United States Department of Agriculture

CUSTER GALLATIN NATIONAL FOREST

Forest Plan Revision

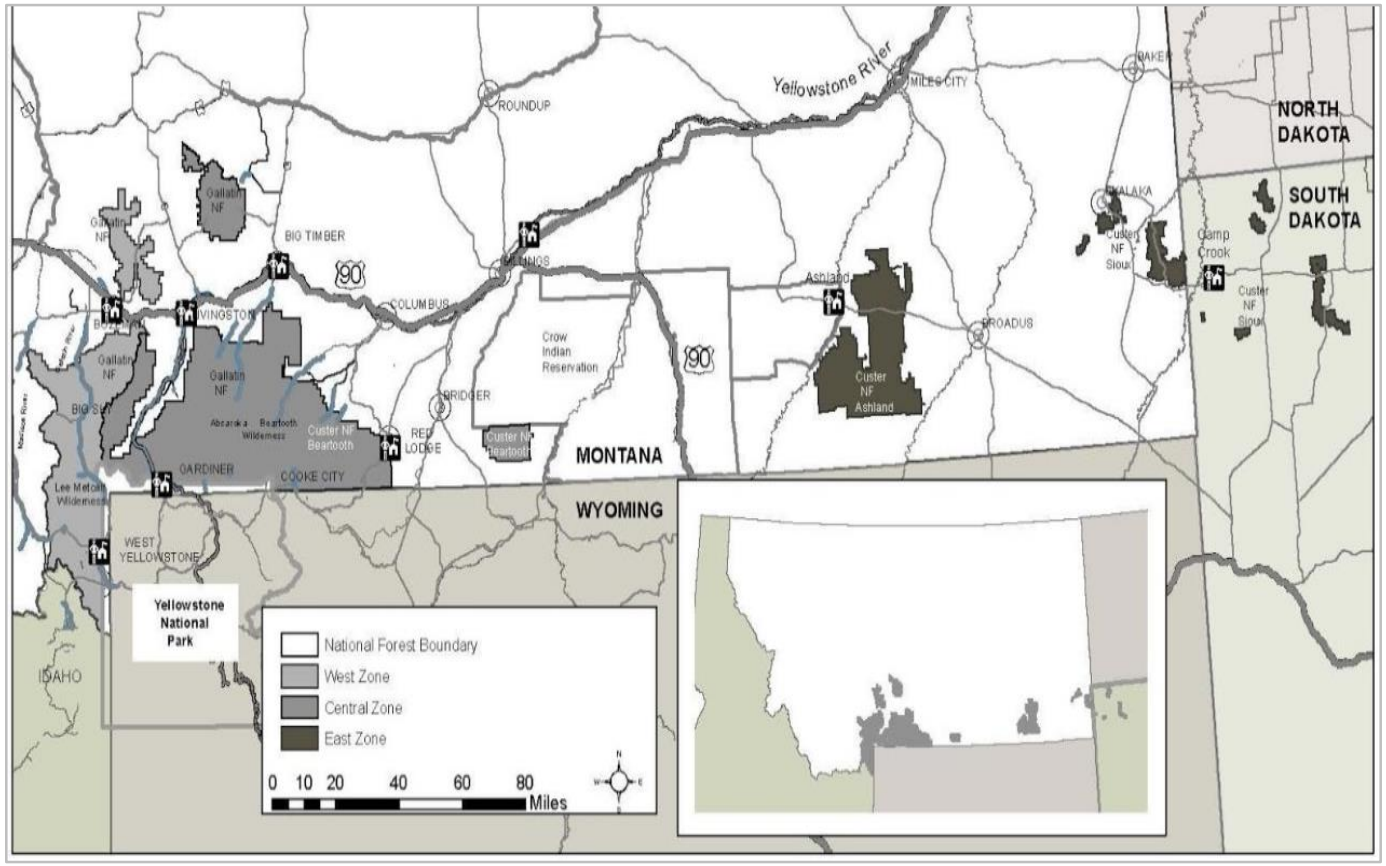
Forest Service

March 2016

Topics

- Custer Gallatin National Forest
- What is a Forest Plan?
- Why does a Forest Plan Matter?
- Why Revise the Forest Plan?
- Plan Revision Steps and Schedule
- Public Engagement

