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This chapter describes the planning requirements of 36 CFR 219 ("2012 Planning Rule") and the procedures for developing, amending, and revising land management plans during the planning phase. FSH 1909.12, chapter 10 describes the requirements for the assessment phase for developing, amending, and revising land management plans.

20.5 – Definitions

See the Zero Code chapter of this Handbook for definitions.

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21 – DEVELOPING, REVISING, AMENDING, OR ADMINISTRATIVELY CHANGING A PLAN

This section gives guidance on the planning phase of how to develop, amend, revise, or administratively change a plan. FSH 1909.12, chapter 10 describes the requirements for the assessment phase for developing, amending, and revising land management plans. Plans provide vision, strategy, guidance, and constraints. Plans themselves do not compel Agency action or guarantee specific results.

21.1 – Developing or Revising Plans

21.11 – General Steps for Developing or Revising Plans

The Responsible Official should complete the plan development or plan revision, from the public notice of the assessment to final plan approval, within 4 years.

The plan development or revision process may be conducted in many different ways depending on the circumstances. The Interdisciplinary Team shall design the process to be transparent and efficient, to reflect principles of adaptive management, and to engage the public through meaningful opportunities for participation early and throughout the process.

The Responsible Official has the discretion to determine the scope, methods, forum, and timing of the process, subject to public notification requirements listed in 36 CFR 219.16 (see FSH 1909.12, ch. 40, sec. 42).

The Responsible Official shall establish an Interdisciplinary Team to carry out the planning process (36 CFR 219.5(b)) and provide the Team direction regarding the scope and nature of the new plan or plan revision. FSH 1909.15, chapter 10, section 12.2 gives guidance on Interdisciplinary Team selection. After the assessment phase and during planning phase, the Interdisciplinary Team develops potential plan components, and constantly reviews, evaluates, and adjusts them throughout planning phase to assure that they make a coherent whole.

Outreach to the public continues at all steps of the plan development or revision process (FSH 1909.12, ch. 40). While the Agency does not specify a sequence of steps for developing or revising plans, general steps for conducting the planning process include:

1. Identifying the need to change the plan (36 CFR 219.7(c)(2)(i), sec. 21.21 of this Handbook).

2. Describing the plan area's distinctive roles and contributions in the broader landscape (36 CFR 219.7(f)(1)(ii), sec. 22.32 of this Handbook).

3. Identifying the species of conservation concern (36 CFR 219.9(c)); FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.52 and sec. 21.22 of this Handbook).

4. Developing a proposed new plan or revised plan with public participation (36 CFR 219.4 and 219.16 (FSH 1909.12, ch. 40).

5. Analyzing and documenting the environmental and social effects of the proposed plan components and alternatives in an environmental impact statement following the appropriate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Procedures (36 CFR 220, FSM 1950, and FSH 1909.15).

6. Reviewing the land use policies of federally recognized Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments required by 36 CFR 219.4(b)(2) and document the review in the environmental impact statement.

7. Providing an opportunity for the public to comment on the proposed new plan or revised plan and the draft environmental impact statement (36 CFR 219.16(a)(2)). The required comment period is at least 90 days for a new plan or plan revision.

8. Considering public comments and preparing a predecisional new plan or revised plan.

9. Consulting with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), a division of the Department of Commerce, or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a bureau of the Department of the Interior (USFWS), or both; if the approval of a plan, or plan revision, or plan amendment may affect listed species or critical habitat or may adversely affect essential fish habitat of managed fisheries.

10. Providing an opportunity to object to a plan, before approval (36 CFR 219.52; FSH 1909.12, ch. 50).

11. Approving the final plan or plan revision with in a decision document that also serves as a record of decision, and notifying the public (36 CFR 219.14(a) and 219.16(a)(4)).

21.12 – Considerations when Preparing New or Revised Plans

In addition to identifying a need to change the plan and reviewing the assessment, the Responsible Official shall identify and consider a number of resources and issues during the planning process as listed by the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.7(c)(2)). The Responsible Official should consider this list of resources and issues before developing a proposed new plan or revised plan or as part of the process of developing the proposed plan. The following list sets forth requirements, along with references for guidance and information. Note that each consideration also may be supported by information generated during public participation or derived from some other source.

1. The Responsible Official shall base the plan components on likely budgets and other assumptions that are realistic as required by 36 CFR 219.1(g):

(g) The responsible official shall ensure that the planning process, plan components, and other plan content are within Forest Service authority, the inherent capability of the plan area, and the fiscal capability of the unit.

2. Before or as part of the process of developing plan components for a new plan or plan revision, the following items should be completed:

a. Identification of the species of conservation concern (§ 219.7(c)(3), § 219.9(c), sec. 21.22a of this Handbook).

b. Descriptions of the plan area's distinctive roles and contributions within the broader landscape (§ 219.7(f)(1)(ii), sec. 22.32 of this Handbook).

c. Identification of the need to change the existing plan (§ 219.7(c)(2)(i)), sec. 21.21 of this Handbook).

d. Identification of priority watersheds (§ 219.7(f)(1)(i), sec. 22.31 of this Handbook).

e. Consideration of the goals and objectives of the Forest Service strategic plan, available at *http://www.fs.fed.us*, as they relate to the plan area (§ 219.2(a)).

f. Identification of the presence and consider the importance of various physical, biological, social, cultural, and historic resources on the plan area (§ 219.6)based on the assessment and the need to change the plan components (sec. 23 of this Handbook).

g. Consideration of conditions, trends, and stressors identified in the assessment related to the need to change the plan components. (§ 219.6).

h. Inventory and evaluation of lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (§ 219.7(c)(2)(v), FSH 1909.12, ch. 70, and sec. 24.41 of this Handbook).

i. Identification of 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 (§ 219.7(c)(2)(vi), FSH 1909.12, ch. 80, and sec. 24.42 of this Handbook).

j. Identification of existing designated areas other than wilderness areas and wild and scenic rivers (§ 219.7(c)(2)(iii), sec. 24 of this Handbook).

k. Identification of the lands that may be suitable for timber production and identify the maximum quantity of timber that may be removed from the plan area (FSH 1909.12, ch. 60).

l. Identification of questions and indicators for the plan monitoring program (§ 219.12, FSH 1909.12, chapter 30).

m. Identification of other content in the plan (§ 219.7(f), sec. 22.3 and 22.4 of this Handbook).

n. Review of land use policies of federally recognized Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments required by 36 CFR 219.4(b)(2).

3. The recommended layout for plan components and other plan content is illustrated by the plan model, described in the technical guide "Foundations of Forest Planning" available on the Ecosystem Management Coordination website at *http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/index.htm*.

4. The Responsible Official shall ensure an integrated set of plan components that:

a. Together provide for sustainability, ecological integrity, diversity of plant and animal communities, ecosystem services, and multiple use;

b. Contribute to social and economic sustainability;

c. Provide a strategic and practical framework for managing the plan area;

d. Are within Forest Service authority, the inherent capability of the plan area, and the fiscal capability of the unit; and

e. On balance, best meet the needs of the American people (16 U.S.C. 531).

5. The Responsible Official should understand:

a. Local customs and culture;

b. Different and possibly conflicting public interests, needs, perspectives, and wants, including regional and national points of view; and

c. The broad range of public values and the input from the public, governmental entities, and the Agency.

21.13 – Opportunities for Coordinating Planning and NEPA Activities

The NEPA and Forest planning processes must be integrated. The Responsible Official should provide direction to the Interdisciplinary team in a project initiation letter to ensure that the Interdisciplinary Team develops a strategic approach for coordinating planning and NEPA procedures. The Forest Service NEPA directives are found in FSM 1950 – Environmental Policy and Procedures and in FSH 1909.15 – National Environmental Policy Act Handbook. See *http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nepa/nepa_procedures/index.htm*.

Careful coordination of planning and NEPA procedures, particularly public participation, allows the Interdisciplinary Team to be more efficient by aligning planning tasks with the requirements of NEPA. Important opportunities to integrate planning and NEPA requirements include the following:

1. Using the results of the assessment to describe the affected environment in the environmental impact statement. If information gaps were identified during or subsequent to the assessment, additional information might be needed to effectively describe the affected environment, consistent with NEPA requirements.

2. Using the need to change the plan identified during the planning process to write the purpose and need statement for the environmental impact statement. Early in the planning phase, a preliminary need to change the plan is identified and public comment is sought to help develop the need to change the plan, which in turn helps focus plan development or revision.

3. Including both planning and NEPA requirements in the public participation strategy (FSH 1909.12, ch. 40, sec. 42).

4. Integrating NEPA scoping, where appropriate, into public engagement activities used to support development of plan components and other plan content. Scoping includes refining the proposed action, determining cooperating agencies, identifying preliminary issues, and identifying interested and affected persons (FSH 1909.15, ch. 10, sec. 11.) Early public engagement during the planning process can help to identify goals and concerns for the plan area. This phase provides the opportunity for the Interdisciplinary Team to meet NEPA scoping requirements and, therefore, gain an understanding of the following elements that will be important during the NEPA analysis:

   a. Significant issues that will frame alternatives for considerations,

   b. Potential alternatives for analysis, and

   c. Potential effects of alternatives.

21.14 – Coordination of Public Outreach and Scoping Activities for Plan Revision

The Responsible Official has discretion to determine when to begin the NEPA scoping phase; for example, during the assessment, as soon as the assessment is complete, before developing plan components, or early in the development of plan components. The Responsible Official may adjust steps and content of the scoping process, depending upon when scoping begins.

The Responsible Official should ensure that the Interdisciplinary Team has planned appropriately to meet and integrate NEPA and planning public outreach requirements and to meet notice and maintenance of meeting records (see FSH 1909.15, ch. 10, sec. 11, "Conduct Scoping," and sec. 12.1, "Project Initiation").

There are considerations when coordinating public outreach and scoping activities. Here are two examples:

1. Engage the public to develop the proposal and later begin NEPA scoping. Once the Responsible Official starts the planning process with notice to start development of a new plan revision (36 CFR 219.5(a)(1)), the Interdisciplinary Team would conduct public engagement activities needed to ensure strong public input into developing a proposal. The proposal might consist of a detailed need to change the plan, proposed management areas, plan components, or a combination of these items. At a reasonable time in advance of preparation of the draft environmental impact statement (EIS), the Responsible Official has the option to start NEPA scoping by publishing a notice of intent (NOI) in the Federal Register. Under this consideration, the Agency gives the public a more specific proposal, developed with public input, in the NOI to bring about specific comments that are useful to identify specific issues related to the proposal. Responsible Officials shall set the expectation that they will consider and use all public comments arising through the NEPA process to refine or alter the proposal.

2. Engage the public to develop the proposal and at the same time begin NEPA scoping. NEPA scoping may begin simultaneously with the planning process. The notice of intent to prepare an EIS can be combined with the notice to start development of a new plan revision (36 CFR 219.5(a)(1). In this approach, the proposal in the NOI would be less specific than paragraph 1. In this approach, public engagement efforts intended to identify issues and potential alternatives, and to design plan components are done together. Under this consideration, additional public engagement may be needed once a proposal is refined to identify specific issues related to the proposal. If there are major changes to the NOI proposal, a corrected notice of intent should be published in the Federal Register.

Exhibit 01 displays a model on how planning, NEPA, and opportunities to participate are related over time in the plan revision process. There is a row for each topic. The beginning of the assessment is on the left. The end of the planning process is on the right. It should take 3 to 4 years to cross the page. The activities that occur about the same time are arranged on top of one another. The duration of any given activity will vary depending on specific circumstances.

21.12 - Exhibit 01

Relationship of Planning, NEPA, and Opportunities to Participate in Plan Revision

Planning Timeline →						
Planning Process						
Assessment	Preliminary identification of need to change the plan	Development of plan components and other plan content for proposed plan	Seek public comment on proposed plan	Develop plan	Objection Process	Plan approval
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process						
	Scoping (flexibility to begin scoping at any point in the assessment and planning process) Review results of scoping. Identify purpose and need based on need to change the plan	Identify alternatives Describe affected environment Estimate effects of each alternative Develop environmental impact statement	Seek public comment on draft environmental impact analysis (EIS) and preferred alternative	Consider comments and respond to comments. Develop final EIS and draft plan decision	Issue errata sheet or supplemental EIS if needed	Record of decision approving the plan
Opportunities for Public Participation						
Formal notice starting assessment * Public engagement in assessment.	Formal notice of starting plan revision* Formal notice of intent to develop EIS (when scoping starts)* Public engagement in planning process and scoping process.	Inform public of results of scoping Public engagement	Formal notice of availability of DEIS and proposed plan* Public engagement	Public engagement	Formal notice to begin objection period (availability of FEIS, final plan, and draft plan decision document* Notice of objections filed in the newspaper of record	Formal notice of plan approval* Public engagement about plan approval

* Formal notice means notice in the Federal Register and the newspaper of record

21.2 – Information Basis for Plan Development, Plan Amendment, and Plan Revision

New plans, plan amendments, and plan revisions are based on a need to change the plan. Usually the Responsible Official begins a plan revision because it is time to do so; that is, NFMA requires plan revision "at least every 15 years." 16 USC 1604 (f)(5). In that case, how much of the content of the plan must change in the revision process is the “need to change the plan” inquiry.

Otherwise, if a need to change the plan is identified that cannot be made through administrative changes (36 CFR 219.13) or by changing management practices rather than plan components, an amendment or revision should be started, as appropriate. A well-supported and effective rationale determining a need to change the plan must be based on a good source of information. Assessments (ch. 10), along with the planning record, are an important source of information for a new plan or plan revision.

For plan amendments, an assessment is not required (see FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 15). The Responsible Official may rely on a monitoring report or other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances to identify a need to change the plan (36 CFR 219.13(b)).

The Responsible Official shall focus on evaluating available, relevant information. The terms “available” and “relevant” are defined in FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, section 11.

21.21 – Need to Change the Plan

The Responsible Official for plan development, plan amendment, and plan revisions shall identify a need to change the plan to give focus to the planning process. If a need to change the plan is identified that cannot be made through administrative changes (36 CFR 219.13), an amendment or revision should be started, as appropriate.

The need to change the plan helps define the proposed action, purpose and need, and decision framework for the environmental analysis related to the planning process (See FSH 1909.12, ch. 40 and FSH 1909.15, ch. 10, sec. 11.2). The Responsible Official should involve the public in the development of the need to change the plan by giving the public the opportunity to comment on a preliminary need to change before documenting the need to change the plan as part of the purpose and need in the environmental analysis documents for the plan development, plan revision, or plan amendment.

1. The need to change the plan should be written so that it is clear to the public which plan components are proposed to be changed and which are not.

2. Numerous sources of information are available to the Responsible Official to help determine a need to change the plan including:

a. Biennial evaluations of monitoring information (36 CFR 219.12(d); FSH 1909.12, ch. 30, sec. 34)

b. An assessment for plan development or plan revision (36 CFR 219.6(a) and (b); FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, secs. 12, 13 and 14)

c. A focused assessment for plan amendments, if needed (36 CFR 219.6; FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 15)

d. Other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances on the plan area, from any source, that supports a need for a revision, amendment or administrative change to the plan (36 CFR 219.6(c)).

e. Changes in laws, regulations, or policy.

3. When developing or revising a plan, the Responsible Official should invite public input on a preliminary need to change the plan (36 CFR 219.7(c)(2)(i)) so that:

a. Public comments are used to improve the need to change the plan.

b. The topics and concerns considered can be broadened or reduced as needed.

c. The need to change the plan may support retaining existing plan direction as plan components as well as developing new plan components as appropriate.

4. For documentation, the Responsible Official should document the need to change as part of the purpose and need in the environmental analysis documents for the plan development, plan revision, or plan amendment.

21.22 – Species of Conservation Concern

21.22a – Identifying Species of Conservation Concern

The Regional Forester is the Responsible Official for identifying any species of conservation concern in a plan area. Identifying the SCCs usually occurs during the planning phase, but may occur at any time.

1. The Regional Forester has the authority and responsibility to:

a. Review the rationale and documentation for potential species of conservation concern provided by the Responsible Official (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.52), and determining whether the best available scientific information indicates:

(1) That the species is native and known to occur in the plan area, and

(2) There is a substantial concern about the species' capability to persist over the long term in the plan area based on the guidance of FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, section 12.52c.

b. Based on the review of the potential species of conservation concern, identify the species of conservation concern in coordination with the Responsible Official for the plan area. This authority to identify species of conservation concern may not be delegated.

c. Identify species of conservation concern early enough to expedite the planning process.

d. Leverage expertise of the public and local, State, Tribal, and other Federal natural resource agencies, for identifying species of conservation concern.

e. Engage the public and invite public input when identifying species of conservation concern, as part of the public participation strategy (FSH 1909.12, ch. 40, sec. 42).

f. Document the rationale for the selection of species of conservation concern.

g. Inform the Responsible Official and the public of the identified species of conservation concern.

h. Identify any species of conservation concern at times outside the planning process as appropriate.

2. The Responsible Official has the authority to:

a. Leverage expertise of the public and local, State, Tribal, and other Federal natural resource agencies in determining whether plan components need to be added, removed, or changed based on any new species of conservation concern being identified by the Regional Forester.

b. Recommend additional changes to the list of species of conservation concern to the Regional Forester, if appropriate. See section 21.22b of this Handbook for guidance on new information and species of conservation concern.

21.22b – Evaluating New Information on Species of Conservation Concern

After the Regional Forester has identified the species of conservation concern, new scientific information may indicate some species should be added or removed from the list.

If any employee receives such new scientific information before or after a new plan or plan revision is approved, the employee should send the information to the Forest Supervisor for the plan area.

1. When there is new scientific information indicating a potential change to the list of species of conservation concern, the Forest Supervisor should:

   a. Evaluate the new information using the guidance of FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, section 12.52 to develop a recommendation whether to change the list of species of conservation concern.

   b. Leverage expertise of the public and local, State, Tribal, and other Federal natural resource agencies.

   c. Document the rationale for including or not including the species as a species of conservation concern for the plan area using the guidance of FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, section 12.52.

   d. Send documentation and recommendation to the Regional Forester.

2. When the Regional Forester receives a recommendation from a Forest Supervisor to change the species of conservation concern for a plan area, the Regional Forester should:

   a. Consider the recommendation using the guidance of FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, section 12.52.

   b. Leverage expertise of the public, including local, State, Tribal, and other Federal natural resource agencies, for identifying species of conservation concern.

   c. Document a response and rationale.

   d. Notify the public and the Responsible Official of any changes to the list of species of conservation concern for the plan area.

3. If the Regional Forester identifies an additional species of conservation concern, the Forest Supervisor should:

   a. Review the information relevant to the threats, stressors, and other risks to the species persistence within the plan area using the guidance of FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, section 12.

b. Evaluate whether existing plan components would provide the ecological conditions necessary to maintain the long-term persistence of the species within the planning area using the guidance of section 23.13 of this Handbook.

c. Determine if the plan must include additional species-specific plan components to maintain the species' long-term persistence.

d. Document the determination, and amend the plan accordingly, if appropriate.

4. If the Regional Forester removes a species from the list of species of conservation concern, the Forest Supervisor should review the plan and amend the plan, if appropriate (sec. 21.3 of this Handbook).

21.23 – Outreach during Development or Revision of Plans

Guidance on a public and governmental outreach strategy, including tribal consultation, and on methods for giving notice is provided in FSH 1909.12, chapter 40. The 2012 Planning Rule requirements include 36 CFR 219.4, "Requirements for Public Participation," and 36 CFR 291.16, "Public Notifications."

If the approval of a plan, or plan revision, or plan amendment may affect listed species or critical habitat, or may adversely affect essential fish habitat of managed fisheries, the Responsible Official shall follow procedures in FSM 2670 for working with the NMFS or the USFWS or both (FSM 1920.3). See FSM 2670 for requirements for consultation on land management plans.

For plan development or plan revision that may adversely affect historic properties or sites of religious or cultural importance to Indian Tribes, the Responsible Official shall follow procedures in FSM 2360 for consulting with State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), Indian Tribes, and the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (Title 16, United States Code 470 et seq.; 36 CFR 800; Executive Order 13007 – Indian Sacred Sites).

21.24 – Consultation with Federally Recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations

Under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, the Responsible Official shall coordinate with planning programs of Indian Tribes and for Indian Tribes (such as those developed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs):

> In the development and revision of land use plans, the Secretary of Agriculture shall coordinate land use plans for lands in the National Forest System with the land use planning and management programs of and for Indian tribes by, among other things, considering the policies of approved tribal land resource management programs. (43 U.S.C. 1712(b)).

The Responsible Official shall engage in formal, meaningful consultation and collaboration with Tribal Officials on new plans or plan revisions as part of the Federal government-to-government relationship and Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments. See FSH 1509.13, chapter 10, and FSH 1909.12 and Chapter 40 – Public Participation, for guidance regarding consultation and coordination with Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations. (See 36 CFR 219.4(a)(2); FSH 1909.12, ch. 40, sec. 44.3; FSH 1509.13, ch. 10)

21.3 – Amending a Plan

Plan amendments started after May 9, 2015, must conform to the 2012 Planning Rule requirements. Before that date, plan amendments may be made following the 1982 Rule process or following the 2012 Planning Rule. (36 CFR 219.17(b)(2)).

For plans developed, revised, or amended under a previous Planning Rule, changes to plan content that correspond to plan components defined in the 2012 Planning Rule (desired conditions, goals, guidelines, objectives, standards, or suitability of lands for uses) must be made by plan amendment or plan revision. All additions or modifications to the text of plan direction that are made by plan amendments using the 2012 rule must be written in the form of plan components as defined at 36 CFR 219.7(c).

Amendment of a plan developed and approved using the 1982 Rule process requires application of the 2012 Planning Rule requirements only to those changes to the plan made by the amendment. For example, the 2012 Rule's requirements to establish a riparian management zone (36 CFR 219.8(a)(3)) would apply only if the plan amendment focuses on riparian area guidance.

Plan amendments are intended to be an adaptive management tool to keep plans current, effective, and relevant between required plan revisions (every 15 years). Amendments help Responsible Officials adapt an existing plan to new information and changed conditions. Maintaining plans through amendment also may reduce the workload for subsequent plan revisions.

Amendments may be broad or narrow in scope, depending on the need to change the plan. An assessment for a plan amendment is not required, but may be developed at the discretion of the Responsible Official (see ch. 10, sec. 15).

Whether an amendment is proposed in response to changing conditions or in relation to a specific project, the Responsible Official should keep the scope and scale of the process, including public participation, commensurate with the scope of the plan amendment (CFR 219.13(b)(2)).

A plan amendment process relies on the Responsible Official's identification of the need to change a plan.

> **Amendment process. The responsible official shall…[b]ase an amendment on a preliminary identification of the need to change the plan. The preliminary identification of the need to change the plan may be based on a new assessment; a monitoring report; or other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances.** (36 CFR 219.13(b)).

In general, the steps for conducting a plan amendment process are as follows:

1. The Responsible Official identifies a need to change the plan by means of a plan amendment.

2. Invite input from public and governmental entities on the need to change the plan identified at step 1. (See 36 CFR 219.4 and FSH 1909.12, ch. 40).

3. Consider public comments, complete documentation regarding the need to change the plan, and determine whether an amendment is appropriate. If an administrative change is appropriate, follow procedures in section 21.5 of this Handbook.

4. Document the need to change the plan in the appropriate NEPA analysis document as part of the purpose and need (see 21.21 of this Handbook and see FSH 1909.15, ch. 10).

5. Provide opportunity for the public and governmental entities to comment on the proposed amendment and the environmental document. The comment period is at least 90 days when an EIS is prepared and at least 30 days otherwise (36 CFR 219.16(a)(2)).

6. Provide an opportunity to object to the plan amendment before approval (36 CFR 219.52; see ch. 50).

7. Respond to objections, if any (36 CFR 219.57(b); FSH 1909.12, ch. 50, sec. 51.66).

8. Approve the final plan amendment and notify the public (36 CFR 219.14(a) and 36 CFR 219.16(a)(4)).

Correction of clerical errors to any plan component is not an amendment but administrative changes. Requirements for administrative changes are found at 36 CFR 219.13 (c); see also section 21.5 of this Handbook.

21.31 – Project-specific Plan Amendments and Administrative Review

Amendments may be project-specific. If a proposed project is not consistent with the plan, the Responsible Official has the option to start a plan amendment that, if approved, would accommodate the project.

The administrative review process for plan amendments varies based on whether the amendment applies to one project or to future projects as well. If the plan amendment applies only to a single project, the amendment would be subject to the project review process. If the plan amendment would apply to future projects as well, the objections process of the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219, Subpart B) would apply. The project itself will always be subject to the applicable project review process of 36 CFR 215 or 218 (see 36 CFR 219.59(b) as described in FSH 1909.12, ch. 50, sec. 51.1).

When a plan amendment is approved in the same decision document with a project, the Responsible Official for both decisions must be a Forest Supervisor or higher-level official, regardless of whether the District Ranger could have authorized the project in the absence of a plan amendment. The decision document for the project and amendment must include the rationale for amending the plan.

Multiple or frequent project-specific plan amendments of the same type may suggest a need to change a plan component. The Responsible Official should recognize when there are multiple project-specific plan amendments and evaluate the presence of any systemic need to change the plan that should be addressed by a plan amendment.

21.32 – Plan Amendment Outreach and Consultation

Outreach and consultation during a plan amendment is similar to outreach and consultation for a plan outreach (sec. 21.1 of this Handbook). See FSH 1909.12, chapter 40 for additional guidance on outreach.

21.33 – Project consistency with Prior Plans amended using the 2012 Planning Rule

The 2012 Planning Rule sets forth how to determine whether a project is consistent with the plan amendments at 36 CFR 219.17(c) and 36 CFR 219.15(d). The applicable provisions are quoted below with the relevant wording underlined.

> **§ 219.15 Project and activity consistency with the plan.**
>
> ***
>
> **(d) *Determining consistency.* Every project and activity must be consistent with the applicable plan components. A project or activity approval document must describe how the project or activity is consistent with <u>applicable plan components developed or revised in conformance with this part</u> by meeting the following criteria:**
>
> **§ 219.17 Effective dates and transition**
>
> ***

> **(c)** ***Plans developed, amended, or revised under a prior planning regulation.*** **This part supersedes any prior planning regulation. No obligations remain from any prior planning regulation, except those that are specifically included in a unit's existing plan. Existing plans will remain in effect until revised. This part does not compel a change to any existing plan, except as required in § 219.12(c)(1). None of the requirements of this part apply to projects or activities on units with plans developed or revised under a prior planning rule until the plan is revised under this part, except <u>that projects or activities on such units must comply with the consistency requirement of § 219.15 with respect to any amendments that are developed and approved pursuant to this part.</u>**

For a plan developed or revised under a prior planning regulation that is amended pursuant to the 2012 Planning Rule, the consistency requirement is as follows:

1. The 2012 Planning Rule consistency provisions at 36 CFR 219.15(d) apply only to plan component(s) added or modified in conformance with, and as defined by, the 2012 Planning Rule; with respect to other plan provisions, the Forest Service's prior interpretation of consistency, that projects need only be consistent with plan standards and guidelines, applies.

