan components are:

- **Desired Conditions:** The social, economic, and ecological attributes toward which management of the land and resources of the plan area is to be directed. Desired conditions are aspirations and are not commitments or final decisions approving projects and activities and may be achievable over a long time period.
- **Objectives:** Concise projections of measurable, time-specific intended outcomes. Objectives are the means of measuring progress toward achieving or maintaining desired conditions.
- **Suitability of Areas:** NFS lands are identified as “generally suitable” for various uses. An area may be identified as generally suitable or generally not suitable for uses that are compatible with desired conditions and objectives for that area.
- **Special Areas:** Lands within the NFS that have been designated because of their unique or special characteristics, for example, wilderness, research natural areas, botanical areas, or national recreation trails.
- **Guidelines:** Information and guidance for projects and activity decisionmaking to help achieve desired conditions and objectives.

Plan components, except suitability of areas, are formatted differently to distinguish them from other sections of the Plan. They are set in a light gray box.

## Consistency with Plan Components

Under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976, a project or activity must be consistent with plan components as described in Appendix B: Consistency with Plan Components.

A substantive change to the plan components requires a plan amendment. Other changes in this document may be made with administrative corrections<sup>1</sup>; such as, corrections and updates of data and maps, typographical errors, the monitoring program and monitoring information, and other

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<sup>1</sup> Per the 2008 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219), administrative corrections include: (1) corrections and updates of data and maps; (2) corrections of typographical errors or other non-substantive changes; (3) changes in the monitoring program and monitoring information; (4) changes in timber management projections or other projections of uses or activities; and (5) other changes in the plan document or set of documents that are not substantive

non-substantive changes. The public would be notified of any future amendments and administrative corrections to the Plan.

## **Other Content**

This Plan also includes materials that are not plan components. This material includes: this background chapter, roles and contributions of the ASNFs, the ASNFs' mission, the ASNFs' vision, background and existing conditions, cross indexes, management approaches, other sources of information, and appendices. Projects and activities are not expected to be consistent with this material. This material may be changed with an administrative correction.

## **Plan Structure**

This Plan is organized into several major divisions: Background, Vision, Strategy, Design Criteria, and appendices. This section briefly describes how the plan components are distributed among the three parts of this Plan, and the sections within those three parts. For a quick preview of the Plan structure, glance at the Table of Contents.

## **About Vision**

This chapter describes the aspirational picture for the future of the ASNFs through desired conditions that reflect the forests' uniqueness on a national and regional level. It includes the desired conditions plan component.

Desired conditions are organized by three revision topics: 1) Maintenance and Improvement of Ecosystem Health, 2) Managed Recreation, and 3) Community-Forest Interaction. The desired conditions are described forestwide and by [geographic area](#) and management area.

## **About Strategy**

This chapter describes how the ASNFs intend to move toward the desired conditions. It includes a discussion of objectives and management approaches, suitability of areas, and special areas. Objectives, suitability of areas, and special areas are plan components. While the management approaches sections are not plan components, they help clarify how plan components may be applied.

The objectives are organized by the three revision topics mentioned above.

## **About Design Criteria**

Design criteria are the sideboards that guide management activities. They provide for the protection of resources as projects are carried out under the plan guidance to help move toward the desired conditions. This chapter includes the guidelines plan component.

In addition to plan guidelines, the design criteria chapter also references "other sources of information" found in public laws, regulations, Forest Service manuals, handbooks, and other references.

### **About Appendix A: Glossary**

This appendix provides definitions of select words from this Plan. These words are hyperlinked once in the main document.

### **About Appendix B: Consistency with Plan Components**

This appendix explains how projects and activities must be consistent with this Plan.

### **About Appendix C: Proposed and Possible Actions**

This appendix describes proposed and possible actions that may subsequently take place at the project or activity-level to help maintain existing conditions or move toward the desired conditions.

### **About Appendix D: Monitoring Strategy**

This appendix describes the monitoring strategy for this Plan, including monitoring questions and performance measures.

### **About Appendix E: Communications Sites**

This appendix identifies the designated communications sites located on the ASNFs.

### **About Appendix F: Timber Availability Summary and Classification Descriptions**

This appendix describes the categories of timber availability and how ASNFs' lands were classified to determine timber suitability.

### **About Appendix G: Geographic Area Maps**

This appendix displays maps of the eight geographic areas, including special areas, management areas, and other features.