Custer Gallatin National Forest



Custer and Gallatin Forests combined in 2014

Custer Gallatin National Forest *Fast Facts*

- 3.1 million acres
- Highest peaks in Montana; 12,799’ Granite Peak
- Dinosaur Fossils
- Only US palladium and platinum mine
- Among the nation’s largest Forest Service grazing programs (Sioux and Ashland Districts)
- All native wildlife still roam

Custer Gallatin National Forest *Fast Facts*

7 Districts

9 Forest Offices in two States:

-West Yellowstone, MT

-Bozeman, MT

-Gardiner, MT

-Livingston, MT

-Big Timber Work Center, MT

-Billings, MT

-Red Lodge, MT

-Ashland, MT

- Camp Crook, SD

500 road miles from west to east offices

What is a Forest Plan?

- Comprehensive plan guiding forest management for 15+ years
- Guides **what** we do, **where** we do it and **how** we do it.
- Land allocations ("Zoning")
- Identify areas that are or may be suitable for special designations.
- Maintain and restore forest land and water ecosystems
- Provide for ecosystem benefits and multiple uses.

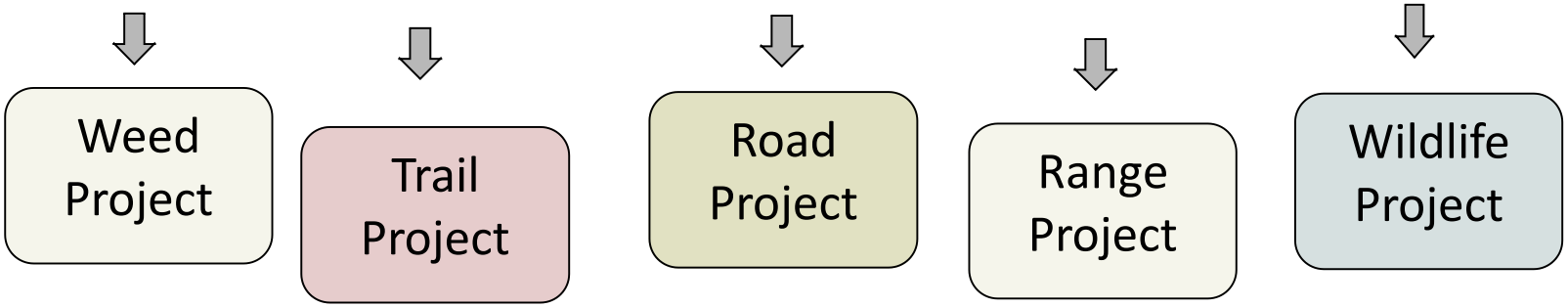
Why Does a Forest Plan Matter?

Forest Plan

Project

- Creates a vision for the Forest
- Sets overall Forest management direction for years to come
- The Forest Plan does not authorize site specific activities or prohibitions
- All subsequent proposals and projects must comply with the approved forest plan

New Projects comply with the Revised Forest Plan and with Project NEPA



Why Revise the Forest Plans?

- It's the law

  The National Forest Management Act (1976) requires a Forest Plan, and that it be periodically revised.

- Two existing Plans for one Forest

- A lot has changed: increased population, bigger fires, new invasives, land exchanges, new technology, uses and interests.

Who Approves the Revised Forest Plan?

Decided by Forest Supervisor Mary Erickson

Forest Service Chief (Washington DC)

↓

Regional Forester (Missoula)
(9 Regions Across the Country)