2. The Forest Service's prior interpretation of consistency, that projects need only be consistent with plan standards and guidelines, and not the 2012 Planning Rule consistency provisions at 36 CFR 219.15(d), also applies when an amendment developed and approved under the 2012 Planning Rule does not change the text of the plan direction but simply applies existing plan direction to a different, or additional, area or areas within the plan area.

The reason that the manner of compliance with consistency requirements depends upon the origin of the plan direction applicable to a project is that, before the 2012 Planning Rule, the Forest Service interpretation was that the consistency requirement applied to standards and guidelines but not to other parts of the plan. Plan direction was written with this interpretation in mind, so there was no expectation that projects must be consistent with any direction other than standards and guidelines. The 2012 Planning Rule applies a new interpretation, so that projects and activities must be consistent with all applicable plan components (desired conditions, objectives, suitability of lands, as well as standards and guidelines), see 36 CFR 219.15(d).

The 2012 Planning Rule also includes new direction for designing and drafting plan components (see 36 CFR 219.7(c)) through (e).The application of the project consistency requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule to plan direction that does not conform to these new drafting requirements could trigger an expansion of the amendment process that would be inconsistent with the need to change the plan. Such a result would impede the intent of the 2012 Rule to make it easier to

keep plans current by amending them frequently and by providing for amendments with a narrow scope. Therefore, when an amendment developed and approved pursuant to the 2012 Planning Rule retains the text of plan direction that had been developed when the Forest Service had the narrower interpretation of consistency, it is appropriate also to retain the application of that interpretation.

Applying the consistency requirements at 36 CFR 219.15(d) for such plan direction would also make project-level planning considerably more difficult, when the base plan was developed under a previous planning rule. Thus, it is important to continue to apply the prior interpretation of consistency to plan direction developed under that interpretation, for project consistency to be determined with respect to standards and guidelines. See the preamble to the Proposed Planning Rule for further explanation, 76 FR 8480, 8501 (February 14, 2011).

21.4 – Concluding the Plan Development, Revision, or Amendment Process

21.41 – Decision Document

The Responsible Official approves plans, plan amendments, and revised plans with a decision document developed according to NEPA procedures (FSH 1909.15). For a new plan or plan revision, the decision document is a Record of Decision (sec. 21.1 of this Handbook). For a plan amendment, the decision document would be a Decision Memo, Decision Notice, or Record of Decision, depending upon what type of NEPA analysis was prepared (sec. 21.3 of this Handbook). In addition to complying with Forest Service NEPA procedures, a decision document for a plan, revised plan, or amendment must meet the requirements of the Rule at 36 CFR 219.14(a) and 219.15(a), which are set out in exhibit 01.

21.4 - Exhibit 01

Planning Rule Requirements for Decision Documents

Decision Document Requirements (36 CFR 219.14(a), 219.15(a)) and 219.51(d)	New or Revised Plan	Plan Amendment
The rationale for approval	Yes	Yes
An explanation of how the plan components meet the sustainability requirements of § 219.8, the diversity requirements of § 219.9, the multiple use requirements of § 219.10, and the timber requirements of § 219.11	Yes	If Applicable
Every decision document approving a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision must state whether authorizations of occupancy and use made before the decision document may proceed unchanged. If a plan decision 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, subject to valid existing rights. 36 CFR 219.15(a)	Yes	Yes
The documentation of how the best available scientific information was used to inform planning, the plan components, and other plan content, including the plan monitoring program (§ 219.3)	Yes	Yes
The concurrence by the appropriate research station director with any part of the plan applicable to any experimental forests or experimental ranges (§ 219.2(b)(4));	If Applicable	If Applicable
The effective date of the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision	Yes	Yes
When a plan, plan revision, or plan amendment is not subject to objection, the Responsible Official shall include an explanation in the decision document of why it is not subject to objection (36 CFR 219.51(d)).	Yes	Yes

The decision document should also include a summary (with cross-references to the planning record; see sec. 21.42 of this Handbook) of how the plan and the planning process meets all the applicable requirements of the Planning Rule including those not specifically required by 36 CFR 219.14 This summary should provide a description of how the plan decision is responsive to public and governmental participation including the success in reaching low-income and minority communities and young people in the planning process. The scope of the summary should be commensurate with the complexity of the decision made.

For plan amendments, the decision document must discuss only those requirements of 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11 that are applicable to the plan components that are being modified or added. For example, if a plan amendment does not add or modify plan components applicable to an experimental forest or range, there would be no need to document the Research Station Director's concurrence with the amendment

Plans serve as an umbrella for projects, activities, and resource plans. If ongoing projects, activities, and resource plans would not be consistent with the plan, plan revision, or the plan as amended, they must be made consistent with the plan, unless the decision document allows them to proceed unchanged (36 CFR 219.15(a)). The decision document should identify projects, activities, and resource plans that must be changed to be consistent with the plan and set forth a schedule for modifying the ongoing projects to be consistent with the plan (subject to prior existing rights).

21.42 – Documentation of Plan Revision and the Planning Record

> **(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); the plan, including the monitoring program; the proposed plan, plan amendment, or plan revision; public notices and environmental documents associated with a plan; plan decision documents; and monitoring evaluation reports.** (36 CFR 219.12).
>
> **(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 amendment, or plan revision was developed.** (36 CFR 219.14).

Analytical conclusions should be written using plain language that discusses any important risks and uncertainties in the assumptions. The Interdisciplinary Team may support conclusions using the "Issue-Rule-Analysis/Application-Conclusion" model (IRAC). The model follows the following formula:

1. The *issue* statement poses a key question to be answered or issue to be addressed.

2. The *rule* statement presents the criterion necessary to address the *issue*.

3. The *analysis/application* section applies the relevant assumptions, data, facts, or results of a Resource Specialist's analysis to the *rule*.

4. The *conclusion* directly answers the question posed in the *issue* statement based on the material presented in the *rule and analysis/application* sections.

See exhibit 01 for an example.

21.42 - Exhibit 01

Example of Issue-Rule-Analysis/Application-Conclusion model

Issue: Whether the plan components should require a specific canopy cover to provide the ecological conditions necessary to maintain a viable population of XX species within the plan area (a species of conservation concern).

Rule: Planning regulations require plan components provide the ecological conditions necessary to maintain a viable population of each species of conservation concern within the plan area unless the responsible official determines that it is beyond the authority of the Forest Service or not within the inherent capability of the plan area.

Analysis: The best available scientific information shows that a viable population of XX species will be maintained through managing its habitat to meet ecological conditions of 1, 2, and 3. Specific canopy cover percentage is not one of those ecological conditions.

Conclusion: Plan components need not require a specific amount of canopy cover because the best available scientific information demonstrates that specific canopy cover is not necessary to maintain a viable population of XX species within the plan area.

(Note: analysis for an actual plan issue would likely be more detailed).

21.43 – Documenting Public Involvement

The Interdisciplinary Team should document how the public involvement contributed to the development of the proposed plan in a "participation process" document. The Team should document the "who, what, where, when, and how" of public and governmental participation. The Team should document the steps of the public and governmental participation process related to the need to change the plan and the development of any alternatives (sec. 21.21 of this Handbook; and FSH 1909.12, ch. 40). Comments and other input received during scoping

should be managed and documented. Documentation should include contact information like electronic and postal mailing information (FSH 1909.15, ch. 10, sec. 12.6). This documentation may be in an appendix to the appropriate environmental document.

21.5 – Administrative Changes

> ***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, conformance of the plan to new statutory or regulatory requirements, or changes to other content in the plan (§ 219.7(f)).**
>
> **(1) A substantive change to the monitoring program made outside of the process for plan revision or amendment may be made only after notice to the public of the intended change and consideration of public comment (§ 219.16(c)(6)).**
> **(2) All other administrative changes may be made following public notice (§ 219.16(c)(6)).** (36 CFR 219.13(c)).

Administrative changes are:

1. Corrections of clerical errors to any plan content, including plan components;

2. Any changes to plan content, including plan components, when necessary to conform the plan to new statutory or regulatory requirements, for which there is no discretion.

3. Any other changes to plan content except for changes to the substance of plan components, or to the application of plan components to specific areas within the planning area.

Administrative changes to the monitoring program must have at least 30 days for public comment, and section 21.51 of this Handbook describes the process.

The Responsible Official shall give public notice before issuing an administrative change (36 CFR 219.13(c)(2)). The public notice may be made in any way the Responsible Official deems appropriate, except for, at a minimum; the notice must be posted online on the administrative unit's planning website.

After reviewing comments on the proposed change, if any, the Responsible Official may make the change effective by posting the change online. Administrative changes are not subject to the objection process (36 CFR 219.50).

The Responsible Official should be transparent with the public and governmental entities when making administrative changes to "other plan content" by reaching out to the public early. When considering public and governmental participation, the Responsible Official should consider the importance of the need to change the plan and conduct appropriate outreach that is commensurate with the change to be made and the level of public and governmental interest. Public involvement may be minimal for correction of clerical errors.

21.51 – Making Administrative Changes to the Monitoring Program

Changes to existing plan monitoring programs are made by administrative change, unless the change is made as a part of a plan revision or a plan amendment.

The Responsible Official shall provide opportunities for public and governmental participation when considering changes to the monitoring program.

1. Any change to the monitoring program may be made only after notice to the public of the intended change and consideration of public comment (36 CFR 219.16(c)(6)).

2. The public comment period for a proposed change to the monitoring program should be at least 30 days.

21.6 – Plan Development, Revision, or Amendments Started Under Previous Planning Rule

***Plan development, plan amendments, or plan revisions initiated before this part*. For plan development, plan amendments, or plan revisions that were initiated before May 9, 2012, the responsible official may complete and approve the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision in conformance with the provisions of the prior planning regulation, including its transition provisions (36 CFR part 219, published at 36 CFR parts 200 to 299, revised as of July 1, 2010), or may conform the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision to the requirements of this part. If the responsible official chooses to complete an ongoing planning process under the provisions of the prior planning regulation, but chooses to allow for an objection rather than an administrative appeal, the objection process in subpart B of this part shall apply. When the responsible official chooses to conform an ongoing planning process to this part, public notice must be made (§ 219.16(a)(5)). An objection process may be chosen only if the public is provided the opportunity to comment on a proposed plan, plan amendment, or plan revision, and associated environmental analysis.** (36 CFR 219.17((b)(3)).

The Responsible Official may choose to conform an ongoing planning process (started before May 9, 2012) to the 2012 Planning Rule, if it is feasible and appropriate to do so (see 36 CFR 219.17(b)(3)).

To conform to the 2012 Planning Rule, the Responsible Official should evaluate the ongoing planning process to determine the extent to which it meets the requirements of the new rule and adjust the ongoing process to meet any requirements if necessary. If the Responsible Official decides to adjust the planning process, the Responsible Official then shall issue a formal public notification in the Federal Register and newspaper of record to announce and describe how the plan revision or plan amendment process will be conformed to meet the provisions of the 2012 Planning Rule. For ongoing plan revisions that conform to the 2012 Planning Rule the Responsible Official may change from the Regional Forester to the Forest Supervisor upon formal public notification.

21.7 – Project or Activity Decisions Concurrent with Plan Decisions

The Responsible Official may find that the NEPA process for a project or activity may be more efficiently conducted together with a plan revision or plan amendment process. The relationship of the project NEPA process and the planning process is as follows:

1. Project or activity decisions may be made at the same time as the decision to approve a land management plan or amendment, but such project and activity decisions do not, thereby, become plan components, or any other part of a plan.

2. A project or activity decision must be supported by NEPA analysis appropriate for that project and distinct from the NEPA analysis for a plan or plan amendment.

3. Environmental analysis for projects and activities may be included in the same document as the plan development environmental analysis. If the analysis for the project or activity is contained in the same documentation as the plan environmental analysis, the distinction between the two separate analyses must be clear, with the project analysis set out in a separate section.

4. The project or activity decision may be included in the plan decision document or in a separate decision document. If the project or activity decision is included in the same document as the plan decision, the distinction between the two decisions must be clear, with the project decision set out in a separate section of the decision document.

5. The administrative review for the project or activity must be the appropriate procedure for the project or activity decision (36 CFR part 218), not the objection process of 36 CFR 219 Subpart B.

a. If a plan amendment is approved to apply to a specific project only, the administrative review opportunity for the amendment must be that which is provided for the project decision (36 CFR 219.15 or part 218).

b. If a plan amendment is to be issued at the same time as the project decision, and the amendment applies to future projects as well, the objection process of 36 CFR 219 Subpart B applies to the amendment (that is, there are two separate administrative review opportunities, one to challenge the project and another to challenge the amendment). See FSH 1909.12, chapter 50, section 51.1 for additional guidance.

6. Examples of project decisions are the following:

a. Authorization of a specific land management project or activity.

b. Designation of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use under 36 CFR 212.50.

c. An Order issued following 36 CFR part 261 prohibiting or constraining the public's use of an area. See section 21.8 of this Handbook for guidance regarding plans and prohibitions of public uses.

21.8 – Public Use Prohibitions

Any constraint on the public's use of National Forest System lands, not otherwise imposed by law or regulation, requires the Responsible Official to issue an order under 36 CFR part 261, Subpart B. An order may close an area or restrict the type or timing of a use or uses in an area. An example of such an order is "The following act is prohibited on [name] National Forest: possessing or using a bicycle except on forest roads open to highway legal vehicles, trails designated for bicycle use, developed recreation areas, and trailheads (36 CFR 261.55(c))."

A plan is direction for the Forest Service, not the public; therefore, the plan alone cannot prohibit public uses such as biking, boating, camping, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, or picnicking. See exhibit 01 for a demonstration of how designation of land not suitable for a public use affects land management.

21.8 - Exhibit 01

Example of how suitability of lands for a particular use affects on-the-ground management

- A plan may identify an area as not suitable for equestrian riding.
- The plan has no immediate effect on the public. People may still ride horses in this area.
- Because of the plan, the Forest Service may not issue authorizations for equestrian events, or approve equestrian trail construction or maintenance.
- An appropriate Responsible Official may issue a closure order (following appropriate NEPA analysis) to prohibit the activity for which the area is not suited, but is not required to do so. A closure order can be issued concurrent with the plan decision document, or separately, at the discretion of the Responsible Official.
- A closure order does govern the public's conduct, and therefore an Agency law enforcement official may issue a citation to people who ride in the area, for violating the order.

Nothing precludes an authorized officer from issuing an order at any time it is necessary to do so. In the context of planning, there are two options for dealing with public uses that are preventing attainment of the desired conditions for the plan area or portion of the plan area:

1. Consecutive plan and project decision making. The Responsible Official may identify lands in which the use is occurring as not suitable for such use and establish an objective in the plan to have such uses controlled in a specified time. After plan approval, the Responsible Official may propose a closure, analyze the effects of the proposal and issue a project decision to issue an order prohibiting the use. The Responsible Official is not required to propose and issue a closure order, and public uses may continue despite their occurring on lands not suitable for them, so long as a closure order is not in effect. The plan components would, however, bar the Forest Service from authorizing such uses, for example, when they would be conducted as an event requiring a special use authorization.

2. Concurrent plan and project decision making. During the plan development process, the Responsible Official may identify lands in which the use is occurring as not suitable for such use, and establish an objective in the plan to have such uses controlled in a specified time. At the same time, the Responsible Official may also propose the closure of an area and analyze the proposal separately from the Plan environmental impact statement. The Responsible Official would include in the plan decision document or a separate decision a site-specific decision authorizing closure of the area, and the

Responsible Official would issue a closure order at the same time. See section 21.7 of this Handbook for further guidance regarding concurrent decisions, and FSH 1909.12, chapter 50, section 51.1 for additional guidance regarding the application of plan and project objection process.

22 – REQUIREMENTS FOR INTEGRATED PLAN CONTENT

The land management plan must include plan components and other plan content (36 CFR 219.7; see FSH 1909.12, zero code for definitions). Plan components should provide a strategic and practical framework for managing the plan area. Plan components should be applicable to the resources and issues of the plan area, and should reflect the unit's distinctive roles and contributions (36 CFR 219.7(f)(1)(ii)). The Responsible Official shall integrate plan components so the plan is internally consistent for the plan area. As a whole, the set of plan components must provide for social, economic, and ecological sustainability and multiple uses. The Planning Rule requires plan components for integrated resource management as follows:

> **§ 219.1 Purpose and Applicability. . . .**
>
> ***
>
> **(b) … and management plans guide sustainable, integrated resource management of the resources with the plan area . . . .**
>
> **§ 219.2 Levels of planning and responsible officials. . . .**
>
> ***
>
> **(b) National Forest System unit planning. (1) . . . . 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.**
>
> **§ 219.5 Planning framework.**
> **(a) …The intent of this framework is to create a responsive planning process that informs integrated resource management . . . .**
>
> **§ 219.10 Multiple Use. . . .**
>
> ***(a) Integrated resource management for multiple use. The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses in the plan area.** (36 CFR 219.10(a)).

The Planning Rule defines "integrated resource management" as "[m]ultiple use management that recognizes the interdependence of ecological resources and is based on the need for integrated consideration of ecological, social, and economic factors" (36 CFR 219.19).

The rule sets out requirements for plan components in four sections: 219.8 (Sustainability), 219.9 (Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities), 219.10 (Multiple Use) and 219.11 (Timber Requirements Based on the NFMA). While the Rule sets out these requirements in separate sections, the plan should not be organized with a similar structure. Rather, plan components must meet these requirements in an integrated manner.

The set of plan components should integrate social, economic, cultural, and ecological considerations. For example, the desired condition for a sustainable landscape must be developed in the context of the desired multiple uses for the landscape. When providing for desired multiple uses for an area, the plan must at the same time ensure that the uses will be managed sustainably, while providing for ecological sustainability.

A plan is not an assemblage of program plans that have unique plan components for every resource. While the set of plan components must fulfill all the requirements of 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11, there need not be a one-to-one correlation of one plan component to each requirement listed in those sections. What is essential is that as a whole, the combined plan components meet the requirements of the Rule for ecological integrity, diversity of plant and animal communities, multiple-use management, ecologically sustainable production of goods and services, and they contribute to economic and social sustainability. All of these requirements go hand in hand.

The term “integration” means that the plan components work together, but does not mean that all uses must be provided for on all lands. From place to place within a plan, a plan will often provide for some uses but not others. The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act makes that principle clear by explaining that “multiple use” means management to make “judicious use of the land for some or all” of the renewable resources thereon, with some land “used for less than all of the resources” (16 USC 531).

The integration of plan components means that all plan components work together toward achieving or maintaining desired conditions. The plan components are internally consistent. One plan component must not directly conflict with another plan component or prevent its accomplishment. Not only must unit-wide plan components fit together, but also unit-wide and area-specific plan components must fit together. Fitting unit-wide and area-specific plan components together may require qualification to eliminate conflicts in direction. For example, a standard for a wildland-urban interface area requires that vegetation management projects leave no standing dead trees or downed woody debris; the Forestwide standard requires all vegetation management projects leave a certain minimum level of dead trees or down woody debris, but also states the qualification, “except within the wildland-urban interface area.”

For more information, examples, lessons learned, and technical guidance for monitoring and evaluating contributions to ecological, social, and economic sustainability visit the Technical Information for Planning Site (TIPS) at *http://www.fs.fed.us/TIPS*.

22.1 – Plan Components

(e) *Plan components*. Plan components guide future project and activity decisionmaking. The plan must indicate whether specific plan components apply to the entire plan area, to specific management areas or geographic areas, or to other areas as identified in the plan. (36 CFR 219.7(e)).

This section and sections 22.11 through 22.16 of this Handbook give guidance for developing the required plan components for every plan. The following plan components are required (36 CFR 219.7): desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, and suitability of lands. Goals may be included as an optional plan component.

1. Objectives, desired conditions, standards, and guidelines must be written clearly and concisely in a way that allows for monitoring to test their effectiveness and verify assumptions on which they are based.

2. Plan components:

a. Must be written so that they are in accord with Agency authorities, and the inherent capability of the plan area.

b. Are written clearly and with clarity of purpose and without ambiguity so that a project's consistency with applicable plan components can be easily determined. (For definition of consistency, see 36 CFR 219.15).

c. Must have clear geographic applicability (that is, the entire plan area, a specific management or geographic area, or land of specific character; see sec. 22.2 of this Handbook).

d. Guide the development of future projects and activities, and are not commitments to act or final decisions approving projects and activities.

e. Must be informed by the assessment, monitoring, public and governmental participation, and the best available scientific information. (For more information on best available science, see FSH 1909.12, zero code, sec. 07).

f. May be used to carry out laws, regulations, or policies, but should not merely repeat existing direction from laws, regulations, or directives. (References to other sources are preferred.)

g. Guide and constrain Forest Service personnel; not the public.

h. May not interfere with statutory or valid existing rights.

i. Should not simply repeat Agency policies applicable to all National Forest System units.

j. Can be stated to apply only at certain seasons or only at specific ecological conditions. See exhibit 01 for simple examples of desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines.

See the Plain Language website at *http://www.plainlanguage.gov* for guidance on how to write clearly and concisely.

Plan components should not include explanatory narrative; see section 22.4 of this Handbook for direction on how to include explanatory narrative as “other plan content.”

22.1 - Exhibit 01

Example of Plan Components for a Management Area (Oak-grasslands example)

Desired Condition for Management Area XX:

Generally, natural environments characterize this management area and users have the opportunity to experience a moderate degree of independence, closeness to nature, solitude, and remoteness, but with motorized opportunities on forest roads and some trails. Satisfactory recreational experience is provided for forest visitors. This area contributes to economic sustainability by providing areas for birders who frequently use quality outfitter guides for birding tours.

Oak-grasslands dominate watersheds in this management area (see Appendix maps). On upper slopes and ridges across this area, grasslands (less than 10 percent tree canopy closure) and open oak woodlands (10-60 percent tree canopy closure) are interspersed in variable mixtures. In general, tree density increases as one moves down slope, but densities are variable and transitions gradual. Snag and den tree density averages three stems per acre on a watershed basis (10-digit hydrologic unit code (HUC)). Native grasses and forbs dominate understories.

Most mid and lower slopes have open oak forests (60-80 percent tree canopy closure), with understories containing oak regeneration in sufficient numbers to provide for sustaining oak on these sites over time. Multi-layered mixed hardwood mesophytic and riparian forests occur on lower slopes, where, because of topography and moisture, understory fires burn at low intensities. In riparian areas, vegetative filter strips have at least 80 percent total ground cover comprised of grasses, or forbs. In riparian areas, flooding is the primary disturbance factor.

In grasslands and open oak woodlands of this management area, diverse grass and grass-forb understories provide diverse and abundant herbage, seeds, and insects. Open canopies and a periodic fire frequency of x-y years create this understory condition. This understory condition also supports a diverse assemblage of wildlife. Rare species that are adapted to open forests and grasslands are present and distributed in numbers that will provide for self-sustaining populations. These include Henslow's sparrow, whip-poor-will, southern prairie aster, barbed rattlesnake-root, buffalo clover, and prairie parsley. Small mammals, such as deer mice (*Peromyscus* species), voles *(Microtus* species*)*, and rabbits *(Sylvilagus* species*)* are abundant, supporting increased populations of predators, such as raptors, foxes, and bobcats.

Objectives for Management Area XX:

- To have an average of X snags per acre within Y years of plan revision approval.

- To add 5 thousand acres of Henslow's sparrow habitat to the current XX acres by 2020.

- To have X rehabilitated high-impact dispersed camping areas within Y years of plan revision approval.

- To have by 2025 at least 80 percent of forest visitors who respond to Forestwide annual visitor satisfaction survey report their recreational experiences rated as "satisfactory."

Standards for Management Area XX:

- Timber harvest must not occur in riparian buffers except to maintain or restore the riparian ecosystem. Riparian buffers are at least 100 feet on either side of the tops of perennial stream banks. Riparian buffers along intermittent streams must be 50 to 75 feet or more, measured from bankfull stage.

Guidelines for Management Area XX:

-On sustained slopes greater than 35 percent, heavy equipment should not be used for mechanical site preparation treatments to reduce erosion from soil disturbance.

-Artificial regeneration should use native plant material (FSM 2070, glossary) in restoration activities to provide suitable habitat for native species of butterflies, birds, and other wildlife.

-Trail construction should not occur in riparian buffers, except for designated stream crossings, to prevent soil erosion and sediment deposition in waterways.

Suitability of lands: This management area is suitable for motorized recreation on designated roads and trails.

22.11 – Desired Conditions

> ***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.** (36 CFR 219.7(e)(1)(i)).

Desired conditions describe the aspirations or visions of what the plan area (or portions thereof) should look like in the future and drive the development of the other plan components. Desired conditions essentially set forth the desired landscape of the future and the other plan components give guidance on how to get there. Desired conditions should be developed with the context of the plan area's distinctive roles and contributions within the broader landscape in mind (sec. 22.32 of this Handbook). A plan's set of desired conditions must be internally consistent so they are feasible and attainable, and they must be written clearly so that they can be understood by the public as well as the Agency. The set of desired conditions must reflect the capability of the plan area and the fiscal capability of the Agency. The set of desired conditions for plan revision must cover ALL the requirements for a plan set out at 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11—to provide for sustainable ecosystems with ecological integrity, in the context of multiple-use management. The set of desired conditions should integrate the ecological, economic, social, and cultural desired conditions. The format function of desired conditions is addressed in this section. Sections 23 through 24.44 of this Handbook set forth guidance for the resource requirements for plan components.

Desired conditions, as key plan components, are fundamental to determining monitoring strategies and requirements. Desired conditions should define the geographic scale, where applicable, used to measure change associated with them. Responsible Officials should include sufficiently detailed descriptions of desired conditions so they are useful to determine the purpose and need for many projects such as restoration projects and activities. Other plan content may identify, if applicable, how desired conditions may differ from existing conditions.

When designing desired conditions, the Responsible Official should take into account the condition of the land adjacent to the plan area and the larger surrounding landscape. Consider the desires by adjacent agencies, landowners, interested and affected individuals, or communities for the plan area. Because desired conditions affect current and future generations, they should be developed as part of the public outreach and collaborative process of planning.

Desired conditions have essential characteristics:

1. <u>Desired conditions have cultural, ecological, economic, and social characteristics</u>. The set of desired conditions are sustainable and:

a. Describe what is desired for ecosystem integrity; air, soil, and water quality; riparian areas; social and economic sustainability; ecosystem diversity; additional species-specific plan components if needed; and multiple uses (required topics are listed in section 23, exhibit 01 of this Handbook);

b. Are attainable through integrated resource management for multiple uses (§ 219.10(a)); and

c. Contribute to social and economic sustainability (§ 219.8(b)); including:

(1) Social relationships, traditions, culture, and activities that connect people to the plan area where they recreate, hunt, visit, or work for their livelihood.

(2) The capability of society to produce and consume goods and services, including jobs, market benefits, and nonmarket benefits derived from the plan area.

2. Desired conditions have functional characteristics; they:

a. Must be written with enough detail so the condition of on-the-ground achievement is clear and progress toward their achievement can be measured or evaluated;

b. May be the same as an existing condition, so efforts to manage for the desired condition would focus on maintaining that condition;

c. Must be achievable even if the time for success exceeds the plan period;

d. Must not direct taking action or prohibit taking action, or indicate specific tools (for example, prescribed fire and thinning) to be used for its attainment or maintenance;

e. Should be expressed in a way that helps managers determine the uses that are suitable and the types of management actions that may be proposed during the planning period to move toward or maintain those conditions;

f. May be stated in comparative terms such as “more,” or “less,” or “increased,” or “decreased,” but only if the baseline is clearly stated;

g. May be stated in terms of a range of clearly defined conditions; and

h. May be supplemented by a photograph or illustration.

22.12 – Land Management Plan Objectives

> ***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.** (36 CFR 219.9(e)(1)(ii)).

Plan objectives:

1. Must be outcomes designed to make progress toward attaining desired conditions;

2. Help set the basis for priority areas or activities, with a timing expectation that near-term objectives would be completed first, depending on funding;

3. Must be clearly stated in measurable terms with specific and reasonable timeframes; (Timeframe can be identified by either an end date ("by 2020") or by a period of time from an identified start point (within 5 years of plan approval.");

4. Should be expressed in terms of outcomes, not actions; and

5. Must be attainable within the fiscal capability of the unit, determined through a trend analysis of the recent past budget obligations for the unit (3 to 5 years); (Other plan content (such as potential management approaches, sec. 22.4 of this Handbook) may identify how the Responsible Official would respond to enhanced resources or other efficiencies that would facilitate attaining desired conditions (36 CFR 219.1(g)).

22.13 – Standards

> ***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.**
> (36 CFR 219.7(e)(1) (iii)).

There are several ways to constraint projects and activities: standards, guidelines, and other sources of constraints. A standard differs from a guideline in that a standard is a strict constraint, allowing no variation, whereas a guideline allows variation if the result would be equally effective. Examples of other sources of constraints on the design of projects and activities include congressional direction, oil and gas leasing stipulations, regulations, timber sale contract clauses, and special use authorization standard clauses. In addition, the Responsible Official may develop project-specific constraints for a project.

Standards are used when the requirement is absolute such as to ensure projects will not prevent achievement of a desired condition, or to ensure compliance with laws such as the timber requirements of sections 6(g)(3)(E) and (F) of the NFMA to protect aesthetics, fish, recreation, soil, watershed, and wildlife (16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(E) and (F)), or to protect threatened or

endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544). For some species, standards are used to maintain habitat connectivity. For example, standards are used as part of the aquatic conservation strategies for the Northwest Forest Plan amendments and the Sierra Nevada Framework amendments. Standards can be used to limit disturbances from projects and activities to animal dens, perennial streams, and wildlife habitat. Standards can also be used to protect resources by restricting authorization of specific uses in appropriate circumstances. Such uses might include firewood gathering, grazing, motor vehicle use, road construction, timber harvest, removal of sand and gravel, sanitary waste facilities, storage of fuel, and surface occupancy in riparian areas.

Standards:

1. Place design or operational constraints on projects and activities, or prohibit the Forest Service from authorizing certain types of projects or activities to help achieve or maintain desired conditions, to avoid undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements (see required topics for standards or guidelines in sec. 23, ex. 01 of this Handbook).

2. Are stated in a precise manner, and with mandatory or prohibitive wording, such as “must,” “shall,” “must not,” “may not,” “shall not,” or XX is not allowed to be authorized.”

3. Are written clearly and without ambiguity so that consistency of a project or activity with a standard can be easily determined. (For definition of consistency, see 36 CFR 219.15).

4. Should not direct or compel processes such as analysis, assessment, consultation, planning, inventory, or monitoring. (Such processes that could be used can be part of other plan content such as management approaches, see sec. 22.4 of this Handbook)

5. Must not restate other plan components.

6. May be used to provide limitations or direction on whether or how a specific tool is appropriate.

7. Must not mandate conditions beyond those affected by a project. Any guidance meant to apply more broadly, such as to maintain a certain level of snag density throughout a watershed should be written in the form of desired conditions or objectives.

8. May impose alternative constraints, when appropriate. An alternative constraint may be particularly useful in situations where conditions do not currently exist in some project areas. For example, “Vegetation management activities must retain an average of four snags per acre on forested acres of the project area, unless this average does not exist. In such case, make up the difference from the largest live trees in the project area.”

22.14 – Guidelines

> **Guidelines. A guideline is a constraint on project and activity decisionmaking that allows for departure from its terms, so long as the purpose of the guideline is met. (§ 219.15(d)(3)). Guidelines are established to help achieve or maintain a desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements.** (36 CFR 219.7(e)(1)(iv)).

Guidelines serve the same purpose as standards but they differ from standards in that they provide flexibility in defining compliance, while standards are absolute constraints.

Guidelines:

1. Place design or operational constraints on projects and activities to help achieve or maintain desired conditions, to avoid undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements (see required topics for standards or guidelines in sec. 23, ex. 01 of this Handbook).

2. Are not absolute, but allow for departure from their terms so long as the underlying purposes are met. They use the words “should” and “should not.”

3. Should clearly describe the circumstances and manner in which the guidelines apply so that other options may be carried out if they meet the purposes of the guidelines.

4. Should not direct or compel processes such as analysis, assessment, consultation, inventory, planning, or monitoring.

5. Must not restate other plan components.

6. May be used to provide limitations or direction on whether or how a specific tool is appropriate.

7. May not impose conditions beyond those affected by a project. Any guidance meant to apply more broadly should be written in the form of desired conditions or objectives.

8. May impose alternative guidance, when appropriate. An alternative guideline may be particularly useful in situations where conditions do not currently exist in some project areas. For example, “Pipelines, gas lines, or electric lines (transmitting less than 34.5 kV) should be buried at a minimum depth of 3 feet to protect from damage and freezing. Exceptions may be made if site conditions warrant, such as bedrock requiring blasting.”

22.15 – Suitability of Lands

> **(v) *Suitability of lands*. Specific lands within a plan area will be identified as suitable for various multiple uses or activities based on the desired conditions applicable to those lands. The plan will also identify lands within the plan area as not suitable for uses that are not compatible with desired conditions for those lands. The suitability of lands need not be identified for every use or activity. Suitability identifications may be made after consideration of historic uses and of issues that have arisen in the planning process. Every plan must identify those lands that are not suitable for timber production (§ 219.11).** (36 CFR 219.7(e)(1)(v)).

National Forest System lands are generally suitable for a variety of uses consistent with the purposes for which they are administered (outdoor recreation, grazing, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fisheries). As discussed in the beginning of section 22 of this Handbook, the set of plan components including the suitability of lands in the plan area should integrate social, economic, cultural, and ecological considerations. The identification of suitability of lands is not required for every resource or activity. If suitability of lands is identified for a resource or activity, such identification does not need to be made for every acre of the plan area. For some resources, identifying the suitability of use or activity in a particular area may be more appropriately made at the project or activity level with site-specific analysis, stakeholder participation, and proposed design criteria.

Identifying suitability helps determine if future projects and activities are consistent with desired conditions. The identification of suitability or nonsuitability of lands is based on the desired condition for those lands and the inherent capability of the land to support the use.

Identifying which uses to focus on when identifying lands as “suitable “ or not for the uses may arise from issues raised in public participation. When beginning to identify specific lands as suitable for various uses, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider what they learned from existing uses, monitoring, project planning, and resource plans including fire management plans, travel management plans, watershed plans, and other resource plans.

The Responsible Official should document and make available to the public the rationale for identifying the suitability of lands and the information sources, tools, standards, technical guidance documents, and databases used in the identification.

Responsible officials should not identify suitability of lands for any resource, such as certain minerals, if an entity other than the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has sole authority over the resource. Section 23.22i of this Handbook gives guidance for plan components and mineral resources.

The effect of identifying lands as *suitable* for a use is notably different from identifying lands as *not suitable* for a use. The difference is as follows:

1. Lands identified as suitable for certain uses or activities. A plan's identification of certain lands as suitable for a use is not a commitment to allow such use but only an indication that the use might be appropriate. A specific use or activity may be approved or may be disapproved in an area identified as suitable for such types of use. For instance, a plan may identify a management area as suitable for utility corridors; however, that suitability determination does not imply that specific application for pipeline construction would be approved.

2. Lands specified as not suitable for uses or activities. If a plan identifies certain lands as not suitable for a use, then that use or activity may not be authorized. Public uses for which a special use authorization is not required, such as biking, boating, camping, hiking, or hunting, will not be affected by such a designation in the plan; such uses can only be restricted by an action such as a closure order (sec. 21.8 of this Handbook). See chapter 60 of this Handbook for identification of lands not suitable for timber production.

A plan may not identify a use or activity as being suitable in the plan area or relevant part of the plan area, and should identify the area as not suitable for that use or activity, if any of the following conditions apply:

a. A law, regulation, Executive Order, or Forest Service directive prohibits the use;

b. The use would result in substantial and permanent impairment of the productivity of the land or renewable resources; or

c. The use is not compatible with the desired conditions and objectives for the plan area, or relevant portion thereof.

Plans may include suitability or nonsuitability statements for uses such as: administrative or commercial communication sites, commercial harvest of nontimber forest products, cross-country over-snow vehicle use, helicopter skiing, mechanized travel, motorized travel, nonmechanized travel, nonmotorized travel, range structures, recreational trails, research activities, tethering and grazing of recreational stock, utility corridors, and others.

Plans should not include any suitability or nonsuitability statements for the use of management tools such as prescribed fire, clearcutting, or use of chemicals. A guideline or standard may be used to provide limitations or direction on whether or how use of a specific tool is appropriate.

There are many approaches for identifying suitable or not suitable lands for uses, including: geographical (variety of mapping techniques); narrative descriptions of types of physical, ecological, or economic conditions; photos showing types of conditions; and tying specific uses to suitability tables of management areas. An example of a narrative description of identifying

not suitable lands is "Timber production is not suitable on soil types B-2 and C-5 as defined in the Forest Soils Handbook." If maps are used to show where plan components apply, substantive changes to such maps require a plan amendment.

22.16 – Goals

> ***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, but do not include completion dates.** (36 CFR 219.7(e)(2)).

The Responsible Official may choose to include goals as optional plan components. Goals may be used to organize plan components similar to the Forest Service Strategic Plan. Goals may be appropriate to describe a state between current conditions and desired conditions but without specific amounts of indicators (acres, percentages, frequencies). Goals may also be appropriate to describe overall desired conditions of the plan area that are also dependent on conditions beyond the plan area or Forest Service authority. Goals for resource conditions may be appropriate if scientific information is not adequate to provide sufficient specificity to establish desired condition. However, using goals in lieu of desired conditions should be avoided.

Goals instead of objectives may be appropriate if the Responsible Official is not sure a concise, measurable, and time-specific statement of a desired rate of progress is within the control of the unit; however, using goals in lieu of objectives should be avoided. Examples are:

1. If the outcome is the result of a partnership between the Forest Service and other land owners within the broader landscape.

2. If the outcome is uncertain, because it could be beyond the fiscal capability of the unit.

22.2 – Where Plan Components Apply

The public, governmental entities and Forest Service employees need to know where plan components apply. The plan must indicate which plan components apply unit-wide, which apply to specific parcels of land, and which apply to land of specific character). Plans use management areas or geographic areas to apply plan components to specific mapped parcels of land. Some plan components apply to land of specific character (for example riparian areas, roads, springs, streams, and wetlands) and this is explained in the wording of the plan component itself.

A plan can have complicated land allocation schemes. Some plans may include static areas (for example, old forest emphasis areas), overlapping areas (for example, wildland-urban interface may overlap with old forest emphasis areas), and dynamic areas that may change over time (for example, spotted owl protected activity centers). If a plan has overlapping areas and direction that overlaps, the plan must clearly explain which direction has priority.

A plan applies only to National Forest System land and, therefore, no longer applies after land has been conveyed to others. With respect to land that is acquired through land exchange or other means, the forest-wide plan components apply to that land automatically. Additionally, the plan components for the management or geographic area within which the land lies in whole or in large part will apply, unless the plan is amended to add plan components specific to that land.

22.21 – Identification of Management Areas and Geographic Areas

> **(d)** ***Management areas or geographic areas*****. Every plan must have management areas or geographic areas or both. The plan may identify designated or recommended designated areas as management areas or geographic areas.** (36 CFR 219.7(d)).

The terms "management area" and "geographic area" may be used to describe how plan components apply to specific parcels of National Forest System land, with locations shown on maps. The definitions of geographic area and management area are defined at 36 CFR 219.19. Geographic areas are based on place, while management areas are based on purpose.

1. Management areas. The typical management area (MA) map represents the management emphasis on landscape basis. Management area maps often show lands with integrated packages of compatible resource direction. For example, a map of a plan area's management areas might be labeled as follows: MA 1, for all the lands in the plan area emphasizing developed recreational use; MA 2, for all the lands in the plan area that are suitable for timber production; MA 3, for all the lands in the plan area providing for off-highway vehicle trails; MA 4, for all the lands in the unit that are Wilderness; MA 5, for all the lands in the unit areas emphasizing primitive backcountry recreational experiences.

2. Geographic areas. The typical geographic area map represents large areas that have desired conditions with a range of possible resource management emphases. Rather than a management emphasis map, a geographic area map tends to focus on a place (Red Rock Canyon, Mount Whitney, or perhaps a specific watershed).

A geographic approach is based on the idea that the plan serves as a long-range vision for an area. However, the boundaries for different suitable uses within a geographic area may be identified by using multiple overlays of maps. For example, overlays of maps could identify how suitability for nonmotorized use, winter motorized use, and timber production differs across one geographic area.

A combination of geographic area and management area approaches may be useful. Above all, the approach must fit the plan area, be clear about the use of geographic areas, management areas, and where plan components apply.

Management areas and geographic areas may overlap. Management areas may overlap with other management areas if specified plan components are not conflicting. Not every acre of the plan area needs to be assigned to a management area or geographic area. Management areas or geographic areas may be established for designated areas, including designated roadless areas.

Plan guidance in a management area or geographic area (MA or GA) could differ from the forest-wide guidance in the following ways:

1. The MA or GA guidance can constrain an activity where the unit-wide guidance does not (for example unit-wide direction may say nothing about leaving snags, but MA-GA direction requires leaving X snags per acre);

2. The MA or GA guidance can constrain an activity to a greater degree than the unit-wide direction does (for example, unit-wide guidance is to leave an average of X snags per acre, but in MA 1 the average of X + 3 snags per acre is to be retained); or

3. The MA or GA would be in conflict with the unit-wide direction *except* that the unit-wide direction allows for the discrepancy (for example, forestwide guidance is for a minimum of X snags per acre, "*except where a MA or GA plan component provides otherwise*," and the MA or GA plan component for a wildland-urban interface area is that NO snags are to be retained).

The names of designated areas (see sec. 24, ex. 01 of this Handbook) should not be used as a "management area" or "geographic area" name unless the area has been specifically designated.

The following names are reserved for Forest Service designated areas when using the process of FSM 2372-Areas Designated Administratively, or unless the Responsible Official is designating or recommending the area as an administratively designated area using the process of FSM 2372 as part of the plan decision:

1. Botanical Area.

2. Geological Area.

3. Historical Area.

4. Paleontological Area.

5. Recreational Area.

6. Scenic Area.

7. Zoological Area.

Designated areas are discussed in section 24 of this Handbook.

22.3 – Other Required Content in the Plan

In addition to requiring that a plan have components, the Planning Rule requires that a plan have "other required content" (36 CFR 219.7(f)(1)). Sections 22.31 through 22.34 of this Handbook discuss priority watersheds, distinctive roles and contributions of the plan area, plan monitoring program, and proposed and possible actions in that order.

22.31 – Priority Watersheds

The Planning Rule requires land management plans to:

> **(i) Identify watershed(s) that are a priority for maintenance or restoration;** (36 CFR 219.7(f)(1)).

Identification of priority watersheds is done to focus effort on the integrated restoration of watershed conditions in these areas.

The Responsible Official should identify an appropriate number of watersheds in the plan for maintenance or improvement that corresponds to reasonable and achievable plan objectives for a 5-year period and within current budget levels. Priority watersheds in the plan are the watersheds where plan objectives for restoration would concentrate on maintaining or improving watershed condition.

The Forest Service national Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) must be used in all plan revisions for identifying priority watersheds unless the Responsible Official coordinates with the Washington Office, Director, Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air & Rare Plants staff, provides written justification, and obtains concurrence from the Regional Forester for using an alternate approach.

Under the Watershed Condition Framework, the task of identifying priority watersheds is left to the discretion of Responsible Officials within the broad framework of national direction, regional emphasis, land management plan direction, resource values, restoration costs, local issues and needs, and opportunities for watershed maintenance and restoration.

The identification of priority watersheds for the plan will use an Interdisciplinary Team process, where the Responsible Official approves the priority watersheds. The Responsible Official should reach out to local, State, Tribal, other Federal agencies, and interest groups when identifying priority watersheds. The identification of priority watersheds is also based on the following:

1. Agency watershed restoration policies and priorities that have been established at other scales, including national and regional scale restoration strategies.

2. The importance of water and watershed resources (ecological, social, and economic resource value), the urgency of management action to address conditions and threats, and the ability of management actions to maintain or improve conditions or address threats.

3. Alignment of watershed objectives with other Forest Service strategic objectives and priorities.

4. Alignment of watershed objectives with the strategies and priorities of other Federal and State agencies, Tribes, community and collaborative efforts, nongovernmental conservation organizations, and public desires.

5. Considering watersheds that have important ecological values, such as those with designations of Outstanding Natural Resource waters, Class A/Blue Ribbon fisheries, Class I Air sheds, or biodiversity hotspots.

6. Considering impaired ecosystems, such as those with Clean Water Act 303(d) listed waters, threatened or endangered species, poor air quality, invasive species, or degraded vegetation conditions, and those where improvement or restoration activities are necessary to meet regulatory requirements or meet desired condition objectives.

The identification of priority watersheds is intended to be helpful to Forest Service managers as they schedule work after plan approval, especially in circumstances of limited budgets and resources.

The Interdisciplinary Team should develop plan components to address conditions in priority watersheds.

Changes as to which watersheds in the plan are "priority" are made by administrative change (sec. 21.5 of this Handbook).

The Watershed Condition Framework publication is available at *http://www.fs.fed.us/publications/watershed/*. Watershed Condition Framework priority watersheds are mapped online at the USDA Forest Service Watershed Condition and Prioritization Interactive map at *http://apps.fs.usda.gov/WCFmapviewer/*.

22.32 – Distinctive Roles and Contributions of the Plan Area

The Planning Rule requires land management plans to:

> **(ii) Describe the plan area's distinctive roles and contributions within the broader landscape;** (36 CFR 219.7(f)(1)).

The Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.2(b)) explains the types of things the Interdisciplinary Team may consider when describing the plan area's distinctive roles and contributions within the broader landscape:

> **. . . A plan reflects the unit's expected distinctive roles and contributions to the local area, region, and Nation, and the roles for which the plan area is best suited, considering the Agency's mission, the unit's unique capabilities, and the resources and management of other lands in the vicinity. . . .**

The plan area's distinctive roles and contributions within the broader landscape can provide focus or context and can aid in developing plan components. Well-described distinctive roles and contributions can also help provide an all-lands perspective and a framework for potential collaborative restoration efforts.

A plan area may have multiple roles and contributions within the broader landscape. In describing the plan area's distinctive roles and contributions within the broader landscape, the Responsible Official should consider the many potential roles of the plan area.

Some roles may not be distinctive but could still be important. For example, all forested land in an area may be part of the upstream supply of water to a downstream community, making a unit's contribution to the quality and availability of that water important but not distinctive. The Responsible Official should note those roles and contributions that are most relevant to the unit's land and resource management. This description is important because it provides a foundation for desired conditions and objectives. Desired conditions and objectives should address all-important roles.

The Interdisciplinary Team should describe the distinctive roles and contribution of the plan area within the broader landscape early in the planning phase. The team should consider information evaluated during the assessment phase as a starting point for describing the distinctive roles and contributions. The Interdisciplinary Team should develop an understanding of the ecological, social, and economic context that surrounds the plan area. For example, does the plan area represent a large or a small percentage of the land ownership in a county or other jurisdiction; what is the level of diversity of the local economy; and what habitat conditions can be provided on surrounding or intermingled private or State land? The roles and contributions of the plan area should then be placed within this context, to provide a gauge of the relative importance of each potential role.

When writing the description of the plan area's distinctive roles and contribution within the broader landscape, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider the following:

1. Whether the plan area's distinctive roles and contributions within the broader landscape:

a. Are distinctive attributes of the plan area, or distinctive benefits (uses, values, products, and services) provided by the plan area to the broader landscape;

b. Are important and relevant at the local, regional, and/or national level; and

c. Contribute toward social, economic, and ecological sustainability.

2. Descriptions of a plan area's distinctive roles and contributions may reflect the:

a. Ecological role of the plan area in the broader landscape;

b. Economic benefits of uses, products, and services provided by the plan area;

c. Resources and management of other lands in the broader landscape in terms of social, cultural, economic, and ecological conditions; and

d. The role of the plan area in providing the renewable resources of the Multiple-use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (MUSYA) of outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish; and

e. The role of the plan area of providing sustained yield of the several products and services obtained therefrom (MUSYA) including ecosystem services.

f. The role of the plan area as related to other planning efforts such as Community Wildfire Protection Plans and regional or national plans and strategies.

3. Examples of distinctive roles and contributions of a plan area within the broader landscape could include:

a. A downhill skiing designation.

b. Recharge areas for water supplies for large communities.

c. A major source of supply for local timber industry.

d. A primary conservation area for grizzly bear.

e. A designated area with extraordinary scenic views for high volume backpacking.

f. An outstanding opportunity for hiking on a national scenic trail.

g. Extraordinary scenery contributing to quality of life and opportunities to improve physical and mental health.

h. The location of a specific river, protected under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, nationally known for white water rafting.

4. Comments from the public and governmental entities may be received from various perspectives including:

a. Engagement of communities, individuals, Indian Tribes, and others early in the participation process, to define existing and desired roles and contributions of the plan area;

b. Outreach to engage youth, minority, and low-income populations (FSH 1909.12, ch. 40, sec. 43.3);

c. Collaborative processes to achieve understanding lifestyles, values, attitudes, beliefs, and other conditions, relevant to the plan area;

d. Consideration of the areas and populations to which plan area contributions apply at a local, regional, and national scale, as appropriate;

e. Consideration of the context of local, Tribal, regional, and national perspectives;

f. Consideration of the context to the Agency's mission and strategic plan goals; and

g. Consideration of current and projected program outputs and ecosystem services.

22.33 – Plan Monitoring Program

A land management plan must contain a plan monitoring program (36 CFR 219.12). See FSH 1909.12, chapter 30 for guidance for developing a plan monitoring program.

22.34 – Proposed and Possible Actions

The Planning Rule requires land management plans to:

> **(iv) Contain information reflecting proposed and possible actions that may occur on the plan area during the life of the plan, including: the planned timber sale program; timber harvesting levels; and the proportion of probable methods of forest vegetation management practices expected to be used (16 U.S.C. 1604(e)(2) and (f)(2)). 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)).** (36 CFR 219.7(f)(1)).

The land management plan must include a list of types of possible projects for the next 3 to 5 years to move toward the desired conditions and objectives. The possible actions may be displayed in an appendix as a brief summary of the types of possible projects expected.

The plan's discussion of possible actions must be explicit that the types of actions described do not commit the Agency to perform or permit those actions, but that they are provided as possible actions that would likely be consistent with plan components, particularly the desired conditions and objectives.

The possible actions listed should include exhibits of the possible timber sale program, timber-harvesting levels, and the proportion of probable methods of forest vegetation management practices expected to be used, if applicable; see examples of such exhibits in FSH 1909.12, chapter 60. The identification of possible actions should include an estimate of timber harvesting level, but should not include speculation about the specific amount, frequency, location, magnitude, or numbers of actions during the plan period.

Do not place a "to do" list of projects and expected dates in the plan. If management approaches are included as optional content in the plan (sec. 22.4 of this Handbook); they may be used to inform future proposed and possible actions.

22.4 – Optional Content in the Plan

Optional content in the plan is discussed at 36 CFR 219.7(f)(2):

> **(2) *Optional content in the plan*. A plan may include additional content, such as potential management approaches or strategies and partnership opportunities or coordination activities.**

Plans may include optional content, such as existing conditions, explanatory narrative, general management principles, management approaches, management challenges, performance history, performance risks, or referenced material. This optional content must not be labeled or worded in a way that suggests it is a plan component. In addition, optional content must not include, or appear to include, a "to do" list of tasks or actions.

For example, a plan could include optional explanatory narrative on performance history to show the public how planned outcomes are related to recent trends, while also reflecting movement toward the desired condition. A discussion of performance risks could give the public a realistic expectation regarding the plan area's ability to achieve the objectives. Optional content in the plan could facilitate transparency and give the public and governmental entities a clear understanding of the plan and how outcomes would likely be delivered. Optional content in the plan may also describe partnership opportunities that support the achievement of desired conditions and objectives.

If used, management approaches would describe the principal strategies and program priorities the Responsible Official intends to employ to carry out projects and activities developed under the plan. The management approaches can convey a sense of priority and focus among objectives and the likely management emphasis. Management approaches should relate to desired conditions and may indicate the future course or direction of change, recognizing budget trends, program demands and accomplishments. Management approaches may discuss potential processes such as analysis, assessment, inventory, project planning, or monitoring. Use care not to create unrealistic expectations regarding the delivery of programs.

Land management plans are not the only vehicle for providing information for subsequent projects and activities to help achieve the desired conditions. Land management plans may reference other sources of information in "other plan content" such as standard road and trail construction clauses, special use authorization clauses, memoranda of understanding between the Forest Service and other agencies, Congressional direction, or best management practice guidebooks.

Optional plan content can be changed through administrative changes.

23 –RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTEGRATED PLAN COMPONENTS

A plan provides vision, strategy, and constraints to guide integrated resource management of the plan area. This section provides a framework for developing the plan components that together provide for ecological sustainability and contribute to social and economic sustainability in the plan area as well as the broader landscape. Plan components must be within the inherent capability of the plan area, Forest Service authority, and the fiscal capability of the unit (36 CFR 219.1(g)).