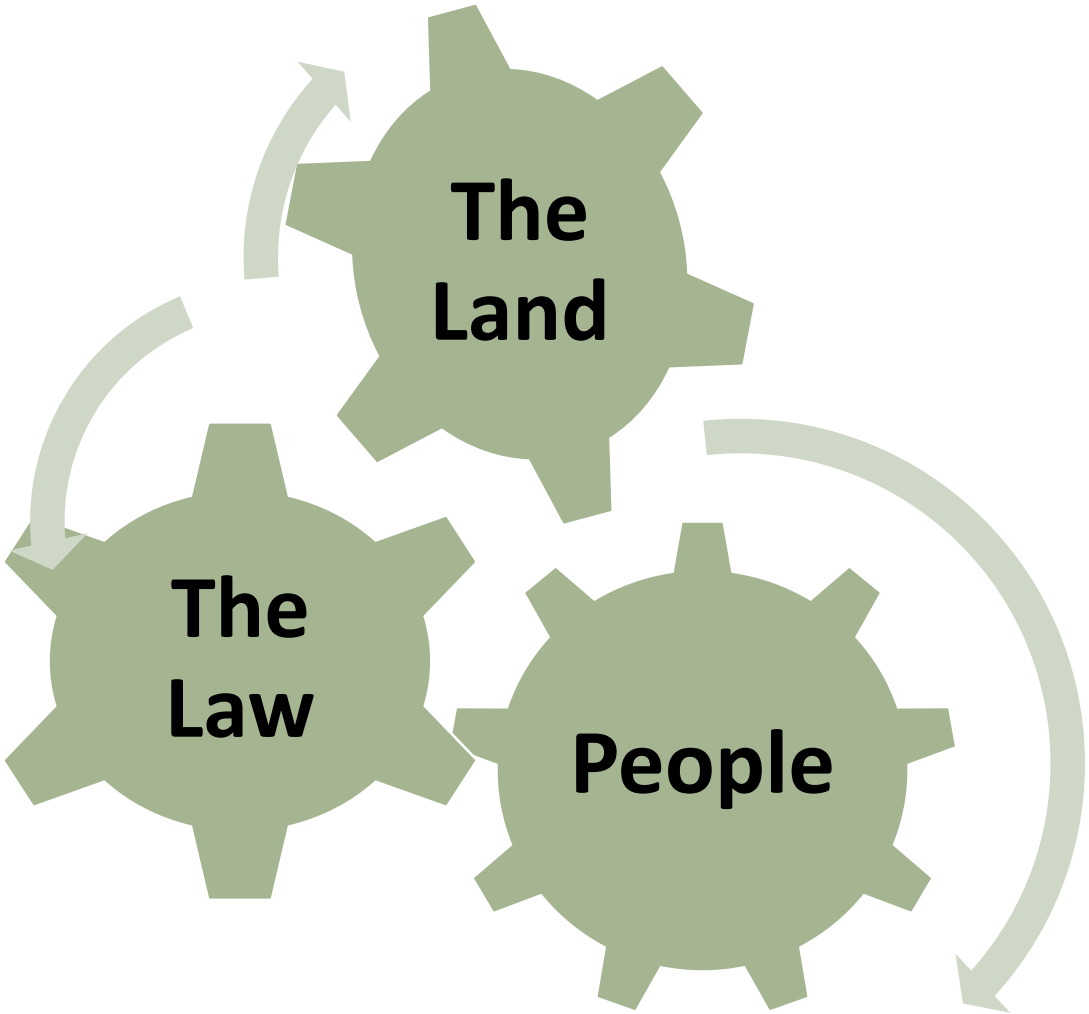
↓

Forest Supervisor Mary Erickson

↓

District Ranger
(7 Rangers on Custer Gallatin NF)

Cogs to a Forest Plan



The Land

- Soils
- Elevation
- Terrain
- Steepness
- Rainfall
- Climate
- Streams, springs
- Vegetation

The Law

"The Principal Laws Relating to Forest Service Activities"

USMiningLaws
EndangeredSpeciesAct
NationalHistoricPreservationAct
NationalEnvironmentalPolicyAct
NationalForestManagementAct
CleanAirAct WildernessAct
CleanWaterAct
MultipleUseSustainedYieldAct
WildandScenicRiversAct
NationalTrailsSystemAct

The Law

National Forest Management Act (1976)

↓

USFS Planning Rule (1982, then 2012)
Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR219)

↓

Forest Service Planning Directives (2015)

↓

Forest Land Management Plan

↓

Possibly Intermediate Plans
(e.g. Wilderness Plan)

↓

Project or Activity Decision

The Law

National Forest Management Act (1976)

Forest Land Management Plan Includes "zoning"

Project or Activity Decision

Montana Growth Policy Subdivision and Platting Act

County Growth Policy (optional)