> **§ 219.8 Sustainability.**
>
> **a) Ecological sustainability. (1) Ecosystem Integrity. The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore the ecological integrity of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and watersheds in the plan area, including plan components to maintain or restore structure, function, composition, and connectivity, taking into account: . . . .**
>
> *** * ***
>
> **The plan must provide for social, economic, and ecological sustainability within Forest Service authority and consistent with the inherent capability of the plan area, as follows: . . . .**
>
> *** * ***

> **(b) Social and economic sustainability. The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to guide the plan area's contribution to social and economic sustainability, . . .**
>
> *** * * § 219.9 Diversity of plant and animal communities. This section adopts a complementary ecosystem and species-specific approach to maintaining the diversity of plant and animal communities and the persistence of native species in the plan area. Compliance with the ecosystem requirements of paragraph (a) is intended to provide the ecological conditions to both maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities and support the persistence of most native species in the plan area. Compliance with the requirements of paragraph (b) is intended to provide for additional ecological conditions not otherwise provided by compliance with paragraph (a) for individual species as set forth in paragraph (b). The plan must provide for the diversity of plant and animal communities, within Forest Service authority and consistent with the inherent capability of the plan area.**
>
> *** * * § 219.10 Multiple use.**
>
> **While meeting the requirements of §§ 219.8 and 219.9, the plan must provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses, including outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish, within Forest Service authority and the inherent capability of the plan area . . . .**

While the guidance in the sections that follow is stated in terms of "plan components for diversity" and for "ecological integrity" and for "multiple use," individual plan components need not be so narrow. The set of desired conditions for a plan area, or portion of the area, in particular provides an integrated description of an area managed sustainably for ecological integrity, multiple use, and for the production of goods and services. (See sec. 22 of this Handbook—introductory text—for additional discussion of integrated plan components.)

The requirements for plan components are set out in this section, topic by topic. While this directive sets out each requirement separately, the set of plan components should integrate them. For new plans or plan revision, the Rule requires the plan to include plan components, including standards or guidelines for many topics at 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.1l. The topics include air quality; contribution to social and economic sustainability; diversity of ecosystems; ecological integrity; integrated resource management; soils and soil productivity; timber harvest; water quality; and water resources.

A separate plan section, or even a unique plan component, is not required for each topic. Rather, the plan components should be integrated in any manner that ensures that the plan, as a whole, meets each of the Rule's requirements. One plan component can address more than one requirement; for example, a standard that limits soil disturbance during timber harvesting

operations would respond to the Rule's requirements that timber harvest not irreversibly damage soil and be carried out consistent with the protection of soil, as well as the Rule requirements regarding the maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity, riparian areas and water quality.

See exhibit 01 for a list of all the Rule requirements for plan components, including standards or guidelines. Note the set of desired conditions should cover all topics listed in exhibit 01, except for where the topic or resource does not occur within the plan area.

23 - Exhibit 01

The topics for which plan components, including standards or guidelines, are required

- Ecological integrity of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, and watersheds in the plan area (36 CFR 219.8(a) and 219.9(a))
- Air quality; soils and soil productivity, including guidance to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation; and water quality (36 CFR 219.8(a)(2))
- Ecological integrity of riparian areas (36 CFR 219.8(a)(3))
- Contribution to social and economic sustainability (36 CFR 219.8(b))
- Diversity of ecosystems and habitat types (36 CFR 219.9(a)(2))
- [species-specific] ecological conditions in the plan area [for species at risk, when coarse filter does not required protections for such species] (36 CFR 219.9(b)(1)) and 219.9(b)(2)(ii))
- Integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses (36 CFR 219.10(a)))
- Sustainable recreation; including recreation settings, opportunities, and access; and scenic character (36 CFR 219.10(b)(i))
- Protection of cultural and historic resources (36 CFR 219.10(b)(ii))
- Management of areas of tribal importance (36 CFR 219.10(b)(iii))
- Protection of congressionally designated wilderness areas as well as management of areas recommended for wilderness designation . . . . (36 CFR 219.10(b)(iv))
- Protection of designated wild and scenic rivers as well as management of rivers found eligible or determined suitable. . . . (36 CFR 219.10(b)(v))
- Appropriate management of other designated areas or recommended designated areas . . . (36 CFR 219. 219.10(b)(vi))
- No timber harvest for the purposes of timber production on lands not suited (36 CFR 219. 219.11(d)(1))
- Soil, slope, or other watershed conditions would not be irreversibly damaged (36 CFR 219.11(d)(2))
- Protection of soil, watershed, fish, wildlife, recreation, and aesthetic resources (36 CFR 219.11(d)(3))
- Limit[s on] the maximize size for openings (must be standards; cannot be guidelines) (36 CFR 219.11(d)(4))
- Timber harvest only when in compliance with the resource protections (36 CFR 219.11(d)(5))
- [Timber removal] on a sustained yield basis (36 CFR 219.11(d)(6))
- [Regeneration only of] stands that generally have reached the culmination of mean annual increment of growth (36 CFR 219.11(d)(7))

Section 23.1 of this Handbook, "Ecological Sustainability and Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities," provides guidance for developing plan components related to ecological sustainability, ecosystem integrity and conditions that meet the needs of at-risk species within the plan area.

Section 23.2 of this Handbook, "Social and Economic Sustainability and Multiple Uses," provides guidance for developing plan components to guide the plan area's contribution to social and economic sustainability (such as employment, income, community wellbeing, and culture).

Developing plan components is an iterative process. For example, emerging plan components may be adjusted to ensure that management for multiple use will do so in a way that provides for sustainable ecological conditions, and vice-versa.

While a plan cannot guarantee sustainability, plan components are more likely provide for sustainability if they reflect the broader social, economic, and ecological context in which the plan applies. In addition, plan components must be within Forest Service authority, the inherent capability of the plan area, and the fiscal capability of the unit (36 CFR 219.1(g)).

23.1 – Ecological Sustainability and Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities

To develop the land management plan consistent with maintaining ecological sustainability, the plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, designed to maintain, restore, or promote the ecological integrity of terrestrial, riparian, and aquatic ecosystems; maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities; and support the persistence of native species within the plan area, subject to the extent of Forest Service authority and the inherent capability of the plan area.

This section (sec. 23.1 of this Handbook) gives direction for developing plan components for ecological sustainability and diversity of plant and animal communities. It consists of three subsections.

The first two subsections, "Plan Components for Ecosystem Integrity and Ecosystem Diversity" (sec. 23.11-23.11d of this Handbook) and "Plan Components for Air, Soil, and Water" (sec. 23.12-23.12c of this Handbook), provide direction for design of plan components for the ecosystem and watershed level within the plan area.

The third subsection, "Additional Species-Specific Plan Components" (sec. 23.13-23.13c of this Handbook), gives direction for the design of plan components when those developed for the ecosystem and watershed level under sections 23.11 and 23.12 of this Handbook would not provide for the ecological conditions necessary to meet the requirements of 36 CFR 219.9(b).

The plan development process for ecological sustainability and diversity of plant and animal communities should primarily focus on the ecosystem and watershed level plan components, especially those that support ecological conditions for at-risk species.

When developing integrated plan components the Interdisciplinary Team should consider the following:

1. Major vegetation types and their successional stages, patch sizes, spatial arrangement, and connectivity;

2. Dominant ecological processes and disturbance regimes for the plan area;

3. Ecosystems and unique habitat types including those that are rare or at risk;

4. Stressors, such as changes in human impacts within the plan area, disruptors of a key ecosystem characteristic by catastrophic fire, effects of a changing climate, invasive species, or water obstructions;

5. Soil resources and soil productivity;

6. Geologic resources and hazards;

7. Air resources;

8. Water quality and quantity, stream and other natural water flows, stream and lake morphology, wetlands, riparian areas, floodplains, and other groundwater-dependent ecosystems;

9. Management strategies that mitigate the effects of stressors, restores ecological integrity, or adaptation strategies to reduce vulnerability; and

10. Access, recreational settings, and scenic character.

11. Maintenance or restoration of key ecosystem characteristics identified in the assessment including those that are rare or at risk (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, secs. 12.14c and 12.55) in the plan area.

12. Range of ecological conditions established within the limits of natural landforms, vegetation, and disturbance processes that existed before extensive human alteration (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.14a).

13. Variation in physical and biological conditions exhibited by ecosystems because of system drivers, stressors, climatic fluctuations, and disturbance regimes, including those that are beyond the control of the Agency (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.3).

14. The concept that the environmental conditions that sustained species and other ecosystem components in the past are likely to sustain them (at least over the short term) in the future (Weins et al. 2012; and sec. 23.11a of this Handbook).

23.11 – Plan Components for Ecosystem Integrity and Diversity

The Agency's vision is for ecosystems in the plan area to have ecological integrity and adaptive capacity. (See FSH 1909.12, zero code, sec. 05 for definition of ecological integrity and adaptive capacity). Ecosystems have integrity when their composition, structure, function, and connectivity are operating normally over multiple spatial and temporal scales. However, not every desired condition or acre has to meet the definition of ecological integrity, because some specific areas may not have the capability or because another concern such as public safety is more important in a specific area.

In light of possible changes in species composition under the effects of climate change and with a focus on restoration, the Agency designs plan components to provide ecological conditions to sustain functional ecosystems based on a future viewpoint. Functional ecosystems are those that sustain critical ecological functions over time to provide ecosystem services.

Functional restoration may be necessary to restore the abiotic and biotic processes in degraded ecosystems. Functional restoration focuses on the underlying processes that may be degraded, regardless of the structural condition of the ecosystem. As such, a functionally restored ecosystem may have different structure and composition than the past reference condition.

1. The Responsible Official should coordinate with Research and Development to develop plan components to adapt to the effects of climate change.

2. The Responsible Official should direct the Interdisciplinary Team to design plan components that are within Forest Service authority, the inherent capability of the plan area, and the fiscal capability of the unit (36 CFR 219.1(g)):

a. Provide ecological conditions to restore, establish, and maintain functioning ecosystems on National Forest System lands that can sustainably support multiple uses and provide a broad range of goods and services.

b. Restore, establish, and maintain functioning ecosystems that will have greater adaptive capacity to withstand stressors and recover from disturbances, especially changing and uncertain environmental conditions and extreme weather events.

c. Provide ecological conditions to sustain ecosystems that maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities and the persistence of native species in the plan area (36 CFR 219.9).

d. Take into account the effects of a changing climate (36 CFR 219.8(a)(1)(iv)).

e. Provide for ecological integrity, ecosystem services, and multiple uses within the plan area in an integrated manner (36 CFR 219.10).

23.11a – Natural Range of Variation

An understanding of the natural range of variation related to key ecosystem characteristics provides context and insights to the design of plan components. Agency intent is to promote ecosystem integrity in the plan area. However, it may not be possible or appropriate to strive for returning key characteristics to past conditions throughout the plan area.

Understanding the natural range of variation is fundamental in strategic thinking and planning, even if restoration to historical conditions is not the management goal or possible on parts of the plan area. Understanding the natural range of variation of an ecosystem provides an understanding of how ecosystems are dynamic and change over time. The natural range of variation is useful for understanding each specific ecosystem, for understanding its existing ecological conditions, and for understanding its likely future character, based on projections of climate regimes. The natural range of variation is a guide to understanding how to restore a resilient ecosystem with structural and functional properties that will enable it to persist into the future.

The goal of understanding natural range of variation is to help design plan components to maintain or restore the integrity of the diversity of terrestrial, riparian, and aquatic ecosystems and habitat types throughout the plan area provide an ecosystem (coarse-filter) approach to maintaining the persistence of native species.

When developing plan components, the Interdisciplinary Team shall consider the role of the natural range of variation as follows:

1. In general, where appropriate, the Interdisciplinary Team should design plan components aimed at maintaining or restoring the natural range of variation of specific key ecosystem characteristics needed to promote ecosystem integrity in the plan area.

2. For specific areas within an ecosystem, the Responsible Official may determine that it is not appropriate, practical, possible, or desirable to contribute to restoring conditions to the natural range of variation. Natural range of variation includes a wide range of characteristics, some more common than other characteristics. To achieve social, economic, cultural, or ecological objectives it may be desirable to manage for uncommon conditions in specific areas in the plan area. For an ecosystem to withstand or recover from disturbance events caused under unique circumstances, it may be necessary to manage for characteristics that were rare or never occurred in the past. The following are examples of situations where it is NOT appropriate, practical, possible, or desirable to design plan components to restore past conditions for specific areas within an ecosystem:

a. The system is so degraded that restoration is not possible.

b. The ability to restore the desired ecological conditions or key ecosystem characteristics is beyond the authority of the Forest Service, the fiscal capability of the unit, or the inherent capability of the plan area.

c. The system is no longer capable of sustaining key ecosystem characteristics identified as common in the past based upon likely future environmental conditions.

d. Conditions that rarely or never occurred in the past, but that can be managed for in the future, will better contribute to long-term ecosystem sustainability and adaption to the effects of a changing climate.

e. Conditions that rarely or never occurred in the past, but that can be managed for in the future, will better address public health and safety concerns.

f. Conditions common in the past are directly opposed to integrated desired conditions (desired conditions that represents a balance of social, economic, cultural and ecological needs).

3. If past conditions relative to the natural range of variation are not appropriate, practical, possible, or desirable approaches:

a. The Interdisciplinary Team should design plan components based on a general scientific and ecological understanding of the conditions that would sustain key ecosystem characteristics and sustain at-risk species using factors such as: representativeness, redundancy, habitat associations of particular species, disturbance dynamics, or observed conditions in reference areas. (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.14b); and

b. The Responsible Official should briefly explain in the plan decision document the rationale for NOT basing the design of the plan components on those conditions that were common in the past relative to the natural range of variation.

23.11b – Ecosystem Integrity

Plans must contain plan components, including standards or guidelines, that maintain or restore the composition, structure, ecological processes, and connectivity of plan area ecosystems in a manner that promotes their ecological integrity (36 CFR 219.8(a) and 219.9(a)(1)). Ecological integrity is defined in the Rule at 36 CFR 219.19 and at FSH 1909.12, zero code, section 05.

219.8 Sustainability

(a) Ecological sustainability. (1) Ecosystem Integrity. The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore the ecological integrity of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and watersheds in the plan area, including plan components to maintain or restore structure, function, composition, and connectivity, taking into account:

(i) Interdependence of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the plan area.

(ii) Contributions of the plan area to ecological conditions within the broader landscape influenced by the plan area.

(iii) Conditions in the broader landscape that may influence the sustainability of resources and ecosystems within the plan area.

(iv) System drivers, including dominant ecological processes, disturbance regimes, and stressors, such as natural succession, wildland fire, invasive species, and climate change; and the ability of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems on the plan area to adapt to change.)

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

(vi) Opportunities for landscape scale restoration.

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§ 219.9 Diversity of plant and animal communities.

. . . (a) Ecosystem plan components. (1) Ecosystem integrity. As required by § 219.8(a), the plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore the ecological integrity of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and watersheds in the plan area, including plan components to maintain or restore their structure, function, composition, and connectivity.

The Interdisciplinary Team shall take into account the following items, set out in the Rule at 36 CFR 219.8(a)(1)(i) –(iv) and (vi) when developing plan components:

1. <u>Interdependence of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the plan area</u>. The Interdisciplinary Team should develop plan components in an integrated manner reflecting the interaction and interdependence of terrestrial, aquatic, and riparian ecosystems in the plan area.

2. Contributions of the plan area to ecological conditions within the broader landscape influenced by the plan area. When developing plan components the Interdisciplinary Team should consider:

a. Ecological conditions within the broader landscape and how those conditions may be influenced by resources or management within the plan area (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.14c, paragraph 3).

b. Ecological connectivity at multiple temporal and spatial scales that would provide landscape linkages facilitating the exchange of resources and the movements of species across the broader landscape (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.14c, paragraph 1).

c. Ecological conditions, habitats, or key ecosystem characteristics in the plan area that are unique, under-represented, or rare across the broader landscape (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.14c, paragraph 3).

d. Opportunities to maintain or restore ecological conditions for pollinators and improve pollinator health.

3. Conditions in the broader landscape that may influence the sustainability of resources and ecosystems within the plan area. When developing plan components the Interdisciplinary Team should consider the ecological conditions in the broader landscape that may influence the sustainability of the plan area and should consider the following:

a. Existing conditions of the broader landscape outside National Forest System boundaries that may influence the plan area's ability to maintain or restore ecological integrity of plan area ecosystems. Such conditions may include habitat fragmentation, land use patterns, resource management, or urbanization (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.14c, paragraph 3).

b. Facilitating or mimicking dominant ecological processes and system drivers of the broader landscape, especially those related to fire-adapted ecosystems (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.3).

c. Collaborating with other land managers across the broader landscape when developing an all-lands approach to planning for ecological resources in a manner that promotes the ecological integrity of terrestrial, riparian, and aquatic ecosystems in the plan area (FSH 1909.12, ch. 40).

4. System drivers, including dominant ecological processes, disturbance regimes, and stressors. When developing plan components, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider dominant ecological processes, disturbance regimes, and stressors (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.3), and should:

a. Consider plan components designed to facilitate ecosystem adaptation to the effects of stressors.

b. Consider developing plan components designed to limit the ability of stressors to impact ecosystem integrity. In doing so, consider:

(1) Providing protection from stressors for areas of high ecosystem integrity, or areas of social, cultural, or economic importance.

(2) Mitigating stressors associated with forest and rangeland management, such as equipment impacts on soils and water, or movement of invasive species via vehicles and foot travel.

(3) Mitigating, if feasible, the effects of widespread environmental stressors such as air pollution and influence of changing climate.

(4) Coordinating with Agency staff from Research and Development to develop plan components to adapt to the effects of climate change.

5. Opportunities for landscape scale restoration. When developing plan components regarding opportunities for landscape-scale restoration of ecological integrity the ID team should consider the following:

a. Multiple spatial and temporal scales. The arrangement of ecological conditions, key ecosystem characteristics, and management goals at multiple spatial and temporal scales are important.

(1) The ecological role of the plan area within the broader landscape, including capability and condition of terrestrial, aquatic, and riparian systems.

(2) Complementary restoration goals of other land managers adjacent to or within the relevant ecosystems of the plan area, if available.

(3) Opportunities to compensate for degraded conditions in the broader landscape.

(4) The broad-scale context of scarcity and abundance, and Agency ability to restore and maintain desired features or conditions that are scarce in the broader landscape (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.14c, paragraph 3).

(5) Opportunities to align desired ecological conditions with landscape-scale ecological units (such as the land-type association level of the National Hierarchical Framework of Ecological Units (FSM 2060.3)), if feasible, to simplify analysis and management by reducing the variability of ecological classifications across units of the National Forest System.

(6) Opportunities for partnerships to support restoring ecological conditions at the appropriate geographic scale.

b. At-risk species. The Interdisciplinary Team should consider the key ecosystem characteristics, ecosystems, and ecological conditions necessary to sustain the at-risk species.

c. Landscape patterns that promote long-term ecological integrity and ecosystem diversity. The ID team should consider plan components for landscape patterns that promote long-term ecological integrity and ecosystem diversity. Landscape pattern is defined as the arrangement, connectivity, composition, size, and relative abundance of ecosystem patches that occur within an area of land at a given time. Patches can be characterized by vegetation type, seral stage, habitat type, or other features relevant to a forest or rangeland management question. Examples of ways to provide plan components for such patterns include:

(1) Designing ecosystem (coarse-filter) connectivity based on landscape patterns of forests, grasslands, rangelands, streams, and wetlands that were created under ecological processes and landscape disturbance regimes that occurred before extensive human alteration.

(2) Designing spatial configuration of desired ecological conditions relative to the natural range of variation conditions, including the scale, frequency, and intensity of system drivers of ecosystem change over time (or other ecological reference model if the natural range of variation is not an appropriate approach) (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.14a; Weins et al. 2012).

(3) Maintaining a representative range of successional states for all ecosystems and in patch configurations similar to those that occurred under historical conditions, at a scale resilient to natural disturbances.

(4) Designing for ecosystem integrity based on a general scientific and ecological understanding of the conditions that would sustain key ecosystem characteristics and at-risk species using factors such as representativeness, redundancy, habitat associations of particular species, or other factors (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.14b; and sec. 23 of this Handbook).

(5) Maintaining the integrity of scarce or unique smaller areas through plan components for desired conditions and standards or guidelines to constrain the levels of disturbance for areas around them.

23.11c – Opportunities to Restore Fire-adapted Ecosystems

When developing plan components for ecological integrity, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider and integrate together plan components related to wildland fire, fuels management, and restoration of fire-adapted ecosystems (36 CFR 219.8(a)(1)(v)). The development of such plan components should be based on the need to change the plan, using information such as the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, community assessment and mitigation plans, fire's historic role in the plan area, local community wildfire protection plans, local risk assessments, trends in fire behavior, and wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas identified in the assessment phase (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.3), or from information brought forward during the public and governmental participation process. Plan components for fire or fuels management should include the following:

1. Desired Conditions. Desired conditions should define and identify fire's role in the ecosystem. It may also be appropriate to identify desired conditions for fuel conditions, fire severity, fire frequency, and so on. These desired conditions should be integrated with the other desired conditions for air, soil, threatened and endangered species, vegetation, water, and so on. In addition, the following topics should be considered when developing desired conditions—current management strategies, hazardous fuels, prevention, public and firefighter safety, smoke management, values to be protected from or enhanced by wildland fire, and wildland-urban interface.

2. Objectives. If fuels conditions are an issue in wildland-urban interface areas, the plan should include a plan objective that sets forth a projection of the number of fuel treatment acres meeting an integrated desired vegetative and fuel condition in a specific time to move toward (or maintain) the desired condition.

3. Standards or guidelines. The plan may include standards or guidelines related to basic smoke management practices, non-fire fuels treatments, post-fire rehabilitation, prescribed fire treatments, and wildland fire responses. A guideline or standard may provide guidance on when or how a specific tool is appropriate.

23.11d – Ecosystem Diversity

The Planning Rule requirements for ecosystem diversity from 36 CFR 219.9(a)(2) are:

> **The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore the diversity of ecosystems and habitat types throughout the plan area. In doing so, the plan must include plan components to maintain or restore:**
>
> **(i) Key characteristics associated with terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem types;**

(ii) Rare aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal communities; and

(iii) The diversity of native tree species similar to that existing in the plan area.

To develop the land management plan consistent with maintaining ecosystem diversity, the plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, designed to maintain, restore, or promote ecosystem diversity and habitat types.

The diversity of terrestrial, riparian, and aquatic ecosystems and habitats is fundamental to providing ecological conditions that support the abundance, distribution, and long-term persistence of native species and diversity of plant and animal communities. In addition, diversity of ecosystems and habitat types within the unit is an important aspect of the coarse-filter approach. The terms ecosystem diversity and habitat type are defined in FSH 1909.12, zero code, section 05. Terrestrial, riparian, and aquatic ecosystems to be addressed in the planning process are identified in the need to change the plan based on the assessment phase or identified based on information brought forward during the public and governmental participation process. See sections 23.1–23.12c of this Handbook for direction about plan components related to maintaining or restoring terrestrial, riparian, and aquatic ecosystems.

When developing plan components for maintaining and restoring the diversity of ecosystems and habitat types, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider the following:

1. The spatial extent and distribution of ecosystems and habitat types and spatial relationships to the natural range of variation (or other reference conditions if the use of natural range of variation is inappropriate).

2. The importance of ecosystems and habitats type to providing ecological conditions that contribute to the recovery of threatened and endangered species, conserve proposed and candidate species, and maintain viable populations of species of conservation concern (sec. 23.13 of this Handbook).

3. How plan components under consideration for large-scale ecosystems (like longleaf pine forests) would maintain or restore rare or unique embedded communities (like hillside bogs and longleaf savannahs) (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.14c).

4. How plan components under consideration for ecosystems would contribute to maintaining the persistence of native tree species within the plan area.

5. How plan components for key characteristics of the ecosystem and habitat types contribute to the broader biodiversity of ecosystems across the plan area.

23.11e – Riparian Areas

The rule requirements for riparian areas from 36 CFR 219.8(a)(3) are:

> **(i) The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore the ecological integrity of riparian areas in the plan area, including plan components to maintain or restore structure, function, composition, and connectivity, taking into account:**
>
> **(A) Water temperature and chemical composition;**
>
> **(B) Blockages (uncharacteristic and characteristic) of water courses;**
>
> **(C) Deposits of sediment;**
>
> **(D) Aquatic and terrestrial habitats;**
>
> **(E) Ecological connectivity;**
>
> **(F) Restoration needs; and**
>
> **(G) Floodplain values and risk of flood loss.**
>
> **(ii) Plans must establish width(s) for riparian management zones around all lakes, perennial and intermittent streams, and open water wetlands, within which the plan components required by paragraph (a)(3)(i) of this section will apply, giving special attention to land and vegetation for approximately 100 feet from the edges of all perennial streams and lakes.**
>
> **(A) Riparian management zone width(s) may vary based on ecological or geomorphic factors or type of water body; and will apply unless replaced by a site-specific delineation of the riparian area.**
>
> **(B) Plan components must ensure that no management practices causing detrimental changes in water temperature or chemical composition, blockages of water courses, or deposits of sediment that seriously and adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat shall be permitted within the riparian management zones or the site-specific delineated riparian areas.**

To maintain the ecological integrity of riparian areas, the plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, designed to maintain, restore, or promote riparian areas. This provision does not prohibit projects that may have short-term adverse effects to water conditions and fish habitat, but that will maintain or restore structure, function, composition, and connectivity of riparian areas over the long term.

Riparian areas are important elements of watersheds that provide critical transition zones linking terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Restoration of riparian areas may be accomplished through passive management or may require active management particularly in areas where natural disturbances such as fire or flooding have been prevented from occurring.

The terms ephemeral stream, intermittent stream, perennial stream, riparian area, and riparian management zone are defined in FSH 1909.12, zero code, section 05.

The National Core Best Management Practices (BMP) Technical Guide (USDA Forest Service 2012a) refers to riparian management zones as aquatic management zones. The technical guide discusses designation of the riparian management zone under the national core best management practice "Plan-3 Aquatic Management Zone Planning." The Agency uses the technical guide to carry out the requirements for the national best management practices for water quality (FSM 2526). As discussed in section 23.12c of this Handbook, plan components must ensure implementation of the best management practices.

Sections 23.1–23.12c of this Handbook give direction on plan components related to maintaining or restoring the ecological integrity of all ecosystems including riparian ecosystems (riparian areas).

The plan must establish widths for riparian management zones for all lakes, perennial and intermittent streams, and open water wetlands (36 CFR 219.8(a)(3)(ii)) so employees know where the plan components for ecological integrity of riparian areas apply.

Riparian management zones must include the riparian area.

1. When establishing riparian management zones, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider:

    a. Available information on the location and extent of surface waterbodies, springs, wetlands, vegetation, soils, geomorphology, topography, and other relevant information.

    b. Soil and vegetation indicators of riparian areas that include regionally distinctive riparian soils and vegetation, or the soil potential to support regionally distinctive vegetation.

    c. Fluvial geomorphic indicators of riparian areas such as break in slope or evidence of fluvial deposition.

d. The 100-year recurrence interval flood stage. The water surface elevation corresponding to the 100-year recurrence interval flood may be preferable to some standard distance from the stream channel (for example, a 100-foot buffer) because a set distance may overestimate actual riparian widths along small streams and underestimate the extent of riparian vegetation along larger rivers.

e. Existing site-specific riparian area delineations, if available (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, section 12.14d).

f. The effects of climate change on stream flows that may affect the size of riparian management zones.

2. When establishing widths for riparian management zones as require by the Rule, and in areas where available information on the distribution of riparian dependent resources within the plan area is too limited to determine appropriate riparian management zone dimensions, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider the following when establishing widths:

a. Establishing a default distance from the edge of all lakes, perennial streams, intermittent streams, and open water wetlands, such as the ordinary high water mark or bankfull flow, for the riparian management zone.

b. Giving special attention to the first 100 feet from the edges of all perennial streams, lakes, and other bodies of permanent surface water containing aquatic flora and fauna or supporting substantial riparian vegetation. In other words, plan components for riparian management zones should be developed to maintain, improve, or restore the condition of the land around and next to waterbodies in the context of the environment in which they are located, recognizing their unique values and importance to watersheds while providing for multiple uses on National Forest System lands.

c. Giving attention to dry washes or channels with minimal or no riparian vegetation that support riparian vegetation downstream due to subsurface flow through the stream channel or adjacent alluvial sediments.

3. When developing plan components for ecological integrity of riparian areas, the Interdisciplinary Team should:

a. Design plan components that constrain projects and activities to comply with requirements of the Planning Rule not to cause detrimental changes to water resources that “seriously and adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat”

(36 CFR 219.8(a)(3)(ii)(B)). This provision does not prohibit projects that may have short-term adverse effects to water conditions and fish habitat, but that will maintain or restore structure, function, composition, and connectivity of riparian areas over the long term.

b. Consider designing plan components for restoring processes that support desirable riparian integrity including allowing roots of plants access to groundwater.

c. Consider designing plan components that provide for passive management or active management. An example of passive management is restoring elements of flow regimes, such as environmental flows and levels, by restricting a destructive activity. Examples of active management include recontouring roads or mechanically removing structures or vegetation. Active management may be appropriate in areas if past management has prevented natural disturbances (such as fire or flooding), or if past projects and activities have altered riparian functions (such as where roads are located within riparian areas).

For guidance on delineating site-specific riparian areas associated with streams and rivers, see the guidelines in the National Riparian Vegetation Monitoring Technical Guide (Forest Service 2012b) or other Agency supported guidance. For guidance on delineating site-specific riparian areas for non-fluvial or palustrine areas (associated with wetlands, lakes and other standing bodies of water), see the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers wetland delineation manuals for the region of interest, available at *http://el.erdc.usace.army.mil/wetlands/wlpubs.html*.

23.12 – Plan Components for Air, Soil, and Water

The rule requirements for air, soil and water from 36 CFR 219.8(a)(2) are:

The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore:

(i) Air quality.

(ii) Soils and soil productivity, including guidance to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation.

(iii) Water quality.

(iv) Water resources in the plan area, including lakes, streams, and wetlands; ground water; public water supplies; sole source aquifers; source water protection areas; and other sources of drinking water (including guidance to prevent or mitigate detrimental changes in quantity, quality, and availability).

Plan components, including standards or guidelines, designed to maintain or restore these ecosystem elements provide the basis for maintaining or restoring the ecological integrity of the plan area. In addition to the resources listed in 36 CFR 219.8(a)(2), clean air, clean and abundant water supplies, geologic resources, and riparian areas should be considered when developing plan components.

When developing plan components for maintaining air quality, soil productivity, water quality, and water resources within the plan area, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider:

1. The range of ecological conditions established within the limits of the natural landforms, vegetation, and disturbance processes that existed before extensive human alteration.

2. The variation in physical and biological conditions exhibited by ecosystems because of climatic fluctuations and disturbance regimes.

3. The concept that the environmental conditions that sustained ecosystem components in the past are likely to sustain them, at least over the short term, in the future.

4. The potential influences of threats and stressors that are within and beyond the influence of management actions on the plan area that are likely to affect ecological conditions on the plan area during the life of the proposed plan (15 years).

23.12a – Air Quality

The rule requirements for air quality are listed in 36 CFR 219.8(a)(2)(i). The development of plan components, including standards or guidelines, for air quality should be based on a need to change the plan identified from the assessment (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.21) or from information brought forward during the public and governmental participation process.

To address air quality issues when developing, amending, or revising a plan, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider:

1. Visibility. As appropriate, consider develop plan components for visibility in class I areas commensurate with goals from relevant State, Federal, and Tribal implementation plans.

2. Emissions. As appropriate, develop plan components for emissions from management activities such as permitted mining or oil and gas operations.

3. Air Pollution Deposition and Exposure of Biophysical Resources. Where critical loads of air pollution to water, soils, flora, or fauna have been exceeded (see assessment, FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.21), develop plan components to help protect or restore key ecosystem characteristics of relevant resources within the plan area. The key

characteristics may include aquatic chemistry, soil chemistry, soil productivity, and biogeochemical cycling. The plan components may include desired conditions and objectives for target loads of air pollution deposition and target levels of air pollution exposure.

4. Smoke Management. If objectives for prescribed fire are set forth in the plan, consider developing plan components for smoke management. Consider relevant State, Federal, or Tribal smoke management program requirements when developing plan components for smoke management. For additional information on smoke management, see Basic Smoke Management Practices. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Forest Service Technical Note (2011) at *http://www.airquality.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1046311.pdf*.

23.12b – Soils and Soil Productivity

The rule requirements for soils and soil productivity are listed in 36 CFR 219.8(a)(2)(ii). The development of plan components for soils and soil productivity, including standards or guidelines, should be based on the need to change the plan identified from the assessment (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.22) or information brought forward during the public and governmental participation process.

1. In addition to considering information identified in the assessment, the Interdisciplinary Team may consider existing recommendations in Forest Service national best management practices guidance documents (USDA Forest Service 2012a). Additional information is found in FSM 2551.3.

2. When designing plan components for soils and soil productivity to sustain the productive capability of the land, its ecological resources, and watershed functions, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider whether it would be appropriate for plan components to give direction regarding :

a. Restoring degraded areas.

b. Maintaining the ecological integrity and functions of soils by managing vegetation communities and the type, degree, and amount of disturbance to soils. (See FSM 2550.5 and FSM 2551.5 for definition of soil function).

c. Maintaining biological properties of soils, such as an appropriate level of organic matter to sustain biological cycling.

d. Maintaining organic matter inputs and avoiding losses, to help maintain or increase net soil carbon storage.

e. Mitigating impacts for those soils that have been identified as vulnerable to stressors.

f. Mitigating potential impacts of changing climate, such as changes in occurrence of extreme storm events (in other words, do potential impacts affect appropriate uses of soils?).

g. Limiting potential impacts on soil physical properties, for example, compaction, rutting, puddling, displacement of the soil surface, and erosion.

h. Limiting potential effects on soil chemical properties, such as potential for nutrient depletion, acidification or both.

23.12c – Water Quality and Water Resources

The Planning Rule requires the plan to have plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore:

> **(iii) Water quality.**
>
> **(iv) Water resources in the plan area, including lakes, streams, and wetlands; ground water; public water supplies; sole source aquifers; source water protection areas; and other sources of drinking water (including guidance to prevent or mitigate detrimental changes in quantity, quality, and availability).** (36 CFR 219.8(a)(2)(iii) and (iv)).

The rule requires the establishment of BMPs in the Forest Service Directive System 36 CFR 219.8(a)(4).

> **(4) *Best management practices for water quality*. The Chief shall establish requirements for national best management practices for water quality in the Forest Service Directive System. Plan components must ensure implementation of these practices.**

The development of plan components, including standards or guidelines, designed to maintain or restore water resources in the plan area, including lakes, streams, wetlands, and groundwater, should be based on a need to change the plan identified from the assessment (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, secs. 12.23 and 13.34) or on information brought forward during the public and governmental participation process.

The Interdisciplinary Team should consider surface and subsurface water quality and public water supplies associated with the plan area watersheds. The Team should also coordinate with State, local and tribal water managers, water users, and others about appropriate resource protection, consistent with applicable law.

The Interdisciplinary Team should develop desired conditions for water quality and quantity in the plan area and consider developing plan components to:

1. Maintain or restore the water quality, quantity, timing, and distribution necessary to sustain ecosystems and downstream ecosystem services into the future by:

   a. Including guidance designed to prevent or mitigate detrimental changes in quantity, quality, and availability, including temperature changes and inputs of sediment and other pollutants.

   b. Ensuring implementation of the national best management practices (BMPs) program for water quality (FSM 2532; USDA Forest Service 2012).

   c. Quantifying the water necessary to maintain and restore terrestrial, riparian, and aquatic ecosystems and associated dependent species, including aquatic species and groundwater-dependent ecosystems in the plan area, when appropriate and practical.

   d. Specifying the appropriate environmental flows and water levels, when appropriate and practical.

2. Support the restoration of designated impaired waters within or adjacent to National Forest System lands with primary or secondary impairments that have the potential to be influenced by Forest Service forest and rangeland management activities in the plan area.

3. Maintain or restore the integrity of public water supplies, sole source aquifers, source water protection areas, and other sources of drinking water in the plan area.

4. Maintain or restore the integrity of lakes, streams, wetlands, and groundwater in the plan area.

5. Address the concerns identified for priority watersheds (sec. 22.31 of this Handbook).

23.13 –Species-specific Plan Components for At-risk Species

Plan components developed for ecosystem integrity and ecosystem diversity (sec. 23.11 of this Handbook) are expected to provide for ecological conditions necessary to maintain the persistence or contribute to the recovery of native species within the plan area, including at-risk species identified in assessment.

At-risk species for planning are federally recognized threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate species; and species of conservation concern. The term “ecological conditions” is defined in FSH 1909.12, zero code, section 05. Ecological conditions include habitat and the effects of human uses (for example, recreation, grazing, and mining).

The Planning Rule, at 36 CFR 219.9(b)(1), requires the Responsible Official to determine whether plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore ecosystem integrity and ecosystem diversity provide sufficient ecological conditions for at-risk species, or if plan components specifically directed toward providing specific conditions required by such species must be developed:

> **(b) Additional, species-specific plan components. (1) The responsible official shall determine whether or not the plan components required by paragraph (a) of this section provide the ecological conditions necessary to: contribute to the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species, conserve proposed and candidate species, and maintain a viable population of each species of conservation concern within the plan area. If the responsible official determines that the plan components required in paragraph (a) are insufficient to provide such ecological conditions, then additional, species-specific plan components, including standards or guidelines, must be included in the plan to provide such ecological conditions in the plan area.**

To make the determination required by 36 CFR 219.9(b)(1), the Responsible Official should evaluate if emerging plan components that would provide for ecosystem integrity and ecosystem diversity (coarse-filter approach) would also provide the ecological conditions necessary to meet the Rule's requirements for all the at-risk species in the plan area. If the evaluation indicates such plan components would not provide sufficient conditions required by the Rule for one or more at-risk species, the Responsible Official shall develop additional, species-specific plan components, including standards or guidelines, for each of those species (fine-filter approach).

Examples of such plan components include a standard for protecting red-cockaded woodpecker nest cavity trees during prescribed burning activities, an objective to establish a food storage order designed to minimize grizzly bear/human conflicts occupied grizzly bear habitat, or a standard for size and placement of culverts on cutthroat trout streams.

The Responsible Official should design an evaluation process for the emerging set of plan components for each at-risk species to determine the degree to which the set of emerging plan components meet the requirements of the Planning Rule for at-risk species. The Responsible Official should take into account the need to change the plan based on the status for each at-risk species (as outlined in FSH 1909.12, ch.10, sec. 12.55).

Plan components that provide for ecological conditions for ecosystem integrity and ecosystem diversity (sec. 23.11 of this Handbook) are the primary context for the evaluation of at-risk species. For most species, the only practical quantitative evaluation of their required ecological conditions is an assessment of habitat conditions (ecological conditions). Plan components developed for multiple uses may contribute to, or detract from, ecological conditions needed for

at-risk species. For example, on some forests or grasslands, a portion of the plan area may have a desired condition for undeveloped remote recreation. Such a desired condition should be taken into account when evaluating the ecological conditions for at-risk species, because it may mitigate some stressors, contribute to ecological conditions, or provide refugia.

1. Process for evaluating emerging plan components. Evaluating the emerging plan components and their likely contribution to meeting requirements for at-risk species is an iterative process as the plan is being developed, amended, or revised. The process includes:

a. Developing emerging plan components that provide for ecosystem integrity and ecosystem diversity.

b. Evaluating whether those emerging plan components would sustain the ecological conditions that the Rule requires for at-risk species.

c. Refining emerging plan components that do not adequately handle species risk factors from the evaluation of status of at-risk species (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.55) or do not sustain the ecological conditions that support at-risk species by:

(1) Making adjustments to the emerging plan components for ecosystem integrity and ecosystem diversity necessary to sustain the ecological conditions that support at-risk species;

(2) Adding additional species-specific plan components necessary to sustain the ecological conditions required by the Rule for at-risk species; or

(3) Combining paragraphs (1) and (2).

d. Repeating the steps of paragraphs 1b and 1c if other social, economic, or ecological considerations are added that alter plan components in a way that would affect an at-risk species.

2. Considerations when evaluating the potential emerging plan components. When evaluating whether emerging plan components that provide for ecosystem integrity and diversity would adequately provide conditions for at-risk species, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider the following:

a. Relevant information derived from the status of at-risk species (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.55), as well as limiting factors, threats, and stressors to each at-risk species.

b. The key habitat relationships of the species, by:

(1) Evaluating the connection between habitat conditions and population consequences.

(2) Using general ecological principles when there is a lack of knowledge of relationships between species, populations, and habitats.

(3) Using existing spatially explicit habitat models, demographic models, or other relevant models.

(4) Using qualitative methods such as expert opinion or simple habitat assessments in the absence of adequate information or models.

(5) Framing the evaluation in the context of risk and uncertainty, no matter what evaluation method is used.

c. Conducting the evaluations of the emerging plan components at the scale in which biological populations of the species operate. Analysis at the scale of distinct population segments or evolutionary significant units may be appropriate.

d. Effects, influences, and contributions from other land ownerships and actions outside of the plan area in addition to those within the plan area.

23.13a – Threatened and Endangered Species

The development of or changes to plan components to provide for ecological conditions for threatened and endangered species should be based on a need to change the plan identified from the assessment of the ecological conditions necessary to contribute to their recovery and maintaining or restoring critical habitats (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.55), or from information brought forward during the public and governmental participation process.

When designing plan components (ecosystem and species-specific) to provide for ecological conditions that contribute to the recovery of threatened and endangered species that occur within the plan area, the Interdisciplinary Team should:

1. Consider conservation measures and actions identified in the recovery plan for each threatened and endangered species.

2. Consider limiting factors (for example, naturally small and isolated populations, climate change) and key threats to each threatened and endangered species.

3. Engage with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), as appropriate, in the evaluation of existing conditions for threatened and endangered species and in the development of plan components that contribute to their recovery.

4. Work beyond the plan area boundary to collaborate and cooperate with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, States, Tribes, other partners, landowners, and land managers to support an all-lands approach to species recovery.

5. Support the reintroduction of listed species into historical habitat on National Forest System lands where appropriate, consistent with recovery plan objectives.

6. Engage with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service, as appropriate, in the evaluation of any effects to aquatic threatened and endangered species downstream of the plan area that could be affected by actions within the plan area.

23.13b – Proposed and Candidate Species

Development of plan components for proposed and candidate species should be based on the ecological conditions necessary to conserve proposed and candidate species that were identified in the assessment phase or information brought forward during the public and governmental participation process and maintain or restore their habitats in the plan area to contribute to preventing them from being federally listed (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 12.55).

When developing plan components (ecosystem and species-specific) to conserve proposed and candidate species, the Interdisciplinary Team should:

1. Consider conservation measures identified in existing conservation strategies and agreements relevant to proposed and candidate species in the plan area.

2. Consider limiting factors and key threats to species identified in proposed rules from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service for listing or candidate species assessments.

3. Engage with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service in the evaluation of existing conditions for proposed and candidate species and in the development of plan components designed to conserve these species.

4. Work beyond the plan area boundary to collaborate and cooperate with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, States, Tribes, other partners, landowners, and land managers to support an all-lands approach to conserve proposed and candidate species.

23.13c – Species of Conservation Concern

Species of conservation concern are defined in the Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.9(c)) and in FSH 1909.12, zero code, section 05. The rule requirements for species-specific plan components for species of conservation concern are:

(2) If the responsible official determines that it is beyond the authority of the Forest Service or not within the inherent capability of the plan area to maintain or restore the ecological conditions to maintain a viable population of a species of conservation concern in the plan area, then the responsible official shall:

(i) Document the basis for that determination (§ 219.14(a)); and

(ii) Include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore ecological conditions within the plan area to contribute to maintaining a viable population of the species within its range. In providing 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 relevant to that population. (36 CFR 219.9(b)(2)).

See section 21.22a of this Handbook for guidance on selecting species of conservation concern.

The Rule requires, as a general matter, that the plan have plan components to provide ecological conditions necessary to maintain a viable population of each species of conservation concern in the plan area. The ecological conditions may be those provided for through a coarse filter approach or through a fine filter (species-specific) approach. The Rule also provides that when the Forest Service's authority or the inherent capability of the plan area is insufficient to provide ecological conditions to maintain a viable population of species of conservation concern in the plan area, the Agency's obligation becomes one of contributing to maintaining a viable population of the species of conservation concern in its range.

When evaluating whether plan components (ecosystem and species-specific) would provide for the ecological conditions to maintain a viable population of each species of conservation concern in the plan area, the Interdisciplinary Team shall determine whether the plan components would provide the ecological conditions necessary to maintain or restore a viable population of a species of conservation concern in the planning area (36 CFR 219.9(b)(1)).

Five aspects of the evaluation process are explained in the following paragraphs: (1) viable population, (2) three possible outcomes of evaluating plan components, (3) examples of circumstances not within the authority of the Forest Service, (4) examples of circumstances not within the inherent capability of the plan area, and (5) duties of the Responsible Official when maintenance of a viable population of species of conservation concern within the plan area is beyond the authority of the Forest Service or not within the inherent capability of the plan area.

1. Viable population. The Planning Rule defines viable population as follows:

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.
(36 CFR 219.19)

The following principles must be kept in mind when developing plan components to provide for ecological conditions necessary to maintain a viable population of species of conservation concern in the plan area:

a. The rule only requires ecological conditions to maintain a viable population.

b. The meaning of the word "population" for planning purposes is explained in the preamble to the proposed rule: "it is the Department's expectation that for the purposes of this subpart, the individuals of a species of conservation concern that exist in the plan area will be considered to be members of one population of that species." (77 FR 21217, April 9, 2012). In some situations, individuals or groups of individuals in the plan area may be known to be or highly suspected to be reproductively isolated and separate from the rest of the individuals. These individuals or groups may need to be considered when considering "sufficient distribution" as described in paragraph 1d of this section.

c. The words "persist over the long-term" means the species continues to exist in the plan area over a sufficiently long period that encompasses multiple generations of the species, the time interval between major disturbance events, the time interval to develop all successional stages of major habitat types, or the time interval needed for the overall ecosystem to respond to management. Understand that confidence in the evaluations of persistence decreases rapidly as the timeframe of projections increases and that the Responsible Official will change plan components using plan amendments and plan revisions when the Responsible Official decides plan components need to be changed because of changed conditions.

d. Whether there is "sufficient distribution" of a species should be considered in the context of the species' natural history and historical distribution and on the potential distribution of the habitat within the plan area. Recognize that habitat and population distribution are dynamic over time. Sufficient distribution also implies a distribution that permits individuals to interact within the plan area within the constraints of the species' natural history. Sufficient distribution implies that ecological conditions are provided to support redundancy in numbers such that losing one or some without replacement will still support a viable population. It should not be expected that management of National Forest System lands would provide broadly or evenly

distributed habitat throughout a plan area for all species. Furthermore, as long as there is enough habitat in the plan area to maintain a viable population, there is no requirement that habitat to maintain all known individuals or the maximum possible number of individuals of a species must be available in the plan area.

e. The word "resilient" suggests that when disturbance events or stressors result in the local disappearance of individuals or extirpation from an area, recolonization of suitable habitat may occur in the future to facilitate long-term persistence in the plan area.

f. The word "adaptable" means that the species is able to adjust to new conditions. Ecological conditions to support the species are distributed in a way that the species may be represented in a variety of locally adapted ecotypes for increased likelihood of persistence in unknown future environments.

g. Species distribution should also be provided for by the requirement that plan components must maintain or restore the diversity of ecosystems and habitat types throughout the plan area (36 CFR 219.9(a)(2), and by the requirement to maintain or restore connectivity (36 CFR 219.9(a)(1)).

2. Three possible outcomes of evaluating plan components. There are a variety of methods for conducting this evaluation, such as expert opinion, expert panels, Bayesian-belief models, habitat suitability models, and so on. The evaluation of the ecosystem and species-specific plan components may result in three outcomes:

a. The emerging plan components, when carried out, would provide the necessary ecological conditions to maintain a viable population of the species of conservation concern in the plan area.

b. Adjustments to emerging ecosystem plan components, additional species-specific plan components, or both, when carried out, would provide the necessary ecological conditions to maintain a viable population of the species of conservation concern in the plan area.

c. Due to circumstances that are neither within the authority of the Forest Service nor consistent within the inherent capability of the land, the plan area is unable to provide the ecological conditions necessary to maintain a viable population of a particular species of conservation concern within the plan area. When this occurs, the Responsible Official shall document the basis for this determination in the planning record.

3. Examples of circumstances not within the authority of the Forest Service. The following are species-specific examples of when ecological conditions necessary for the long-term persistence of a species are outside the National Forest System lands and, therefore, outside Forest Service control for providing ecological conditions to maintain viable populations of each species of conservation concern within a plan area:

a. Forest clearing in South America. These South American forests provide important wintering areas for many Neotropical birds that nest in North America. The clearing of these forests for agricultural purposes adversely affects the wintering habitat and ecological conditions necessary for the continued survival of viable populations of the Cerulean warbler. Thus, impacts to habitat outside the National Forest System may adversely affect populations of species that migrate to and from a National Forest.

b. Hydropower and flood control facilities in the Pacific Northwest and recreational and commercial fish harvest practices. These facilities and practices are primary downstream threats to anadromous fish populations whose spawning beds may occur on stream reaches within National Forests. These facilities and practices occur outside of National Forest System lands and are outside of Forest Service control, but nonetheless may adversely affect anadromous fish populations found on National Forest System lands.

c. Land use patterns on private lands intermixed with or adjacent to National Forest System lands. The continuing agricultural uses and urbanization that is occurring east of the Rocky Mountains is causing habitat fragmentation, which reduces available habitat and ecological conditions necessary for the viability of swift fox populations. Therefore, a reduction in viable populations of this species can occur as a result of land use development and patterns outside of National Forest System lands.

d. Domestic sheep grazing on private lands intermixed with or adjacent to National Forest System lands in the west. The contact of bighorn sheep with domestic sheep can transmit diseases to bighorn sheep and can cause die-offs of the affected bighorn sheep herds. Therefore, a reduction in viable populations of bighorn sheep can occur because of land use outside National Forest System lands.

4. Examples of circumstances not within the inherent capability of the plan area. The inherent capability of the land is defined in FSH 1909.12, zero code, section 05. Examples of circumstances that are not within the inherent capability of the plan area to provide the ecological conditions needed to maintain or restore a viable population of a species within the plan area include:

a. A species that is inherently rare because its individuals naturally occur at low numbers and are wide-ranging. For example, the wolverine occurs at relatively low densities in the northern Rocky Mountains and the number of breeding individuals in a single National Forest may be presumably too small to be considered a viable population.

b. A plan area that lacks sufficient ecological capacity to produce the habitat or ecological conditions necessary to maintain a viable population. An example is the Kisatchie National Forest, which has very limited amounts of land capable of producing the broad bottomland hardwood and cypress swamp habitat necessary to maintain a viable population of swallow-tailed kite. This National Forest is only capable of providing habitat for some individuals of this species.

c. Current and projected changes in climate that may affect a National Forest or grassland's ability to maintain or even contribute to the ecological conditions necessary to maintain viable populations of some species. An example is the warming trends at higher elevations in the West, which are altering the capability of some National Forests in California and other areas of the West to provide ecological conditions needed to maintain viable populations of American pika.

d. Where water quality conditions in Appalachian Mountain streams that provide habitat for eastern brook trout have been altered through acid deposition. The acid deposition is due to past and current acid rain, rendering many streams unsuitable for brook trout and compromising the ability of some Appalachian National Forests to provide the ecological conditions needed to maintain viable populations of this species.

5. Duties of the Responsible Official. If the Responsible Official determines it is beyond the authority of the Forest Service or not within the inherent capability of the plan area to maintain or restore the ecological conditions to maintain a viable population of a species of conservation concern in the plan area, then the Responsible Official shall:

a. Document the basis for the determination.

b. Include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore ecological conditions within the plan area to contribute to maintaining a viable population of the species within its range. For additional guidance see the principles about viable populations at paragraph 1 of this section.

c. Coordinate, to the extent practicable, with Federal, State, Tribal, and private land managers relevant to the species population. In doing so, consider:

(1) The range of the species beyond the plan area, and the ecological role of the plan area to contribute to a viable population across the broader landscape.

(2) Working towards an all-lands approach to species conservation with other land managers across the range of the species, including efforts to mitigate threats or stressors and to provide ecological conditions that would support the species.

23.2 – Social and Economic Sustainability and Multiple Use

In the definition of sustainability, the Planning Rule defines social and economic sustainability as follows:

> **. . . "social sustainability" refers to the capability of society to support the network of relationships, traditions, culture, and activities that connect people to the land and to one another and support vibrant communities.**
>
> **. . . "economic sustainability" refers to the capability of society to produce and consume or otherwise benefit from goods and services including contributions to jobs and market and nonmarket benefits. . .** (36 CFR 219.19).

Plans are required to have plan components to guide the plan area's contribution to social and economic sustainability (36 CFR 219.8(b)) and for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses in the plan area (36 CFR 219.10(a). Plan components must be integrated to meet these requirements as well as requirements for ecological sustainability and species diversity as described in sections 22 and 23 of this Handbook. Under the Planning Rule, ecological, social, and economic systems are recognized as interdependent, without one being a priority over the other. These plan components apply to the plan area and are within the authority of the Forest Service, the inherent capability of the land, and the fiscal capability of the planning unit.

23.21 –Contributions of the Plan Area to Social and Economic Sustainability

Plans must include plan components that guide the plan area's contribution to social and economic sustainability to provide people and communities with a range of social, cultural, and economic benefits for present and future generations. Desired conditions should include a description of the plan area's contribution to social, economic, and cultural conditions. The general Planning Rule requirements for social and economic sustainability are as follows:

> **§ 219.8 Sustainability.**
>
> **The plan must provide for social, economic, and ecological sustainability within Forest Service authority and consistent with the inherent capability of the plan area, as follows:**
>
> ***

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

(1) Social, cultural, and economic conditions relevant to the area influenced by the plan;

(2) Sustainable recreation; including recreation settings, opportunities, and access; and scenic character;

(3) Multiple uses that contribute to local, regional, and national economies in a sustainable manner;

(4) Ecosystem services;

(5) Cultural and historic resources and uses; and

(6) Opportunities to connect people with nature. (36 CFR 219.8)

In addition, the 36 CFR 219.10, Multiple Use, requires that when developing plan components, the Responsible Official shall consider the following:

(7) Reasonably foreseeable risks to ecological, social, and economic sustainability. (36 CFR 219.10 (a)).