Subdivision Decision

People's Interests

Clean water and fresh air

Economic opportunities

Wood products

Minerals and energy resources

Recreation

Grazing

Fish and wildlife habitat

Integration: the Land, the Law, People

Provide for

Ecological Sustainability

and

Contribute to

Social and Economic Sustainability

Integration and Sustainability

Provide for Ecological Sustainability

and

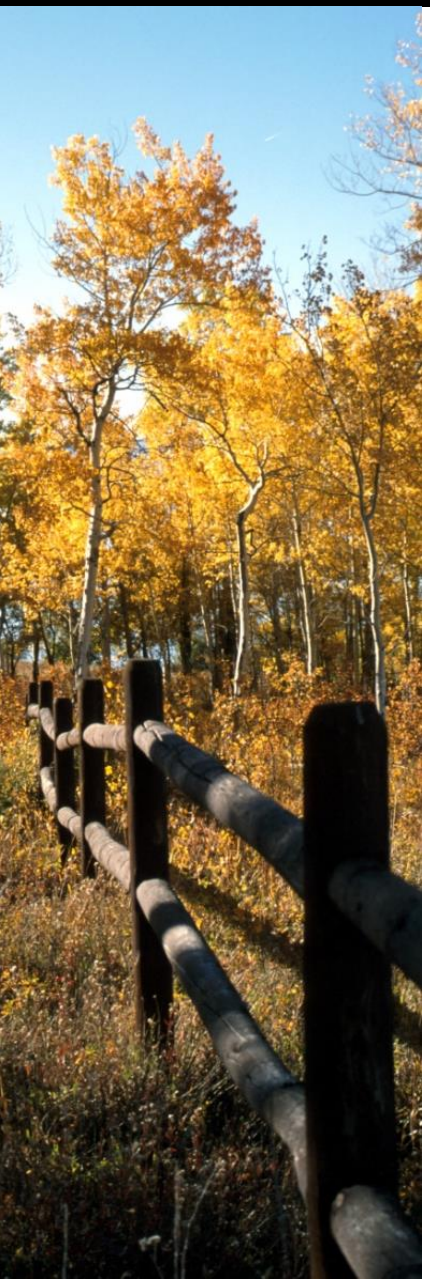
Contribute to Social and Economic Sustainability

Caring for the Land

Serving the People

For the long term

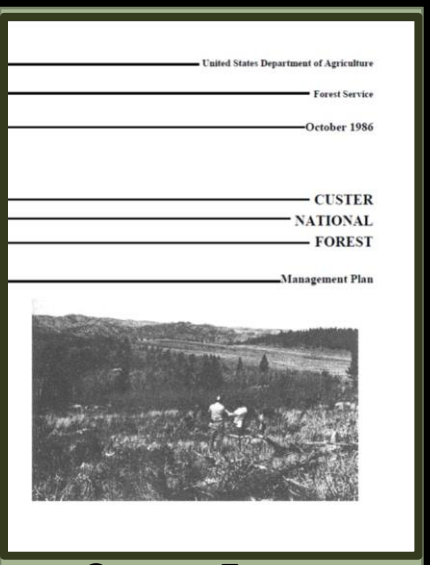
Revised Forest Plan Components



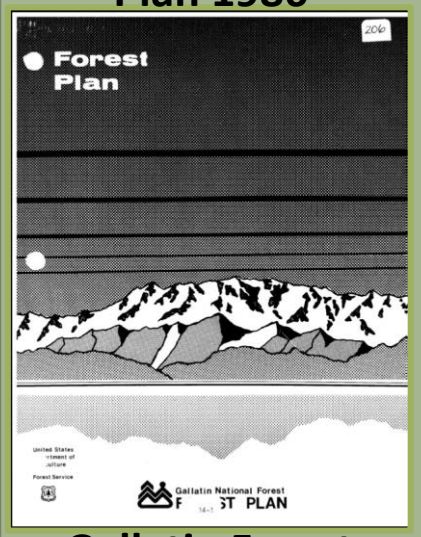
- Desired Conditions
- Objectives
- Standards
- Guidelines
- Suitability of Lands
- Goals (optional)