The Planning Rule sections on social and economic sustainability (36 CFR 219.8(b) and multiple uses (36 CFR 219.10) cover some of the same topics. Sections within section 23.2 of this Handbook present each of these topics once—covering the pertinent requirements from both §219.8(b) and §219.10 of the Planning Rule. The entirety of section 23.2 of this Handbook describes how plans contribute to social and economic sustainability.

FSH 1909.12, chapter 20, sections 13.0, 13.1 and 13.2 describe the framework of how management of the plan area contributes to social, economic, and cultural conditions in the plan area, in the area(s) of influence and the broader landscape. The provision of multiple uses, ecosystem services, infrastructure, and Forest Service presence in the community are the types of contributions most likely to affect these social, economic, and cultural conditions. The assessment identifies these contributions of the plan area and the risks that may affect the ability of the plan to sustain the contributions.

Sections 23.21a and 23.21b of this Handbook give further general guidance on multiple uses and ecosystem services.

Specific guidance on developing plan components for infrastructure is contained in section 23.23 of this Handbook in the sections on sustainable recreation, scenery, renewable energy and infrastructure, roads, and transportation.

Agency operations are normally developed to support the plan and contribute directly and indirectly to the Forest Service presence in the community. The plan should not contain plan components that direct how Agency operations are conducted. The operations of the Forest Service administrative unit support the achievement of the desired conditions, goals, and objectives of the plan consistent with standards, guidelines, and suitability plan components. The Interdisciplinary Team evaluates the social, cultural, and economic impact of Agency operations and the Forest Service presence as part of the environmental analysis and briefly described in section 23.22 of this Handbook.

The plan components should be designed to guide sustainable contributions to social, cultural, and economic conditions while recognizing the reasonably foreseeable risks and uncertainties affecting the plan area.

The desired conditions of the plan should describe the desired social, economic, and cultural conditions in the plan area and the major contributions the plan area makes to social, cultural, and economic conditions outside of the plan area. Plan objectives can describe intended outcomes related to these contributions intended for accomplishment by a certain time. Suitability, standards, and guidelines should clarify how and where certain kinds of uses, projects and activities may or may not occur for reasons such as maintaining or restoring ecological sustainability and species diversity, or avoiding conflicts among uses. The distinctive roles and contributions of the plan area can highlight major unique contributions of the plan area to social and economic sustainability.

The Interdisciplinary Team should consider the following kinds of questions in developing plan components related to social and economic sustainability:

1. What is needed or desired for contributions from the plan area to contribute to social, cultural, and economic conditions?

2. Will the plan area (under the management of the plan) be able to sustain these contributions?

3. How will the plan components influence the contributions of the plan area to social and economic sustainability?

4. How will the plan affect social, economic, and cultural conditions in the plan area and area(s) of influence and the broader landscape? Will the plan adversely affect or benefit minority or low income populations?

5. Will the plan be able to sustain the plan area's contributions to social, cultural, and economic conditions under the reasonably foreseeable risks and uncertainties affecting the plan area, the area of influence and the broader landscape?

6. Are the plan components related to social and economic sustainability well integrated with the plan components that provide for ecological sustainability, including those that provide for ecosystem integrity and species diversity?

23.21a – Multiple Uses

Plan components that provide for multiple uses are one of the primary contributions to social and economic sustainability of the plan in the broader landscape. The Rule's general requirements for integrated resource management of multiple uses area at 36 CFR 219.10:

§ 219.10 Multiple use.

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

(a) ***Integrated resource management for multiple use*****. The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses in the plan area. 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, recreation settings and opportunities, riparian areas, scenery, soil, surface and subsurface water quality, timber, trails, vegetation, viewsheds, wilderness, and other relevant resources and uses. *[Specific topics are detailed at 36 CFR 219.10(a)(2)-(10) and described in subsequent sections]*.

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> **(b) Requirements for plan components for a new plan or plan revision. (1) The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to provide for** [*Specific topics are detailed at 36 CFR 219.10(b)(1)(i)-(vi) and described in subsequent sections*].

This section of the Rule first requires, at paragraph (a), that a plan *must* include plan components, including standards or guidelines, for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple use. The rule does not specify how a plan shall do this, but it lists specific topics that that the Responsible Official *shall consider* in developing plan components (36 CFR 219.10 (a)(1)-(10).

The Planning Rule at 36 CFR 219.10(b) requires, that a plan *must include* plan components to provide for specific resources and uses (36 CFR 219.10(b)(1)(i)-(vi)). Plan components to meet these requirements are expected to be integrated and a unique plan component is not required for each topic in 36 CFR 219.10(b) as described in sections 22 and 23 of this chapter. The following sections of this Handbook give direction to meet these specific requirements: sections 23.21a, 23.23a, 23.23g, 23.23h, 24.2, 24.41, and section 24.42.

23.21b – Ecosystem Services

The Planning Rule (§ 219.10, § 219.10(a)(1), § 219.8(b)(3) requires that a plan include plan components including standards or guidelines, for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple use.

The Interdisciplinary Team should review the assessment for key ecosystem services provided by the plan area along with information about the ability of the plan area to provide these key ecosystem services FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 13.12). This information provides a framework to evaluate how potential plan components are likely to provide for and affect key ecosystem services.

Key ecosystem services may include services that are described elsewhere in section 23.2 of this Handbook. These include provisioning services such as air, water, energy, fiber, and minerals; regulating services such as soil stabilization; and cultural services such as cultural heritage values, and recreational experiences.

A plan may identify key ecosystem services that are provided by the plan area but that are not covered in this chapter: for example, provisioning services such as food, and regulating services such as flood control. In such a case the plan should have plan components that provide for those services. When developing plan components to provide for key ecosystem services, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider how those services contribute to social, cultural, and economic conditions.

The plan should describe the desired conditions for the key ecosystem services in the plan area. Within the plan area, desired conditions may describe different desired sets of ecosystem services from different management or geographic areas. When developing plan objectives, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider the linkage between the key ecosystem services and how plan objectives would contribute to the intended achievement of the level, quality, or delivery of the key ecosystem services. A plan does not need to have a specific plan component for each key ecosystem service, but there should be a linkage between each of the key ecosystem services and the plan components.

23.22 – Social, Cultural, and Economic Conditions Influenced by the Plan

When developing plan components, including standards or guidelines, the Interdisciplinary Team shall take into account the social, cultural, and economic conditions relevant to the plan's area(s) of influence and the broader landscape (36 CFR 219.8(b)(1)).

1. When developing plan components, the Interdisciplinary Team should:

a. Review the assessment, along with information from public and governmental participation, for information about social, cultural, and economic conditions and their relationship to the contributions of the plan area. (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec.13.23). These social and economic considerations, along with ecological considerations, are often interrelated.

b. Consider the following when developing plan components for social, cultural, and economic conditions:

(1) Opportunities for the plan area to contribute to social conditions including the health, safety, education, social wellbeing, and quality of life of people and communities affected by the plan area. Opportunities can provide for service or civic engagement, and other activities that connect people to the land and to one another.

(2) Opportunities for the plan area to contribute to cultural conditions such as traditions, history, art, and traditional resource uses. These can include traditional uses such as gathering of plants, fish, or wildlife for subsistence; sacred sites; ranching; or means of accessing the plan area such as on horseback, motor vehicles, or airstrips.

(3) Opportunities for the plan area to contribute to economic conditions such individual employment, small businesses, personal income, Federal receipts shared with local governments, and the provision of economically significant benefits, products, and services, including those with both market and nonmarket value.

(4) Ways to reduce or eliminate adverse impacts to any environmental justice communities identified during the assessment or public participation process.

2. The plan should include a description of the desired social, cultural, and economic conditions in the plan area. The description could include:

a. How people use the plan area and the type of social environment that the plan area can provide.

b. Cultural aspects of the plan area including its relationship to specific communities, role in sustaining cultures and use of particular places for cultural events.

c. Economic conditions in terms of the types of work opportunities and resource use desired in the plan area.

3. The plan desired conditions should also contain a description of the contributions of the plan area to the social, cultural, and economic conditions in the area(s) of influence and beyond in the broader landscape. This can include contributions such as the following examples:

a. Recreational and educational opportunities that are designed to provide a wide range of recreational and learning opportunities for communities of interest, schools, and individuals.

b. Management of cultural resources or interpretation of these resources to foster certain educational or cultural activities.

c. Use of resources or infrastructure such as recreation, grazing, timber, or water and energy transmission corridors or roads that help to sustain businesses and employment opportunities.

Note that desired conditions should not describe desired social, economic, or cultural conditions outside the plan area because these are not within Forest Service authority, but they should describe contributions the plan area can make to these conditions.

4. The Interdisciplinary Team should analyze the potential impact of the plan components on social, cultural, and economic conditions as part of the environmental analysis for any plan revision or any plan amendment. The environmental analysis document also analyzes environmental effects on minority populations, low-income populations, or Indian tribes, including human health, social, and economic effects. This analysis should include an evaluation of the sustainability of the contributions of the plan area. Agency guidance for performing such social and economic evaluations in an environmental analysis is contained in FSH 1909.17.

23.23 – Considerations for Multiple Uses, Ecosystem Services, and Infrastructure

Sections 23.23a through 23.23n of this Handbook give additional guidance related to contributions of the plan area covered in the multiple use section (36 CFR 219.10), and the sustainability section (36 CFR 219.8(b)).

23.23a – Sustainable Recreation Resources and Opportunities to Connect People with Nature

The Planning Rule (§ 219.10(a)) requires that a plan include plan components including standards or guidelines for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple use [including outdoor recreation]; and plan components including standards or guidelines to provide for:

> **Sustainable recreation; including recreation settings, opportunities, and access; and scenic character. Recreation opportunities may include non-motorized, motorized, developed, and dispersed recreation on land, water, and in the air.** (36 CFR 219.10 (b)(1)(i)).

The Planning Rule also requires that the development of plan components must take into account outdoor recreation that contributes to local, regional, and national economies in a sustainable manner (§ 219.8(b)(3)) and sustainable recreation; including recreation settings, opportunities and access; and scenic character (§ 219.8(b)(2)). In the development of plan components the Responsible Official shall consider recreation settings and opportunities, trails (§ 219.10(a)(1)) and appropriate placement and sustainable management of recreational facilities (§ 219.10(a)(3)). Introductions to sections 22 and 23 of this Handbook give guidance on how to integrate plan components to meet these requirements.

The Planning Rule provides definitions for sustainable recreation, recreation setting, and recreation opportunity (see 36 CFR 219.19 or FSH 1909.12, zero code, section 05). Guidance pertaining to scenic character is described in section 23.23f of this Handbook.

1. When developing plan components:

   a. The Interdisciplinary Team should review information from the assessment, the need for change, and distinctive roles and contributions related to recreational settings, opportunities, and access in the plan area. Also, consider information about public preferences or demand for recreational opportunities in the broader landscape and the plan area and the compatibility of recreational uses. The review should include consideration of information provided by the public regarding recreation opportunities and activities that may be outside the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum or the National Visitor Use Monitoring system. The information provides a starting point for integrating recreation settings, opportunities, and access with other resource values, multiple uses, ecosystems services, and designated areas.

b. The Interdisciplinary Team should consider how sustainable recreation is related to achievement of the plan area's ecological sustainability and contribution to social and economic sustainability. The Interdisciplinary Team should consider the compatibility of different recreational uses in specific areas within the plan area. In addition, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider how the recreational uses will influence ecological conditions.

c. The Interdisciplinary team should develop plan components that are within the authority of the Forest Service, inherent capability of the land and the fiscal capability of the unit (36 CFR 219.1(g)). Consideration of fiscal capability should recognize contributions of partnerships.

Exhibit 01 describes how sustainable recreation contributes and is related to achieving each aspect of sustainability, and provides examples of how plan components could be developed to address this. For additional information, see FSM 2310.

23.23a - Exhibit 01

Recreation's Contribution to Sustainability

Type of Sustainability	Role of Sustainable Recreation	Examples of Plan Component Development
Ecological sustainability refers to the capability of ecosystems to maintain ecological integrity (36 CFR 219.19).	The health and resiliency of a unit's natural resources are critical to the sustained delivery of nature-based recreation settings and opportunities. As such, the delineation of desired recreation settings and opportunities must be compatible with the landscape's ability to support the associated types of activities, use levels, access, and infrastructure.	Desired motorized recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) classes are located on landscapes where the topography, geology, soils, can support motorized use and the associated roads and motorized trails. Although the designation of specific travel routes is not a land management plan decision, ROS provides the framework where specific recreational opportunities, activities and expected experiences are integrated to ensure compatibility with the landscape's natural and cultural resource values. In addition to identifying desired ROS classes, plan components may limit the authorization of recreation activities that have been identified as a stressor to the ecological system. Plan components can also be designed that will lead to subsequent actions to limit or place constraints on recreation activities identified as a stressor. Examples of recreation as a stressor include dispersed camping in riparian areas, snowmobiling elk winter range, or recreation in bear country. See section 21.8, exhibit 01 of this Handbook for a discussion of public use prohibitions.

23.23a - Exhibit 01--Continued

Type of Sustainability	Relationship to Sustainable Recreation	Example of Plan Component Development
Social sustainability refers to the capability of society to support the network of relationships, traditions, culture, and activities that connect people to the land and to one another, and support vibrant communities. (36 CFR291.19)	Recreation is an important means for people to connect with nature; pursue adventure; socialize; and/or realize personal goals of self-discovery, stress relief, or self-reliance. Social benefits include improving the quality of life for individuals and communities and the many health benefits associated with engaging in outdoor activities	Plan components can provide for a range of recreation settings, opportunities, and places, or to accomplish management goals such as visitor safety or minimizing conflicts between various uses. Other plan content specific to sustainable recreation may describe management approaches for: social engagement through the integration of community and regional recreation programs; greater connection of the plan area to local communities, youth and underserved populations; responding to the needs of visitors; creating connections between people and nature; promoting long-term physical and mental health; and instilling a culture of stewardship and appreciation.

23.23a - Exhibit 01--Continued

Type of Sustainability	Relationship to Sustainable Recreation	Example of Plan Component Development
Economic sustainability refers to the capability of society to produce and consume or otherwise benefit from goods and services including contributions to jobs and market and nonmarket benefits (36 CFR 219.19).	Recreation and tourism is often an important component of local and regional economies. Outfitter-guides, ski areas, or other recreation special uses contribute to both creating jobs and providing a stream of revenue to regional and/or local markets.	Plan components may identify certain types of recreation opportunities for specific areas within the plan area. This can include management areas for winter sports complexes, equestrian use, or interpretative sites and campgrounds. It can also include identifying areas as suitable for certain types of dispersed recreation activities such as equestrian use, mountain biking or river rafting. Plan components may identify general changes to the desired recreation infrastructure such as campgrounds and trails (see sec. 23.23l of this Handbook) that bridge gaps between desired recreational outcomes and available resources. Other plan components and other plan content can be developed to highlight, maintain, or enhance certain recreation settings or opportunities that support economic contributions from recreation in the plan area, the area of influence and the broader landscape.

d. The Interdisciplinary Team uses the recreation opportunity spectrum to define recreation settings and categorize them into the six distinct classes as the structure to describe recreational settings. At the forest scale, sustainable recreation is derived through the integrated planning process and emerges as the resultant set of desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes. Each setting provides opportunities to engage in activities (motorized, nonmotorized, developed, or dispersed on land, water, and in the air) that result in different experiences and outcomes.

(1) The Interdisciplinary Team may create desired recreation opportunity spectrum subclasses. For example, the subclass "roaded modified" was first defined in the Pacific Northwest to distinguish those settings significantly altered by past timber harvest from other roaded natural settings. The Interdisciplinary Team may also create desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes to reflect seasonal variations. Desired winter recreation opportunity spectrum classes can be developed to depict changes in the location, mix and distribution of setting attributes, access, and associated opportunities (both motorized and nonmotorized). In doing so, distinct seasonal changes in the recreation settings and opportunities can be integrated with other seasonally relevant multiple uses, resource values and management objectives, such as protecting crucial winter range, providing access to key winter destinations, or limiting access to avalanche prone areas.

(2) The interdisciplinary team is encouraged to use new approaches for managing recreation within the plan area. The interdisciplinary team should be proactive in developing a coherent system of sustainable and socially compatible recreation opportunities.

2. The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to provide for sustainable recreation integrated with other plan components as described in 23.21a. To meet this requirement the plan:

a. Must include desired conditions for sustainable recreation using mapped desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes. This mapping may be based on management areas, geographic areas, designated areas, independent overlay mapping, or any combination of these approaches. Desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes may be different from existing classes. The set of desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes is the result of an integrated planning process in which recreation contributes to social, economic, and ecological sustainability. Desired recreation settings and opportunities may complement surrounding land uses and may vary by season.

b. May include additional plan components to supplement and complement achieving desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes. Consider desired conditions and related plan components associated with other multiple uses, ecosystem services, and

ecological sustainability. These plan components should be designed within the overall structure of the land management plan to ensure full integration of sustainable recreation.

c. May include objectives where existing recreation opportunity spectrum settings for an area differ from the desired recreation opportunity spectrum for that area. Examples of such objectives are: an objective that roads be obliterated within a certain time period on lands with a desired condition of nonmotorized recreation opportunity spectrum classes; or an objective to create motorized connections between communities and adjacent forest settings within a certain time period on lands on which the desired condition includes a motorized use recreation opportunity spectrum class. Objectives may also be designed for activities to alter the condition of recreation areas, dispersed sites, infrastructure including trails, or services to achieve sustainable desired conditions for recreation in the plan area.

d. Should include suitability determinations for motorized recreation including over the snow vehicles consistent with the desired recreation opportunity spectrum class. This suitability of areas may change by season. Travel management decisions are separate, project-level decisions that determine the specific areas and routes for motorized recreation consistent with areas identified in the plan as suitable for motorized recreation use. The specific areas and routes open to motorized recreation are the result of this staged planning process (sec. 23.23l of this Handbook). Resulting opportunities for motorized recreation including over-the-snow vehicles must be consistent with Executive Order 11644. Suitability or other plan components cannot prohibit public recreational use without additional process (sec. 21.8 of this Handbook).

e. May include suitability of lands for various types of mechanized, and nonmotorized recreation opportunities that are appropriate within each of the desired recreation opportunity spectrum settings.

f. May include suitability determinations for types of recreational facilities, access, infrastructure, and special uses that are appropriate within each of the desired recreation opportunity spectrum settings.

g. Should include specific standards or guidelines where restrictions are needed to ensure the achievement or movement toward the desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes. Standards or guidelines can also apply to specific desired recreation opportunity spectrum settings, specific recreation opportunities, trails, developed recreation, interpretive and educational opportunities, dispersed recreation, special uses, or other recreation activities.

h. May also include discrete plan components for specific recreation opportunity spectrum classes, identified management areas, geographic areas, designated areas, or other identified places within the plan area. Examples of specific areas that may need additional plan components can include landscapes that exhibit unique geological formations, water features, or scenic qualities; contain cultural features or landscapes that are significant to an area's heritage and identity; or possess unique recreation destinations, activities, or services that are important to the area's tourism industry.

The Planning Rule requires that the development of plan components must take into account opportunities to connect people with nature (§ 219.8(b)(6) and (§219.10(a)(10)).

The Interdisciplinary Team should evaluate information from the assessment, the need for change, and distinctive roles and contributions as a starting point to determine how the plan can provide opportunities to connect people with nature. Plan components such as those that provide recreational opportunities are one important way to accomplish connecting people with nature.

The plan could include management approaches or other plan content that describe ways to better connect youth or underserved populations to recreation opportunities, to provide quality information to a diverse set of visitors to understand where to go for the recreation experience they are seeking, to address visitor safety through education and management actions, to enhance visitors' understanding of their natural and cultural environments, and to provide opportunities for people to develop a sense of stewardship and appreciation of the plan area. Environmental study areas or visitor centers may be identified specifically to provide educational opportunities for local schools or the public.

23.23b – Fish, Wildlife, and Plants

The Planning Rule (§ 219.10(a)) requires that a plan include plan components including standards or guidelines, for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple use [including wildlife and fish].

When developing plan components, the Responsible Official shall take into account plants, wildlife and fish, and related uses, that contribute to local, regional, and national economies in a sustainable manner (§ 219.8(b)(3)) and consider fish and wildlife species and habitat and habitat connectivity (§ 219.10 (a)(1)). Other required considerations in the development of plan components include:

Habitat conditions, subject to the requirements of §219.9, for wildlife, fish and plants commonly enjoyed and used by the public; for hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, observing, subsistence and other activities (in collaboration with federally recognized Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other Federal agencies and State and local governments). (§ 219.10(a)(5)).

When developing plan components:

1. The Interdisciplinary Team should identify the contribution of fish, wildlife, plant species, and related uses, to economic and social sustainability. The assessment provides information on the species of fish, wildlife, and plants that are commonly used or enjoyed by the public, the conditions and trends associated with these species, and the contribution of the use and enjoyment of these species to social and economic sustainability (see FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 13.35). Plan components related to ecological sustainability (section 23.1 of this Handbook) and species diversity (section 23.13 of this Handbook) also contribute to social and economic sustainability. In addition to this contribution, the Interdisciplinary Team should examine if other plan components can further improve the conditions of fish, wildlife, and plants that are commonly used or enjoyed by the public.

2. The Responsible Official should work with relevant governmental entities, including federally recognized Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments and the public to design plan components for habitat conditions and sustainable recreation opportunities that provide for the use and enjoyment of fish, wildlife, and plants. Plan components for ecological sustainability, habitat connectivity, species diversity (see sec 23.1 and 23.13 of this Handbook on species at risk), and recreation may also contribute to the use and enjoyment of fish, wildlife, and plants.

The Responsible Official may provide for public use and enjoyment of fish, wildlife, and plant species with desired conditions that describe the ecological conditions for the species desired by the public and how the public can enjoy these species. Desired conditions may highlight different species or different ways to enjoy the species for specific land areas of the plan area. Other plan components would be designed to support achieving this desired condition.

23.23c – Watersheds and Water Resources

The Planning Rule (§ 219.10(a)) requires that a plan include plan components including standards or guidelines, for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple use [including watershed].

When developing plan components, the Responsible Official shall take into account watersheds that contribute to local, regional, and national economies in a sustainable manner (§ 219.8(b)(3)) and consider surface and subsurface water quality (§ 219.10(a)(1)). Other required considerations in the development of plan components include public water supplies and associated water quality (§219.10(a)(9)).

Water and watershed management may also play a role in providing for other uses, such as water-based recreation or energy. The assessment provides available information about the contributions of watersheds and water resources to the public, the conditions and trends related

to water use, and the contribution of water use to social and economic sustainability (FSH 1909.12, ch.10, secs.12.23 and 13.34). When developing plan components, the Interdisciplinary Team should consider the contribution of water and watersheds within the plan area to economic and social sustainability.

Guidance associated with ecological sustainability with respect to watershed, surface and subsurface water quality, and public water supplies and associated water quality is contained in 36 CFR 219.8 and section 23.12c of this Handbook. Plan components that support ecological sustainability will likely also support the social and economic sustainability contributions of water and watersheds within the plan area. The Responsible Official should consider whether additional plan components are necessary to support the values of water and watersheds, other multiple uses related to water and watersheds, water quality and public drinking water supplies and the contribution of water and watersheds to social and economic sustainability.

23.23d – Rangelands, Forage, and Grazing

The Planning Rule (§ 219.10(a)) requires that a plan include plan components including standards or guidelines, for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple use [including range].

When developing plan components, the Responsible Official shall take into account range that contributes to local, regional, and national economies in a sustainable manner (§ 219.8(b)(3)) and consider forage, grazing, and rangelands ((§ 219.10 (a)(1).

To the extent practicable for a land management plan, the Responsible Official should coordinate with State fish and game agencies to balance State population objectives for game species with plan components related to domestic livestock grazing.

1. When developing components, the Interdisciplinary Team should:

   a. Review the assessment for information about conditions and trends of rangelands, transitory range, and other grazing lands, sustainability of the ecological conditions that support grazing of livestock, the impacts of grazing on ecological integrity and species diversity, and the contribution of livestock grazing to sustainability (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 13.32). The assessment may also have information linking the contributions of grazing in the plan area to social, cultural, and economic conditions of communities in the area of influence and the broader landscape.

   b. Consider the conditions, trends, and stressors, that affect the ability of the plan area to sustain native ungulates, other species, and domestic livestock that depend on the forage produced in the plan area, consistent with meeting requirements for ecological integrity and species diversity described in section 23.1 of this Handbook.

c. Recognize important contributions grazing in the plan area may provide to sustain native people and communities dependent on such grazing opportunities. Public engagement strategies should include the participation of native stock raising communities where applicable, in the development of plan components affecting grazing of livestock.

d. Consider current range management (FSM 2200) of existing allotments in the development of plan components that apply to the allotments within the plan area.

e. Recognize potential adverse interactions between domestic livestock and native species and provide appropriate plan components to avoid or mitigate these risks.

f. Consider wild horse-burro territories present in the plan area and management for wild horses and burros in the development of plan components that apply to these territories (sec. 24 of this Handbook).

2. The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to provide for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple use integrated with other plan components as described in 23.21a. To meet this requirement the plan may include:

a. Desired conditions for rangelands, transitory range, and other grazing lands that describe the type, level, and general location of grazing anticipated in the plan area while considering the sustainability of this contribution to the social, cultural, and economic conditions affecting communities in the area(s) of influence and the broader landscape.

b. Objectives that identify expected progress for indicators of rangeland health or other intended achievements such as acres or number of range improvements and accommodations for native species.

c. Suitability determinations to indicate management areas or other areas where livestock grazing or wild horse and burro management is or is not suitable, depending on physical and ecological considerations and the desired conditions for the areas.

d. Standards or guidelines, such as seasonal closures or restrictions based on forage condition, to maintain the ecological sustainability and the sustainability of forage for grazing.

e. Other plan content to describe the approach to range management to provide for rangeland health, restoration, and grazing opportunities for domestic livestock.

Design plan components to accommodate the range of site-specific needs of individual areas, species, allotments, and plant communities. Allotment management plans for livestock, and territory management plans for wild horse and burro populations provide specific operational guidance and are the most appropriate planning level to carry out management tools such as minimum stubble height, multiple-year mean utilization, or streambank alteration limitations.

The appropriate management level for wild horse and burro populations is established in the territory management plan. When a plan is developed, amended, or revised, allotment management plans and wild horse and burro territory plans should be evaluated for consistency with the new plan, as required by 36 CFR 219.15(a)).

23.23e – Timber and Vegetation

The Planning Rule (§ 219.10(a)) requires that a plan include plan components including standards or guidelines, for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple use [including timber].

When developing plan components, the Responsible Official shall take into account timber that contributes to local, regional, and national economies in a sustainable manner (§ 219.8(b)(3)) and consider vegetation (§ 219.10 (a)(1)).

Management of forest vegetation for ecological sustainability, species diversity, and social and economic sustainability is a major focus of planning.

1. When developing plan components, the Interdisciplinary Team should:

   a. Review the assessment for information about the current condition of forests, potential contributions of timber harvest and other wood product activity, to social, economic, and ecological sustainability (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 13.33). Timber harvest may also be a stressor to ecosystems and an influence on species diversity that needs to be considered consistent with guidance in section 23.1 of this Handbook.

   b. Evaluate ecological processes and stressors with and without active timber harvest. This step is often a central part of the planning process. This evaluation may be supported with GIS information and analysis models that explore different harvest methods and schedules that lead to different desired mixes of plant communities and seral stages. This evaluation may include timber harvests that result in timber sold that can contribute to mills or other businesses in support of local economies. Different desired conditions for vegetation and different approaches in terms of land area available for harvest, harvest methods, and harvest schedules may be examined in the planning process.

c. Identify the role of timber harvest within the plan area to maintain and restore desired vegetation conditions for ecological sustainability and species diversity along with the contribution of timber and other wood products and services to economic and social sustainability. This role can include how timber harvest can contribute to creating the desired fire regime condition class or other vegetative conditions (sec. 23.11c of this Handbook). Specific guidance for complying with the Planning Rule requirements that are based on the NFMA timber provisions are described in FSH 1909.12, ch. 60.

2. The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, integrated with other plan components to provide for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple use integrated with other plan components as described in 23.21a. To meet this requirement the plan may include:

a. Desired conditions that describe the mix of specific vegetation conditions such as plant communities, seral stages or fire regime condition class. Desired conditions can also describe the desired nature of timber management.

b. Objectives that describe intended achievement of certain desired vegetative conditions such as seral stages where timber harvest is a way to achieve the objective. Objectives may also identify planned timber harvest activity by acres of vegetation management projects, projected wood sale quantity, or projected timber sale quantity (see FSH 1909.12, ch. 60, secs. 64.62 and 65.1). Consider including timber management objectives to maintain, improve, or restore wildlife habitat for species that are commonly hunted or otherwise enjoyed by the public. Objectives may also include timber harvest to restore conditions in the near term for lands where continued timber harvest or production is not compatible with desired conditions.

c. Suitability, standards, and guidelines as needed so that timber harvest activities are compatible with desired conditions and objectives for other resources including ecological integrity and species diversity. Chapter 60 includes specific guidance on suitability of lands for timber production and required plan components related to timber.

d. Other plan content that discusses the general management approach intended for timber management or partnership strategies to improve markets for plan area timber. Chapter 60 includes specific guidance on required display of the timber program.

23.23f – Scenery, Aesthetic Values, Viewsheds, and Geologic Features

The Planning Rule requires that the plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to provide for scenic character (§ 219.10(b)(1)(i)).

When developing plan components, the Responsible Official shall take into account scenic character (§ 219.8(b)(2)) and consider aesthetic values, geologic features, scenery, and viewsheds (§ 219.10 (a)(1)).

The scenery management system (SMS) is the framework for developing plan components related to scenic character, unless an exception is established per FSM 1921.03. This framework for scenery management is described in Landscape Aesthetics - A Handbook for Scenery Management (Agriculture Handbook 701). Note that the term "scenic character" replaces the term "landscape character" as defined in Chapter I of this Handbook. In addition to this Handbook, FSM 2380 contains additional information on the Scenery Management System.

Viewsheds are specific elements to be considered when developing plan components within the scenery management system, because they describe areas seen from certain view locations such as roads, trails, or campgrounds. Constituent information (such as public preferences) is used to identify desired attributes of scenic character, critical viewsheds, and concern levels of the plan area in the context of the surrounding lands. The review of assessment information should include consideration of other information provided by the public regarding scenery that is not covered in the Scenery Management System. The assessment information, along with ecological considerations, should result in scenery-related plan components that compliment a visual transition from local communities, that is compatible with desired recreation settings and opportunities, and reflect healthy, resilient landscapes.

1. When developing plan components, the Interdisciplinary Team should:

   a. Review information from the assessment that includes the evaluation of existing, trending, and potential scenic character of the plan area and relevant stressors affecting scenery. Information identified in the assessment, the need for change, and the unit's distinctive roles and contributions provide a starting point for integrating scenery with ecological integrity, species diversity, multiple uses, ecosystem services, and designated areas. The scenic character of the plan area, or a portion of the plan area, may be identified as unique or distinct when viewed within a broader landscape.

   b. Consider including in the plan components the concepts of scenic integrity, stability, and sustainability at multiple scales (for example, unit-wide, by geographic area, by management area, by recreation opportunity spectrum setting, by corridor, by viewshed, by geologic or historic feature, or by place association).

   c. Consider developing plan components for aesthetics in the design, construction, and maintenance of infrastructure, facilities or other specific projects or activities that may be proposed under the plan. The Built Environment Guide ("The Built Environment Image Guide for the National Forests and Grasslands" United States

Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, FS-210, September 2001) can be used or referenced to develop applicable plan components that create, maintain, or enhance constructed features and infrastructure to blend with the cultural and biophysical setting.

d. Integrate maintaining or restoring scenic character with the plan components of other resources, multiple uses and ecosystem services so that they function collectively in achieving ecological, social and economic sustainability.

2. The plan must include plan components including standards or guidelines to provide for scenic character integrated with other plan components as described in 23.21a. To meet this requirement the plan:

a. Must include a description of desired scenic character based on the scenery management system, unless an exception is established pursuant to FSM 1921.03. Desired scenic character may be different from existing or potential scenic character identified in the assessment. Depending on the biophysical and cultural attributes of the plan area's landscape, there may be multiple desired scenic character descriptions associated with specific areas.

(1) Desired conditions describing scenic character should include scenic integrity objectives that describe the degree to which desired attributes of the scenic character are to remain. Scenic integrity objectives should be assigned throughout the plan area. (Note that scenery integrity objectives are not the same as plan component "objectives" under the Planning Rule).

(2) Desired conditions may also describe scenic stability, sustainability, and other measures used in scenery management system. Desired conditions may include maps, graphics, photographs, or visual simulations that give a visual representation of desired scenic character and associated scenic integrity objectives.

b. Should contain standards or guidelines as needed to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects incompatible with desired scenery conditions. Standards or guidelines can also apply to specific scenic integrity objectives, management areas, geographic areas, designated areas or other identified special areas or places. Standards and guidelines can be applied at multiple scales to specific management activities such as timber harvest, utility corridors, trail construction, facility development, or road construction.

Unique geologic features must also be considered in the planning process. These features are often unique scenic attractions and would likely be recognized in the scenery management system. In some situations, plan components may be developed to either protect or interpret geologic features within a management, geographic or designated area or for a landscape or place.

23.23g – Cultural and Historic Resources

The Planning Rule requires that the plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, for protection of cultural and historic resources (§ 219.10(b)(1)(ii)).

When developing plan components, the Responsible Official shall take into account cultural and historic resources and uses (§ 219.8(b)(5)) and consider cultural and heritage resources (§ 219.10 (a)(1)).

1. When developing plan components:

   a. The Interdisciplinary Team should review information from the assessment about the cultural and historical context of the plan area, the cultural and historical resources and uses present in the plan area, the condition and trends affecting these resources, and how these resources help sustain specific cultural communities and contribute to social and economic sustainability (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 13.8). A cultural resource overview or a Heritage Program Plan may also have useful information. The Forest Service also uses the term "cultural resources and heritage assets" to describe cultural and heritage resources. See section 21.3 of this Handbook for more detail on priority heritage assets.

   b. The Interdisciplinary Team shall develop appropriate plan components for the protection of cultural and historic resources while considering the following:

   (1) What plan components are needed to protect currently identified historic properties, identified but unevaluated cultural resources, and the cultural resources that may be discovered and evaluated during project planning. These plan components may apply unit-wide. See FSH 2309.12, chapter 30 for more detail on the evaluation of cultural and historic resources and uses.

   (2) Whether unique plan components are needed for situations where cultural or historical resources and uses may be of specially recognized value. Priority Heritage Assets are an example of cultural or historic resources that may be of such recognized value.

   (3) Whether plan components that provide for scenic character is in accord with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (Title 16, United States Code, section 470 et seq.), where historic properties derive their integrity from their setting (scenery and viewshed). See section 23.23f of this Handbook for information about the Scenery Management System that describes scenic character in the land management plan.

c. The Responsible Official shall consult with appropriate entities according to section 106 of the NHPA (16 U.S.C. 470) or programmatic agreements established under the NHPA. The consultation may include consultation with State Historic Preservation Officers, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer(s), federally recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. FSM 2361.2 contains detailed direction for section 106 of the NHPA.

2. The plan must include plan components including standards or guidelines for protection of cultural and historic resources integrated with other plan components as described in 23.21a. To meet this requirement the plan may include:

a. Desired conditions describing the cultural or historic resources in the plan area. For interpretive areas, priority heritage assets, or cultural landscapes, a special set of desired conditions may be appropriate for the protection, management, and use of the resource.

b. Standards or guidelines appropriate for the protection, management, and use of historic properties and cultural resources, as well as appropriate treatment for known but unevaluated cultural resources, or undiscovered cultural resources. Standards or guidelines may distinguish between these situations. Standards or guidelines may be designed specifically for projects and activities to avoid unintentional damage or destruction to cultural resources. Use of federally recognized best management practices may greatly assist with developing plan components for managing cultural resources or heritage assets that overlap with lands managed by other Federal agencies.

c. Management, geographic, or designated areas (sec. 22.2 and 24 of this Handbook) with unique plan components, depending on the primary value of the resource (cultural, traditional, scientific, interpretative, or continued use). A geographic area may be used to identify a cultural landscape. In other situations, especially those of active cultural use, traditional cultural properties or sacred sites (sec 23.23h of this Handbook), the Responsible Official shall not disclose (if restricted by 25 U.S.C. 3056), or may choose to not to disclose, any locational information in the plan to maintain confidentiality of the sites. Confer with the Office of the General Counsel about disclosure about whether to disclose or withhold information about cultural and historic locations in the planning process.

d. Other plan content to describe a management approach for evaluating sites for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Other plan content may also identify unique cultural and historic resources, cultural landscapes, national heritage areas, national monuments, national historic trails, national historic landmarks or

historical areas, or unique cultural or historic management or geographic areas as part of the plan's distinctive role and contribution. See section 24 of this Handbook for further discussion of national monuments, national historic trails, national historic landmarks, or historical areas that are designated areas.

23.23h – Areas of Tribal Importance

The Planning Rule requires that the plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, for management of areas of tribal importance (§ 219.10(b)(1)(iii)).

1. When developing plan components:

a. The Interdisciplinary Team should review the assessment for information about areas of tribal importance, existing tribal rights, and the conditions and trends of these areas of tribal importance (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 13.7).

b. The Responsible Official shall recognize the areas of tribal importance during tribal consultation and develop appropriate plan components for management of these areas. Areas of tribal importance may not always be recognized as cultural resources, as described in section 23.23g of this Handbook. In cases where these tribally important areas are the same as, or may overlap with, cultural resources, guidance in section 23.23g of this Handbook also applies.

c. The Responsible Official shall consult with federally-recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations on the development of plan components for management of areas of tribal importance (see FSH 1909.12, ch. 40, sec. 44).

d. The Responsible Official shall develop plan components to manage lands containing Indian sacred sites in accordance with Executive Order 13007 of May 24, 1996. Provisions for the specific protection, management, or use of these areas are developed in consultation and collaboration with Indian Tribes or Alaska Native Corporations and the Responsible Official.

e. Some Indian Tribes or Alaska Native Corporations may not want areas of tribal importance identified. The Responsible Official shall not disclose (if restricted by 25 U.S.C. 3056) or may choose to not to disclose, any locational information in the plan to maintain confidentiality of the areas of tribal importance. Sacred sites identified by federally recognized Indian Tribes or Alaska Native Corporations during consultation with the Responsible Official can be treated as confidential by the Agency consistent with 25 U.S.C. 3056 and Executive Order 13007.

2. The plan must include plan components including standards or guidelines for management of areas of tribal importance integrated with other plan components as described in 23.21a. To meet this requirement the plan may include:

a. Desired conditions that clearly recognize Indian Tribe and Alaska Native Corporations' concerns associated with areas of tribal importance and access to these areas even if the locations of the areas are not identified. These desired conditions may include providing for traditional uses of the plan area by Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.

b. Standards, guidelines, or suitable uses to place limits or conditions on projects or activities that may adversely affect areas of tribal importance.

c. Other plan content to describe an ongoing collaborative strategy with specific Indian Tribes or Alaska Native Corporations as partners in the accomplishment of the objectives.

23.23i – Mineral and Nonrenewable Energy Resources

The Planning Rule requires that in the development of plan components, including standards or guidelines, the Responsible Official shall consider renewable and nonrenewable energy and mineral resources (§ 219.10(a)(2)). Section 23.23k of this Handbook discusses renewable energy resources.

In consideration of these resources, the Responsible Official must be aware of the various authorities that govern the Agency's mineral and nonrenewable energy management and determine what decisions will be made in the plan, concurrently with the plan, or that may occur subsequent to the plan decision. Applicable law and Federal regulations that define Agency jurisdiction over mineral and nonrenewable energy management include:

Coal resource management (43 CFR part 3420),

Geothermal resource leasing (43 CFR part 3201),

Solid leasable minerals other than coal and oil shale (43 CFR 3501.17),

Oil shale (43 CFR 3900.5),

Tar sands (43 CFR 3140),

Locatable minerals (36 CFR part 228, subpart A),

Disposal of mineral materials (36 CFR part 228, subpart C), and

Oil and gas (36 CFR part 228, subpart E, section 228.102(c) and 43 CFR 3100)

Depending on the specific mineral and applicable laws and regulations, the Forest Service may identify lands in the Federal estate that may or may not be suitable or available for mineral and nonrenewable energy development. The Forest Service manages surface use for the exploration and development of minerals and nonrenewable energy resources on National Forest System lands. In the land management plan, plan components applicable to mineral and nonrenewable energy development must be within Forest Service authority consistent with applicable laws and regulations, including the requirements of the Planning Rule.

Responsible Officials should evaluate the impacts of past, current, and potential mineral development and activity in the plan area and the relationship between the plan components and these impacts in the future; recognizing that current practices can avoid some impacts associated with past development. The plan should identify the existing or potential contributions and impacts of mineral and nonrenewable energy activity expected to occur within the plan area, even if the activity is outside of Agency authority.

In developing an integrated set of plan components, the Responsible Official should include plan components to guide the development of mineral and nonrenewable resources where applicable in the plan area and where the Responsible Official has the authority to do so as part of the land management planning process. The Responsible Official should also consider whether separate decisions regarding the Federal mineral estate would be appropriate or necessary for effective land management. Such decisions include those that can be made concurrently as part of the plan development, revision, or amendment or those recommended for a later time. Include the rationale for such decisions in the plan decision document.

1. When developing plan components for nonrenewable energy and mineral resources: The Interdisciplinary Team should review the assessment (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10 sec. 13.5) for information about the current level, potential, and trends in, mineral and nonrenewable energy activity in the plan area.

2. Plan components related to nonrenewable energy and mineral resources must be in accord with Agency jurisdiction, applicable law, and Federal regulations. The extent of Forest Service authority and responsibility for management of the Federal mineral estate varies depending on the mineral resource involved. Specific authorities applicable to nonrenewable energy or mineral resources that are relevant to the plan area should be reviewed prior to developing any applicable plan components.

3. Plan components must recognize valid existing or statutory rights, such as reserved, outstanding or private mineral rights (sec. 23.23m of this Handbook) or the reasonable right of access to lands open to mineral entry under the general mining laws (30 U.S.C. 22 et seq.).

4. Plan components related to nonrenewable energy and mineral resources must be consistent with the requirements of the Planning Rule, including those for sustainability (§ 219.8), diversity of plant and animal communities (§ 219.9), and multiple use (§ 219.10). When developing plan components the Interdisciplinary Team should consider the following:

a. Whether plan components to guide nonrenewable or mineral resource development are necessary to achieve other desired conditions or objectives related to sustainability, diversity of plant and animal communities, and multiple use.

b. The Forest Service has sole discretion over the management of mineral materials or saleable minerals as described 36 CFR part 228, subpart C. The Forest Service also has sole discretion over making lands available for oil and gas leasing, subject to valid existing rights as described in 30 U.S.C. 226(h).

c. For plan areas where lands were identified in the plan assessment to have coal development potential, the land use planning requirements of 43 CFR 3420.1-4 (b)(1)–(4) must be followed. The plan must identify areas that are acceptable for further consideration for coal leasing according to procedures at 43 CFR 3420.1-4(e), which include reviewing the identified lands to assess where there are areas unsuitable for all or certain stipulated methods of mining per the criteria contained in 43 CFR 3461. The plan must also contain an estimate of the amount of coal recoverable by either surface or underground methods or both (43 CFR 3420.1-4(d)).

d. For plan areas with oil and gas resources, the availability of lands for leasing may be determined in conjunction with the planning process (36 CFR 228, Subpart E, 228.102).

The Forest Service decision regarding which lands are available for oil and gas leasing is supported through preparation of a leasing availability analysis. A leasing analysis may be for all or portions of a plan area. The difference in scope, proposed action, and level of detail between a planning effort and a leasing analysis must be made clear should a single NEPA analysis document be used to support both the plan and oil and gas leasing availability decisions.

For National Forest System plan areas for which oil and gas leasing availability decisions have already been made, the Responsible Official shall review those availability decisions to determine if the previous decision is consistent with the plan components of the newly amended or revised land management plan. If the leasing availability decision is not consistent with the plan, it must be made consistent with the land management plan (36 CFR 219.15) or the plan decision document must expressly allow the availability decision to proceed unchanged (36 CFR 219.15(a); and sec. 21.41 of this Handbook).

The Forest Service may not authorize a BLM leasing decision that is inconsistent with the land management plan decision, and the BLM may not issue any lease on National Forest System lands without the authorization of the Forest Service.

e. For plan areas that expect substantial new mineral or nonrenewable energy development, a projection of potential activity or a reasonably foreseeable development scenario in the case of oil and gas development may be needed not only to estimate the contributions of the mineral resource, but also the influence of this development on other resources. Such a projection or development scenario should be done with the BLM and is part of the environmental impact analysis.

4. The plan may include:

a. Desired conditions that identify mineral uses likely to occur in the long term, along with the desired context for their operation. Desired conditions may describe surface resources and, as appropriate, subsurface resources such as groundwater and caves that may be affected by development of mineral resources.

b. Objectives to maintain or restore the condition of surface and subsurface resources.

c. Suitability, standards, or guidelines to identify measures, within appropriate legal authorities of the Forest Service, to minimize or avoid impacts on surface or subsurface resources or to protect purposes for which lands were acquired. Plan components for aspects of mineral development within Forest Service authority must be in accord with other plan components, including those for ecological sustainability.

d. Other plan content to briefly describe the general management principles, management challenges, and management approaches to ongoing mineral operations and likely future development. Development of mineral resources may be a distinctive role and contribution of the plan area within the broader landscape.

The environmental analysis document evaluates the potential impact of the plan decision regarding mineral and nonrenewable energy developments on the social, economic, cultural, and ecological conditions.

23.23j – Geologic Hazards

The assessment contains information identifying geologic hazards such as landslides, flooding or snow avalanches that may be a risk to the public or to the resources of the plan area. Based on this information the Responsible Official should consider whether the set of plan components

adequately recognizes these hazards and provides for appropriate mitigations. If not, the Responsible Official should direct the Interdisciplinary Team to add plan components to address these geologic hazards.

The desired conditions of the plan can describe certain geologically hazardous areas to be avoided or mitigated. There may be plan objectives to modify infrastructure or manage certain lands to reduce risks associated with these areas. Suitability, standards, or guidelines may prescribe certain restrictions on uses, projects, or activities in or near these geologically hazardous areas.

23.23k – Renewable Energy

The Planning Rule requires that in the development of plan components, including standards or guidelines, the Responsible Official shall consider renewable energy resources (§219.10(a)(2)) and appropriate placement and sustainable management of infrastructure such as utility corridors (§219.10(a)(3)).

National forests and grasslands are capable of producing energy through a variety of methods. Many energy sources such as wind, solar, biomass, and hydroelectric can be considered renewable as these forms are capable of producing energy without depleting the source of the energy. The extraction of fossil fuels (oil, natural gas, and coal) and geothermal energy is described in section 23.23i of this Handbook on leasable minerals. Energy developed on or off National Forest System lands often requires infrastructure to transfer electric power or fossil fuels through transmission corridors between producers and consumers.

1. When developing plan components:

   a. The Interdisciplinary Team should review the assessment for information about the current and future potential energy developments their potential contributions and impacts in and around the plan area (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 13.5).

   b. The Interdisciplinary Team should consider existing facilities and potential for generation and transmission of energy from or across National Forest System lands.

   c. The Responsible Official should engage with other Federal agencies, such as the FERC, BLM, USACE, or State or local government agencies that may have jurisdiction of certain types of energy facilities in the plan area. The BLM is the lead Federal agency for permitting interagency pipelines. Additional laws and regulations may apply to these types of energy developments. Appropriate engagement with these agencies and interests and recognition of applicable laws and regulations must be part of the planning process.

d. The Interdisciplinary Team should consider how and whether the land management plan may provide for renewable energy, such as solar, wind, biomass and hydroelectric energy sites. The team should evaluate lands that are most suitable for these uses and avoid lands that are sensitive, legally restricted from such development or committed to other uses where such energy development would not be desirable. The evaluation of lands should consider how and whether the plan area can contribute to providing renewable energy while simultaneously providing for other desired conditions and objectives of the plan area. The Interdisciplinary Team should develop appropriate plan components that establish this framework for future renewable energy development, while avoiding or mitigating related adverse impacts.

2. The plan may include:

a. Desired conditions that identify long-term energy developments, uses of resources such as biomass for energy, or transmission corridors and the desired context for their operation.

b. Objectives that identify measureable outcomes or intended achievements related to energy resource management, such as improving the condition of infrastructure developments, providing a supply of material for energy generation such as fuelwood, biomass or mitigation outcomes related to energy developments, such as modification of fish passage at dams.

c. Suitable use areas or areas not suitable for certain types of energy developments or resource use in accordance with the appropriate legal authorities and land capability.

d. Standards or guidelines to identify restrictions on certain practices related to the use, development, or transmission of energy within the plan area, within appropriate legal authorities of the Forest Service.

e. Provision of energy or transmission of energy across the plan area as a distinct role and contribution of the plan area.

The environmental analysis document evaluates the potential impact of the plan's decision regarding energy developments on the social, economic, cultural, and ecological conditions within and near the plan area.

23.23l – Infrastructure, Roads and Trails

The Planning Rule requires that the development of plan components must consider trails (§ 219.10 (a)(1)) and appropriate placement and sustainable management of infrastructure, such as recreational facilities and transportation and utility corridors (§ 219.10 (a)(3)).

Infrastructure includes road systems, trail systems, recreational facilities, administrative facilities, airstrips, and other facilities needed in and near the plan area. The central consideration in land management planning for infrastructure is that the integrated desired conditions and other plan components set a framework for the sustainable management of the plan area's infrastructure and mitigation of adverse impacts.

Most design related to infrastructure occurs at the project or site level with a specificity that is not appropriate for a land management plan. For example, the design and construction, or reconstruction, of an individual trail segment is a project-specific decision, as is the siting and design of a recreational facility. Travel management analysis is a separate process outside of land management planning to determine which roads are to be maintained for public use consistent with the land management plan.

1. When developing plan components, the Interdisciplinary Team should:

   a. Review the assessment for information about the current infrastructure (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 13.6). Based on information from the assessment and subsequent public involvement, the Interdisciplinary Team can determine how well the current infrastructure supports or contributes to social, economic, or ecological sustainability and what plan components are needed to deal with infrastructure.

   b. Develop plan components to reflect the extent of infrastructure that is needed to achieve the desired conditions and objectives of the plan. The plan should provide for a realistic desired infrastructure that is sustainable and can be managed in accord with other plan components including those for ecological sustainability.

   c. These plan components must be within the fiscal capability of the planning unit and its partners, consistent with the authority of the Forest Service, and the inherent capability of the plan area.

2. Related to roads, the plan:

   a. Should include desired condition for the road system based on the desired uses for the plan area and management or geographic areas. The desired condition should identify the road system that provides primary access to and within the plan area and describe the general desired use and condition of other roads. This may vary depending on the management area, geographic area, or other areas within the plan area. Desired recreational settings and opportunities (sec. 23.23a of this Handbook) related to the public's recreational use and need for roads are important factors influencing the use and sustainability of roads. Other uses such as grazing, timber

harvest, mineral and energy development, and administrative uses also determine needs for the road system. The plan's desired condition should describe a basic framework for an appropriately sized and sustainable transportation system that can meet these needs. The desired condition may also describe the desired road density for different management areas, geographic areas or other areas in the plan area.

b. May include other plan components for the road system based on the desired conditions:

(1) Objectives such as decommissioning roads in areas where existing roads are no longer desired or improving roads in areas where the road system needs improvement, such as replacing culverts or stabilizing certain types of roads.

(2) Suitability determinations to identify what types of roads are suitable or not suitable for certain management areas and geographic areas.

(3) Standards or guidelines for road management that may restrict road management activities, such as road construction, in certain situations, for example, to protect riparian zones or sensitive scenic areas.

3. Related to recreational trails, the plan:

a. Should include desired conditions for recreational trails. The desired condition of the recreational settings and opportunities should lead to plan components aligned with the desired recreational settings and opportunities of the plan (sec. 23.23a of this Handbook). The desired condition(s) for trails may include an overall design of the trail system that enhances compatible uses and manages user conflicts for the plan area. The desired condition may describe nationally designated trails (sec. 24.43 of this Handbook) and distribution and types of trails for various uses such as hiking, off-road vehicles, mountain bikes, equestrian use, or winter uses such as skiing or snowmobiling.

b. May include objectives to identify intended outcomes or achievements for trail construction or maintenance, such as trail construction or reconstruction to avoid user conflicts on trails or impacts to important environmental areas such as rattlesnake dens.

c. May identify the types of trails and recreational use that are suitable or not suitable in a management or geographic area; these should be aligned with the desired recreational settings and opportunities (sec. 23.23a of this Handbook). While the plan does not determine the use for each specific trail, it does establish desired conditions and other plan components that indicate what types of trails are appropriate within different parts of the plan area.

4. The plan may include the following related to other types of infrastructure such as trails for nonrecreational use, facilities for recreational visitors, airstrips, and utility corridors.

a. Desired condition for other infrastructure appropriate for the plan area, or specific management or geographic areas.

b. Objectives to indicate intended progress toward achieving the desired conditions.

c. Suitability components to identify the kinds of infrastructure that are suitable in certain areas, and

d. Standards or guidelines related to infrastructure development or management.

Other resource plans specifically designed for management of infrastructure, such as travel management plans, must be consistent with the plan components of the land management plan (36 CFR 219.15(e)). The Responsible Official shall review any existing travel management plans to determine if the previous decision is consistent with the plan components of the newly amended or revised land management plan. If the travel management plan is not consistent with the plan, it must be made consistent with the land management plan (36 CFR 219.15) or the plan decision document must expressly allow the travel management decision to proceed unchanged (sec. 21.41 of this Handbook).