- Management Areas or Geographic Areas or both *("zoning")*

Custer Gallatin Forest Plan *Fast Facts*



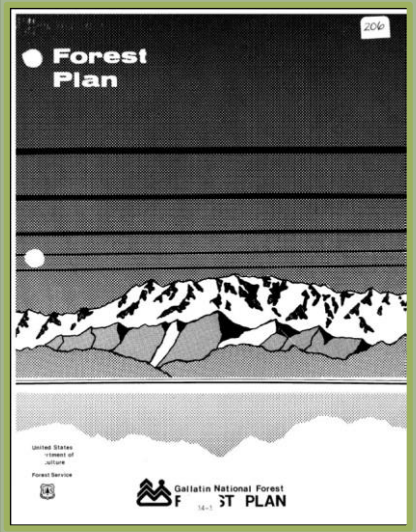
Custer Forest Plan 1986



Gallatin Forest Plan 1987

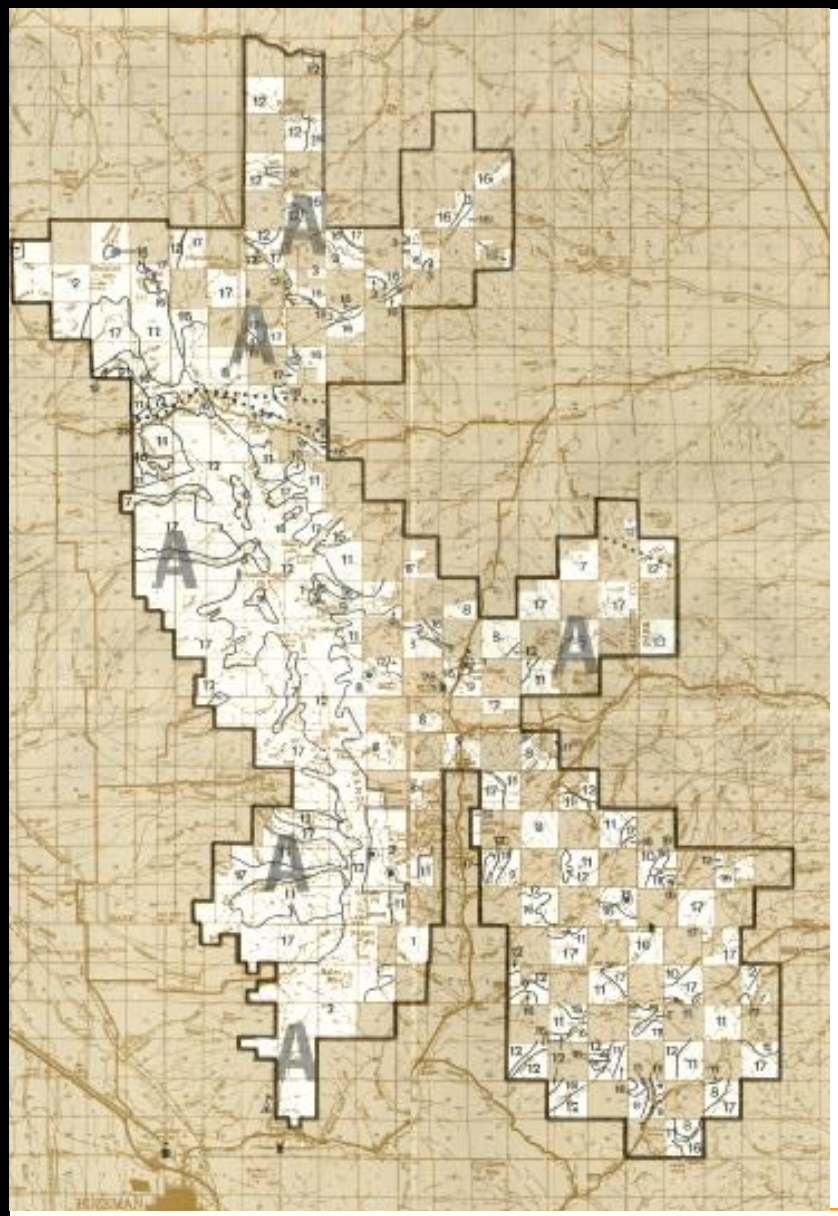
- Two Plans for one consolidated Forest
- Both plans developed under 1982 Forest Service planning regulations
- Custer Plan published in 1986
- Gallatin Plan published in 1987
- 34 amendments to the Custer Plan
- 50 amendments to Gallatin Plan

Current Gallatin Forest Plan *Bozeman District*



Gallatin Forest Plan 1987

Management Areas (MA) 1 through 26



MA 11: Big Game/Timber Water Quality

MA 12: Wildlife Habitat/Dispersed Rec/Livestock Forage

MA 17: Vegetation and Forage for Livestock/Wildlife

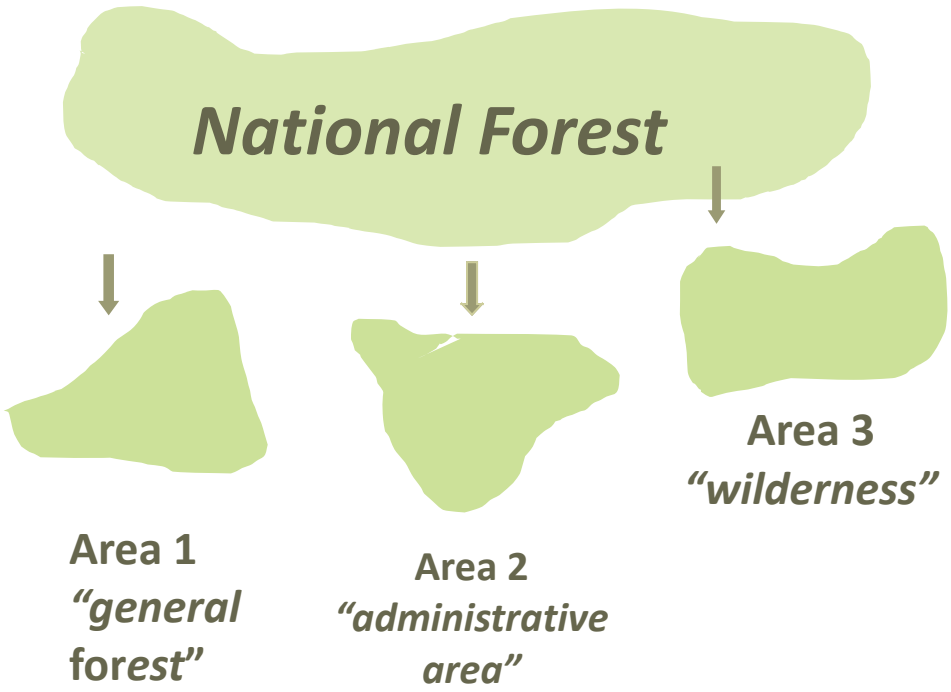
How might the Forest Plan Change?

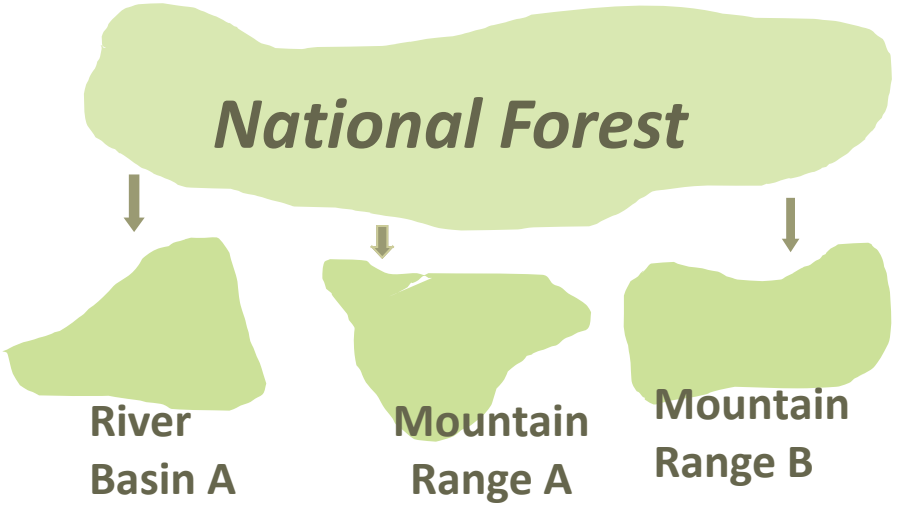
Revised Plan may use **Management Areas** and/or **Geographic Areas**
Management/Geographic Areas May Change in Location and Emphasis

Management Areas
Based on Purpose

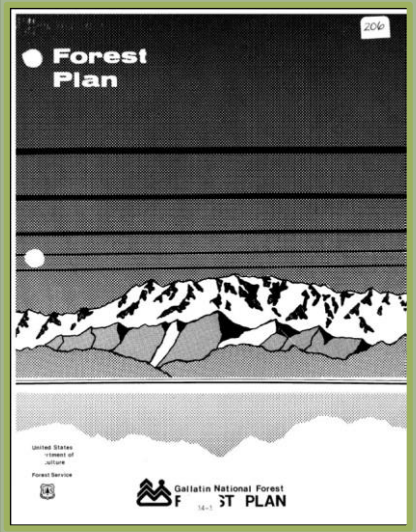
And / Or

Geographic Areas
Based on Place





Current Gallatin Forest Plan



Gallatin Forest Plan 1987

Example: **Current Gallatin Forest Plan**

Goal: Provide a sustained yield of timber products and improve the productivity of timber growing lands.