The environmental analysis document evaluates the potential impact of the plan's decision regarding infrastructure on the social, economic, cultural, and ecologic conditions within and near the plan area.

23.23m – Land Status, Ownership, Use, Access and Linkage of Open Space with Other Ownerships

The Planning Rule requires that the development of plan components must consider habitat and habitat connectivity (§ 219.10 (a)(1)) and:

> **(4) Opportunities to coordinate with neighboring landowners to link open spaces and take into account joint management objectives where feasible and appropriate.**
> ***
> **(6) Land status and ownership, use and access patterns, relevant to the plan area. (§ 219.10 (a))**

1. When developing plan components, the Interdisciplinary Team should:

a. Review the assessment for information about National Forest System land ownership, status, use, and access within and near the plan area (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 13.9).

b. Recognize and actively consider the nature of land status, ownership, and access within the plan area and surrounding the plan area. In particular, the resource and management influences related to land status, ownership, and use must be considered in the planning process. For example, consider such issues as: the potential impacts of fragmentation to habitats in areas of mixed ownership, how off forest development pressures may influence the plan area, and access to and through the planning area for public uses and forest management. An additional important concern is the consideration of opportunities to create connectivity of habitat and open space across these ownerships.

c. Review and consider the plans, planning efforts, and land use policies of other jurisdictional neighboring ownerships as described in FSH 1909.12, chapter 40, section 44.1 of this Handbook. Consider also the plans of any private landowners that are relevant to the plan area and that are made available to the Responsible Official.

d. Consider opportunities for collaboration with neighboring ownerships and other Federal agencies, State, local, and tribal governments to support a landscape approach for sustainable management in which the plan area plays a role.

e. Consider the following:

(1) Indian treaty and other reserved rights on the plan area;

(2) Valid existing rights associated with other ownerships within and adjacent to the plan area;

(3) The status and ownership of Federal lands, including where the Federal government owns the surface and another party owns reserved, outstanding, or other private mineral rights within the plan area;

(4) Changing ownership, uses, or fragmentation either underway or planned near the plan area and how these may affect the plan area's resources;

(5) Access points and areas accessed by the public for recreation, trail connectivity, and other uses of the plan area;

(6) Open space commitments of adjacent landowners where connectivity with the plan area connects or could connect open space across boundaries;

(7) Risks to either the plan area or to adjacent ownerships along plan area boundaries; and

(8) Coordination with U.S. Border Patrol on issues relating to national security along any international border of the United States.

2. The plan may include:

a. The desired nature of the land patterns, uses, and access of the plan area including unique desired conditions for specific areas based on their land status or adjacency to other ownerships.

b. Objectives to identify intended outcomes for improving land status or multiple land ownership patterns, connecting open space, improving access issues or conditions along the plan area boundary such as treatments in the wildland-urban interface.

c. Suitability of lands for uses and standards or guidelines to restrict projects or activities in consideration of land ownership, status, and other influences that cross ownership boundaries.

d. Management or geographic areas where a specific set of plan components may be used to deal with important influences that cross ownership boundaries. Examples include wildland-urban interface areas or open space connections.

e. Other plan content to describe management approaches to work with multiple governments and ownerships to accomplish common goals or objectives. This could include a description of partnerships and coordination designed to achieve more sustainable land management approaches within the broader landscape. Other plan content could describe how the Responsible Official may work to establish collaborative agreements for joint objectives with other ownerships or jurisdictions.

The environmental analysis document examines the impacts of the plan decision on the lands adjacent and near the plan area.

23.23n – Other Considerations for Multiple Uses

The Planning Rule requires that the plan contain other plan components for integrated resource management to provide for multiple use as necessary (§ 219.10(b)) and that the development of plan components consider air quality, riparian areas, soil, and other relevant resources and uses. ((§ 219.10 (a)(1). It is not necessary to consider issues beyond the current space-time continuum. Other required considerations in the development of plan components include:

(7) Reasonably foreseeable risks to ecological, social, and economic sustainability.

(8) System drivers, including dominant ecological processes, disturbance regimes, and stressors, such as natural succession, wildland fire, invasive species and climate change; and the ability of the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems on the plan area to adapt to change [§ 219.8] (§ 219.10 (a)).

Exhibit 01 lists where each of these topics is covered in an earlier section of this chapter as follows:

23.22q - Exhibit 01

Topics covered in an earlier section of this chapter

Topic	Section
Air quality	Section 23.12a
Riparian areas	Section 23.11c
Soil	Section 23.12b
Reasonably foreseeable risks to ecological sustainability	Section 23.1-23.13c
System drivers, disturbance regimes and stressors	Section 23.1-23.11d
Climate change and the ability of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems to adapt to change	Section 23.1-23.13c

24 – DESIGNATED AREAS

A designated area is defined at 36 CFR 219.19 as:

An area or feature identified and managed to maintain its unique special character or purpose. Some categories of designated areas may be designated only by statute and some categories may be established administratively in the land management planning process or by other administrative processes of the Federal executive branch. Examples of statutorily designated areas are national heritage areas, national recreational areas, national scenic trails, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness areas, and wilderness study areas. Examples of administratively designated areas are experimental forests, research natural areas, scenic byways, botanical areas, and significant caves.

Land management plan decisions may include recommendations to establish additional or modify existing designated areas. Some designated areas may be formally designated or established concurrently with a plan decision, while others may not. The term "designated area" refers to categories of area or feature established by, or pursuant to, statute, regulation, or policy. Once established the designation continues until a subsequent decision by the appropriate authority removes the designation. Changes in actual designations do not occur as part the plan decision.

Exhibit 01 lists some types of designated areas that the Responsible Official may consider recommending for designation, the designating authority for each type of designated area, and the location of existing guidance for their designation.

The list in exhibit 01 is not comprehensive. Some plan areas may have unique designations created by special legislation or other administrative action in addition to the types identified in this section. If a land area does not qualify as a designated area or has not been designated, but needs specific guidance, the Responsible Official may identify the area as a management area or as a geographic area to apply specific plan components in the land management plan.

24 - Exhibit 01

Designated Areas - Designating Official and Guidance Cross-Reference

Designated Areas	Designation Authority	Additional Guidance Location
Statutorily Designated Areas		
National Heritage Area	Congressional act designates.	http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas/
National Monument	Presidential Executive order or Congressional act designates.	FSM 2371
National Recreation Area	Congressional act designates.	FSM 2371
National Scenic Area	Congressional act designates.	FSM 2371
National Scenic and Historic Trails	Congressional act designates.	FSM 2353.4
Wild and Scenic River	Congressional act designates.	FSM 1924 & FSM 2354 FSH 1909.12
Wilderness, or Wilderness Study Areas	Congressional act designates.	FSM 1923 & 2320 FSH 1909.12
Highway Systems, Interstate and National	Congressional act established process. Secretary of the Department of Transportation approves.	23 CFR part 470
Administratively Designated Areas		
Botanical Area, Geological Area, Historical Area, Paleontological Area, Recreational Area, Scenic Area, or Zoological Area	Responsible official recommends. Regional forester may designate areas less than 100,000 acres. Secretary of Agriculture designates areas of 100,000 acres or larger.	36 CFR 294.1 FSM 2372
Designated Critical Habitat	Director of Fish and Wildlife Service	Endangered Species Act
Inventoried Roadless Areas/Roadless Areas	Secretary of Agriculture	36 CFR Part 294--Special Areas Subpart B, Subpart C, and Subpart D,
Experimental Forest or Range	Responsible official recommends with concurrence of station director Chief designates.	FSM 4062

24 - Exhibit 01--Continued

National Historic Landmark National Natural Landmark	Responsible official recommends. Secretary of the Interior designates.	FSM 2373 36 CFR 751, FSM 2364.4
Research Natural Area	Responsible official recommends. Regional forester designates, with concurrence of station directors.	FSM 4063
Scenic Byway - Forest Service	Responsible official recommends. Chief designates.	None
Scenic Byway - National	Responsible official recommends. Federal Highway Administration designates.	23 CFR part 162 program guides.
Significant Caves		36 CFR part 290
Wild Horse and Burro Territories	Forest Service Chief	FSM 2260

1. The intent behind identifying designated areas in plans and recommending additional areas for designation is to:

a. Assure that plans identify established designated areas and provide plan components appropriate for the designated area; and

b. Recommend areas where doing so would help to carry out the distinctive role and contributions of the plan area in the broader landscape or contribute to achieving desired conditions for the plan area. Recommendations for designated areas are limited to areas that meet the distinctive qualifications for designation that varies by category or types listed in 24, exhibit 01.

24.1 – Identifying Existing and Recommending New Designated Areas in the Plan

The 2012 Planning Rule requires the Responsible Official to identify existing designated areas and determine whether to recommend any additional areas:

> **(2) In developing a proposed new plan or proposed plan revision, the responsible official shall:**
>
> *** * ***
>
> **(vii) Identify existing designated areas other than the areas identified in paragraphs (c)(2)(v) and (c)(2)(vi) of this section, and determine whether to recommend any additional areas for designation. If the responsible official has the delegated authority to designate a new area or modify an existing area, then the responsible official may designate such area when approving the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision.** (36 CFR 219.7(c)).

1. The Responsible Official shall identify the following in the land management plan:

a. Designated areas that have been previously designated by statute or through a separate administrative process.

b. Areas that the Responsible Official is recommending for designation using appropriate procedures for either statutory or administrative designation.

2. All designated areas that have been statutorily designated or recommended to be statutorily designated must be shown on a map in the plan, unless it is necessary not to do so, to protect resources in the designated area. Mapping may show the designated area as a management area, geographic area or as part of a separate overlay specifically to show location of designated areas. Other administratively designated areas must also be identified in the plan on a map or using a narrative.

3. The Responsible Official shall identify any recommendations for additional designated areas and the rationale for the recommended designations in the plan decision document.

4. Regional Foresters may designate areas within their authority using appropriate procedures concurrently with the approval of a plan amendment or plan revision. The Responsible Official should work with the Regional Forester when considering and evaluating areas to recommend for designation that are within the authority of the Regional Forester to designate.

5. If the Responsible Official intents to have an administrative designation of an area approved together with the plan decision under the appropriate authority, the authorizing official shall identify the area to be designated, the rationale for the designation, and any supporting documentation for the designation in the plan decision document. See section 24, exhibit 01 of this Handbook for information on authorities and guidance for documenting the designation of an area. See section 21.7 of this Handbook for guidance on doing a concurrent decision with a plan decision. See section 21.42 of this Handbook for guidance on plan decisions.

6. The Chief shall be notified if the plan development, plan amendment, or plan revision makes preliminary recommendations that ultimately require Congressional action. The Responsible Official, through the Regional Forester, shall notify the Chief by letter of tentative preliminary administrative recommendations. Examples of preliminary recommendations for Congressional action include additions to or deletions from the National Wilderness Preservation System, National Scenic and Historic Trails, National Recreation Areas; and studies or changes to the National Wild and Scenic River System.

24.2 – Plan Components for Designated Areas and Areas Recommended for Designation

The Planning Rule requires that the plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, for:

> **(vi) Appropriate management of other designated areas or recommended designated areas in the plan area, including research natural areas.** (36 CFR 219.10(b)(1)).

Sections 22 and 23 of this Handbook give guidance on how to integrate plan components to meet this requirement.

1. When developing plan components:

a. The Interdisciplinary Team should review the assessment for information about existing designated areas in the plan area, a general evaluation of the potential need and opportunity for additional designated areas, and the contribution of designated areas to social, economic, and ecological sustainability (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 14). Each type of designated area has its own purposes and authorities (sec. 24.1 of this Handbook).

b. The Responsible Official shall include plan components that will provide for appropriate management of designated areas based on the applicable authorities and the specific purposes for which each area was designated or recommended for designation. Uses and management activities are allowed in designated areas to the extent that these uses are in harmony with the purpose for which the area was designated. For recommended designated areas, the uses and activities allowed should be compatible with the basis of the recommendation.

c. The Responsible Official shall provide for plan components for designated areas that do not interfere with the exercise of valid existing rights.

d. The Interdisciplinary Team should consider how designated areas contribute to other desired conditions or objectives for ecological, economic, or social sustainability.

e. The Responsible Official should coordinate with other Responsible Officials to develop plan components that are compatible across multiple plan areas when a designated area is located across multiple land management plan areas.

2. The plan must include plan components including standards or guidelines for management of other designated areas and areas recommended for designation integrated with other plan components as described in 23.21a. To meet this requirement the plan may include:

a. Desired conditions for the designated areas and its contribution to social, economic, or ecological sustainability. Desired conditions may be developed for specific designated areas.

b. Standards, guidelines, or suitability to place limits or conditions on projects or activities that may adversely affect the purposes of designated areas.

c. Recognition of certain designated areas as part of a plan area's distinctive roles and contributions.

To organize plan components applicable to designated areas, the Interdisciplinary Team may identify designated areas with management areas, geographic areas, designated area overlays, or other means. Management areas or geographic areas may include designated areas, but need not

do so, because some designations may not need unique plan components. Other designations may have plan-specific components applied without the concept of a unique management area or geographic area by including the designated area within a management area(s), geographic area(s), or a combination thereof, where the plan components are compatible with the designation. Unit-wide direction may include plan components that apply to the designated area as identified in a mapped overlay or to other locational characteristics associated with the designated area.

Where multiple designated areas (existing or recommended) overlap in same land area, the plan must provide compatible direction to meet the needs of all of the designations. This is often done with wording to state that the designated area with the most restrictive plan components must be followed in the management of the land area.

24.3 – Designated Area Plans

Planning for designated areas may be met through the land management plan, unless the authorities for the designation require a separate plan. Specific plans for designated areas must be consistent with the plan components (36 CFR 219.15(e)). The designated area authorities may require specific plans (such as wild and scenic river plans or national scenic and historic trail plans) for a designated area with additional requirements than those of the Planning Rule. Any parts of a designated area plan that meet the requirements for land management plan components must be included in the land management plan. The entire area plan does not need to be included in the land management plan. The land management plans must also be compatible with these designated area plans or either the land management plan or the designated area plan must be amended to achieve this compatibility.

24.4 – Specific Types of Designated Areas in Land Management Plans

The following sections provide guidance for recognizing and providing plan components for specific types of designated areas. The general guidance provided in sections 24.1, 24.2, and 24.3 of this Handbook also applies to these designated areas. This general guidance should be consulted for any type of designated area that is not further specifically described in sections 24.4 through 24.44 of this Handbook.

24.41 – Wilderness

The Planning Rule requires that the plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines for:

> **(iv) Protection of congressionally designated wilderness areas as well as management of areas recommended for wilderness designation to protect and maintain the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for their suitability for wilderness designation.**
> (36 CFR 219.10(b)(1).)

Sections 22 and 23 of this Handbook give guidance on how to integrate plan components to meet this requirement.

Plans that include designated wilderness areas must have plan components that provide for wilderness management in accordance with the requirements of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131–1136, 78 Stat 890), and the law that established the particular wilderness area and any other applicable laws.

When a plan area includes an area or areas for which the Responsible Official makes a preliminary administrative recommendation for wilderness designation, the plan must include plan components that protect the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for the suitability of the area for wilderness designation until Congress acts on the recommendation. FSH 1909.12, chapter 70 gives guidance for inventory and evaluation of lands that may be suitable for wilderness and, from those lands, to identify areas, if any, for which the Responsible Official recommends that the land be designated wilderness.

1. The Interdisciplinary Team should review the assessment for information about existing wilderness areas and wilderness study areas in the plan area, a general evaluation of the potential need and opportunity for additional wilderness areas, and the contribution of wilderness to social, economic, and ecological sustainability (FSH 1909.12, ch.10, sec. 14).

2. When developing plan components for designated wilderness areas within the plan area, the Responsible Official should consider:

a. Measures to protect and enhance the wilderness characteristics of the area.

b. Management on adjoining lands that are within the NFS or in other Federal, Tribal or State ownership, especially when the adjoining land s are also designated wilderness areas. If the adjoining lands are part of the same designated wilderness area, the Responsible Officials should coordinate with the Responsible Official(s) of the adjacent administrative unit(s) to ensure compatible management of the wilderness area in both plan areas.

c. Guidance in FSM 2320 regarding management of wilderness areas.

3. When developing plan components for recommended wilderness areas, the Responsible Official shall follow the guidance for developing plan components for recommended wilderness areas as contained in FSH 1909.12, chapter 70, section 74.1. This guidance is repeated here as follows:

When developing plan components for recommended wilderness areas, the responsible official has discretion to implement a range of management options. All plan components applicable to a

recommended area must protect and maintain the social and ecological characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness recommendation. In addition, the plan may include one or more plan components for a recommended wilderness area that:

1. Enhance the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness designations;

2. Continue existing uses, only if such uses do not prevent the protection and maintenance of the social and ecological characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness designation;

3. Alter existing uses, subject to valid existing rights; or

4. Eliminate existing uses, except those uses subject to valid existing rights.

The responsible official should strive to maintain consistency with the provisions of 16 U.S.C. 1133(d) and the content of FSM 1923.03(3) in developing plan components for the management of recommended wilderness areas.

4. The plan must clearly identify and map existing wilderness, wilderness study areas, and recommended wilderness areas within the plan area. The plan may identify each area, or type of area, as a management area or geographic area, with plan components applicable to each.

5. The Responsible Official shall identify any recommendations for wilderness in the decision document for the plan as described in FSH 1909.12, chapter 70, section 71.4.

6. The plan must include plan components including standards or guidelines for the protection of congressionally designated wilderness areas as well as management of areas recommended for wilderness integrated with other plan components as described in 23.21a. To meet this requirement, the plan may include the following types of plan components:

a. Desired conditions that describe the desired wilderness character for existing, recommended, or wilderness study areas from an ecological or social perspective.

b. Standards or guidelines appropriate for placing limits or conditions on projects or activities that may adversely affect the wilderness character of existing wilderness, wilderness study, or recommended wilderness areas. Certain uses may be identified as suitable or not suitable for these areas. Existing wilderness areas have been

withdrawn from and are not suitable for timber production (see FSH 1909.12, Chapter 60, sec. 61.11). Recommended wilderness areas, or wilderness study areas are not suitable for timber production as such production is not compatible with the desired condition for these areas (see FSH 1909.12, Chapter 60, sec. 61.2).

c. The contributions of wilderness as part of the plan area's distinctive role and contribution.

Designated wilderness areas may also have management plans for specific wilderness areas. These management plans must be consistent with the land management plan (36 CFR 219.15(e)) or one of the two plans must be amended to achieve this consistency. Only plan components contained in the wilderness plan need to be included in the land management plan. The entire wilderness area plan does not need to be included in the land management plan.

24.42 – Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Planning Rule requires that the plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines for:

> **(v) Protection of designated wild and scenic rivers as well as management of rivers found eligible or determined suitable for the National Wild and Scenic River system to protect the values that provide the basis for their suitability for inclusion in the system.**
> 36 CFR 219.10(b)(1).

Plans that include designated wild and scenic rivers must have plan components that provide for management in accordance with the requirements of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (16 U.S.C. 1281–1287), and the law that established the particular river and any other applicable laws.

FSH 1909.12 chapter 80 details a river-specific study process to be followed to determine eligibility, potential classification (wild, scenic, or recreational), and suitability of river segments for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. FSH 1909.12, chapter 80 also contains guidance about plan components for rivers identified as eligible or suitable rivers for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system.

Eligible river segments may be evaluated for their suitability for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System during the plan revision process. However, suitability evaluation of eligible river segments may be deferred for a separate evaluation outside the plan revision process.

1. When developing plan components for designated, suitable, or eligible wild and scenic rivers:

a. The Interdisciplinary Team should review the assessment for information about existing wild and scenic river segments including their classification into wild, scenic, or recreational segments (FSH 1909.12, ch. 10, sec. 14) and the eligible and suitable rivers identified in the river study process described in FSH 1909.12, chapter 80. The assessment also provides a general evaluation of the potential need and opportunity for additional wild and scenic river segments and the contribution of wild and scenic rivers to social, economic, and ecological sustainability.

b. The Interdisciplinary Team shall develop plan components that provide for management of existing designated wild and scenic rivers in accordance with requirements of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

c. Plans with river segments found to eligible or suitable for designation must have plan components that protect the outstandingly remarkable values that provide the basis for their inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River system. FSH 1909.12, chapter 80, section 84.3 describes interim protection measures for protecting eligible and suitable rivers. FSH 1909.12, chapter 80, section 84.4 describes how to provide plan components for these interim measures.

d. The Interdisciplinary Team shall provide plan components for wild and scenic river segments that do not interfere with the exercise of valid existing rights.

e. The Responsible Official should coordinate with the Responsible Officials of adjacent administrative units to ensure compatible management of any wild and scenic river that passes through connected land management plan areas.

f. The Interdisciplinary Team should consider:

(1) Measures to protect and enhance the free flow, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values of the rivers (see FSM 2354 for more information on wild and scenic river management); and

(2) Management on adjoining lands within the river corridor.

2. The plan must clearly identify designated, suitable, and eligible river segments within the plan area. To organize plan components applicable to existing, suitable, or eligible wild and scenic rivers, the Responsible Official may identify one or more management or geographic areas for wild and scenic rivers or use other means to indicate where plan components apply.

3. The plan must include plan components including standards or guidelines for the protection of designated wild and scenic rivers and management of eligible and suitable rivers integrated with other plan components as described in 23.21a. To meet this requirement, the plan may include:

a. Desired conditions that describe the conditions expected for wild and scenic river segments and their surrounding corridors. These desired conditions should be based on the type of river segment (wild, scenic, or recreational). Desired conditions can vary for different river segments, depending upon each segment's classification and outstandingly remarkable values.

b. Standards, guidelines, or suitability to place limits or conditions on projects or activities to ensure that adverse effects on the outstandingly remarkable values of an eligible or suitable wild and scenic river segment are avoided (See FSH 1909.12, ch. 80, sec. 84.3 d). Standards or guidelines may also protect the intended wild, scenic, or recreational character of a designated river segment. Designated wild river segments have been withdrawn from and are not suitable for timber production (see FSH 1909.12, ch. 60, sec. 61.11). Eligible and suitable wild river segments are not suitable for timber production as such production is not compatible with maintaining the option for future designation as wild river segment (see FSH 1909.12, ch. 60, sec. 61.2).

c. The wild and scenic river segments may be part of the distinctive role and contribution of the plan area. Other plan content may describe the Responsible Official's management approach to completing suitability studies of an eligible river or completing wild and scenic river management plans for designated rivers.

4. The Responsible Official shall describe the status and any recommendations for wild and scenic rivers in the decision document as described in FSH 1909.12, chapter 80.

Designated wild and scenic rivers must also have comprehensive river management plans (CRMPs). The plan must be compatible with the CRMP or the plan or CRMP must be amended to achieve this compatibility. Only plan components contained in a CRMP need to be included in the land management plan. The entire CRMP does not need to be included in the land management plan.

24.43 – National Scenic and Historic Trails

1. When developing plan components for national scenic and historic trails:

a. The Interdisciplinary Team should review the assessment for relevant information about existing national scenic and historic trails in the plan area, including established rights-of-way pursuant to 16 U.S.C 1246(a)(2) and direction contained in comprehensive plans (CPs) pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1244(e) or 1244(f). For existing or study national scenic and historic trails that do not have such information published, assessments identify and evaluate other information pertinent to the location and management of national scenic and historic trails.

b. The Interdisciplinary Team shall identify Congressionally designated national scenic and historic trails and plan components must provide for the management of rights-of-ways (16 U.S.C 1246(a)(2)) consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders. Plan components must provide for the nature and purposes of existing national scenic and historic trails and for the potential rights-of-way of those trails designated for study (16 U.S.C. 1244(b)).

c. The Interdisciplinary Team shall use the national scenic and historic trails rights-of-way maps required by 16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2) to map the location of the trails. Where national trail rights-of-way have not yet been selected, the Interdisciplinary Team shall reference the establishing legislation (16 U.S.C. 1244(a)) as the primary source for identifying and mapping the national scenic and historic trails right-of-way. If the right-of-way has not been selected, either through legislation or publication in the Federal Register, the Interdisciplinary Team should use other information to delineate a national scenic and historic trails corridor that protects the resource values for which the trail was designated or is being proposed for designation (16 U.S.C 1244(b)).

d. The Responsible Official shall consult with neighboring Responsible Officials when developing plan components for national scenic and historic trails that cross unit boundaries and shall strive to maintain or establish compatible management approaches while recognizing diverse resource conditions and needs in the different plan areas.

e. Plan components must be compatible with the objectives and practices identified in the comprehensive plan for the management of the national scenic and historic trail. The objectives and practices include the identification of resources to be preserved and the trail's carrying capacity.

f. The Responsible Official shall include plan components that provide for the nature and purposes of national scenic and historic trails in the plan area. In doing so, the Responsible Official should take into consideration other aspects of the plan related to the trail such as access, cultural and historic resources, recreational settings, scenic character, and valid existing rights.

2. The plan must include plan components including standards or guidelines for a designated area as described in section 24.2 of this Handbook. To meet this requirement the plan:

a. Should include desired conditions that describe the national scenic and historic trail and the recreational, scenic, historic, and other resource values for which the trail was designated.

b. May include objectives for national scenic and historic trails where existing conditions (settings, opportunities, scenic character, cultural and other resources values) are different from desired conditions. These objectives can identify intended activities to improve national scenic and historic trail conditions, mitigate or enhance associated resource values, create or improve connections with communities and visitors, or other desired and measureable outcomes that will improve the national scenic and historic trail experience.

c. May include standards or guidelines to place limits or conditions on projects or activities to protect the trail and associated resource values.

d. May include suitability plan components to limit or prevent incompatible uses and activities.

e. Must identify and map National scenic and historic trails per #1c above.

f. May, to apply plan components unique to the National and Scenic Historic Trail: provide one or more management or geographic areas for a national scenic and historic trail; reference the identified national scenic and historic trail right-of-way, place a corridor around the trail, or use other means to clearly identify where the plan components apply in reference to the trail.

FSM 2350 has more information about national scenic and historic trails.

24.44 – Inventoried Roadless Areas

The plan must identify Inventoried Roadless Areas governed by the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart B) or the Idaho Roadless Rule (36 CFR 219 Subpart C) and Colorado Roadless Rule (36 CFR 219 Subpart D), or any other State roadless rule in effect and applicable. The spatial information for the boundaries of such roadless areas is available at the Roadless Area Conservation website (*http://fs.usda.gov/roadless/*).

The Responsible Official, in the planning process, does not have the authority to modify the boundaries of roadless areas covered by such rules.

Roadless areas designated under a roadless rule may be, but are not required to be, identified as unique management areas or geographic areas in the plan. Regardless, Responsible Officials shall ensure that plan components applicable to such areas are compatible with the applicable roadless rule. The plan can have different plan components in multiple management areas or geographic areas apply to the inventoried roadless areas as long as these plan components are compatible with the restrictions of the applicable roadless rule.