Goal: Maintain or improve the forage resource.

How might the Forest Plan Change?

Possible: Revised Forest Plan

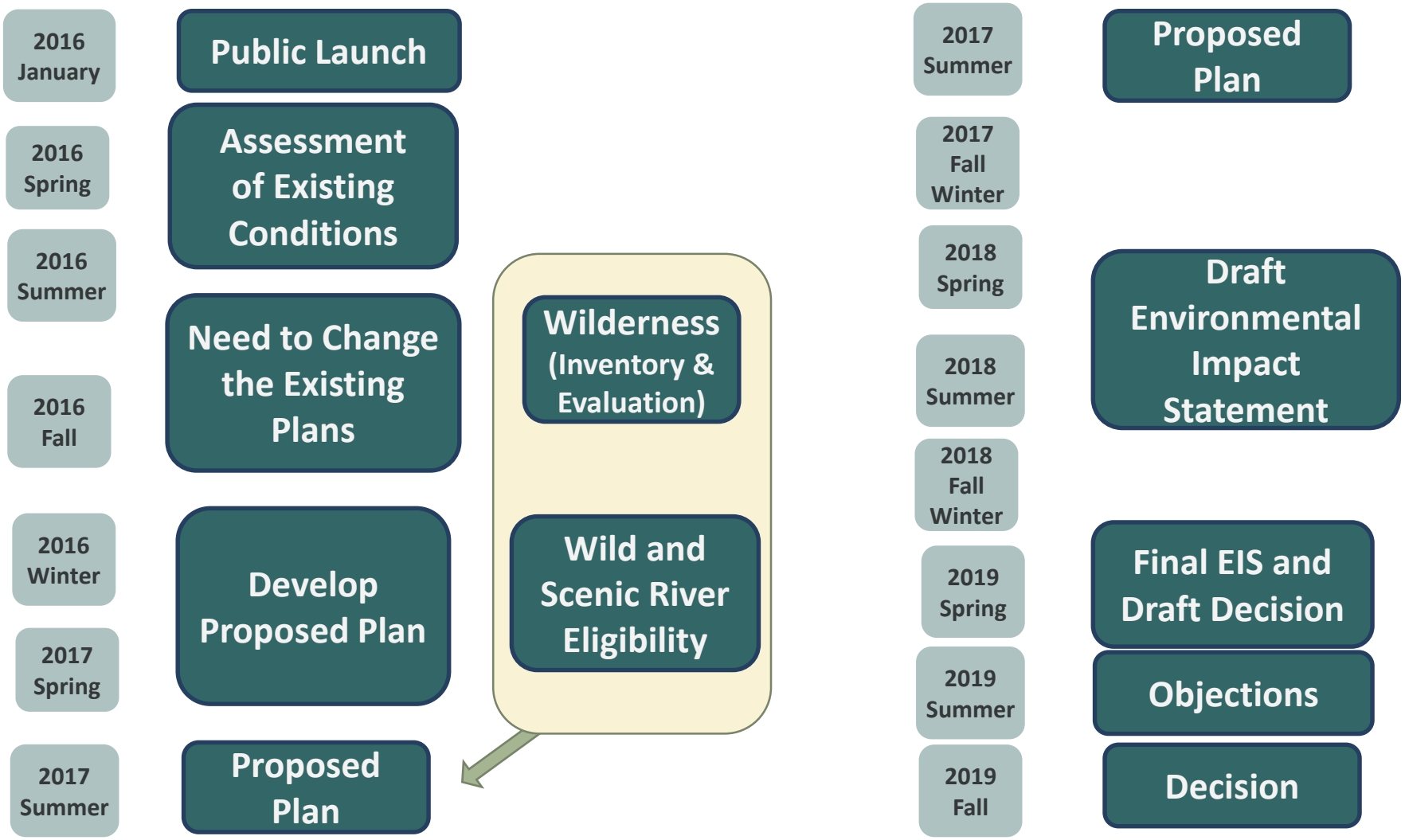
Desired conditions:

Across the landscape, diverse vegetation conditions occur, in a complex pattern of species, tree sizes, tree ages, forest densities, patch sizes, canopy layers and other structural forest characteristics.

Vegetation provides sustainable levels of timber harvest and other forest products such as wood fiber, biomass, firewood, posts and poles, mushrooms, berries for commercial, tribal, personal, educational, and scientific uses.

(merely an example)

Plan Revision Steps and Schedule



Plan Revision Assessment Phase

- 15 important ecological, social, and economic resource topics (see handout)
  - What is out there?
  - What is the trend?
  - What is the potential for the future?
  - What is at risk?
- Use of best available science, local information, national perspectives, and native knowledge
- Identify how the 1986 and 1987 Plans need to be revised (aka “Need to Change”)

Plan Revision Assessment Topics

1. Terrestrial ecosystems, aquatic ecosystems, and watersheds
2. Air, soil, and water resources
3. System drivers and stressors (e.g fire, invasives)
4. Baseline assessment of carbon stocks
5. Threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate species, and potential species of conservation concern
6. Social, cultural, and economic conditions
7. Benefits people obtain from the NFS planning area (ecosystem services)
8. Multiple uses (e.g. timber, grazing)
9. Recreation settings, opportunities and access, and scenic character
10. Renewable and nonrenewable energy and mineral resources
11. Infrastructure, such as recreational facilities and transportation and utility corridors
12. Areas of tribal importance
13. Cultural and historical resources and uses
14. Land status and ownership, use, and access patterns
15. Existing designated areas (e.g. wilderness and wild and scenic rivers) and potential need and opportunity for additional designated areas

Share your local knowledge and data

How will we use your input?

Scientific Information related to the 15 Assessment topics will be considered by the respective specialist(s) using criteria of: **Accuracy, Reliability, Relevance**

Observations, perceptions and trends on existing conditions will be routed to the appropriate specialist for consideration.

Site specific information may or may not be relevant to the Assessment. Information may be routed to the respective district or utilized in developing the Plan.

Opinions/ feelings will not be directly applicable to the Assessment. Where applicable, interests will be incorporated into developing the Plan.

We Need your Involvement

Actively participate in developing a future vision.

Tell us what you **want to see** on this land.

Complete the Questionnaire, tell us:

- What works and what needs to change with Forest management?
- What topics are important to you and why?

See list of information we are already using, and add your local knowledge and data.

Next Steps: 2016

February March

Introductory Community Meetings

Spring

Forest Service Prepares Assessment and Need to Change the Plans

May June

Community Meetings

Assessment and Need to Change the Plans

August

Draft Assessment Available for Review

Fall

Need to Change the Plans

Begin Creating New Plan

For more information….

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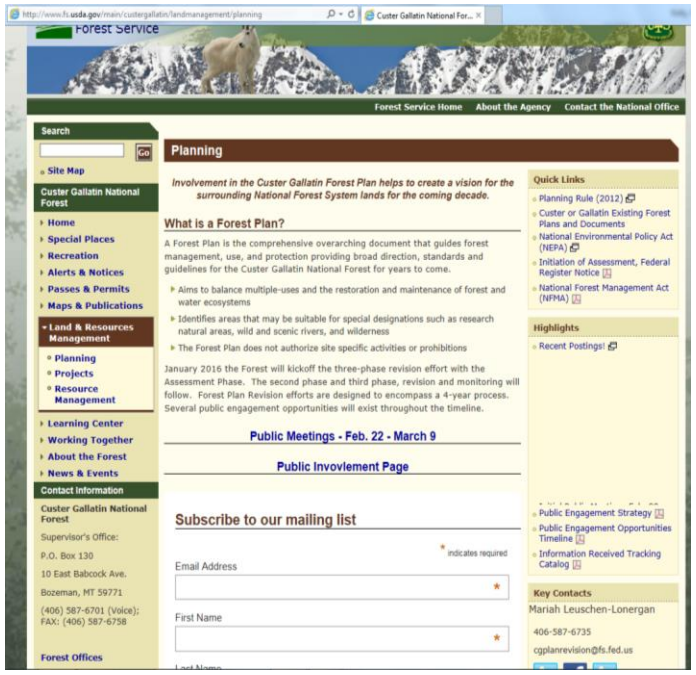
Website:
http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/custergallatin/landmanagement/planning