Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands
Overview of Forest Plan Revision – July 18, 2016

The Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands is revising its 1985 Forest Plan. We began in October 2012 as an early adopter of the 2012 Planning Rule, which requires all National Forests to provide meaningful opportunities for public participation to develop a solid framework for future decisions.

The plan affects the mountain districts - Mt. Taylor, Magdalena, Mountainair, and Sandia. The plan will provide direction and guidance on the future vision for sustainability of the resources, goods and services, and set the course for the future of the Cibola's management actions. It will be used to guide site-specific priorities and projects on these districts to share stewardship with all partners in the future.

We invited over 75 local soil and water conservation districts, city, county, land grant, state, federal, and tribal partners as units of government to help with the public engagement process to build broad support and a shared vision for a wide range of diverse and contemporary values and uses. Approximately 40 of these cooperating agencies have worked with us in four groups, called Landscape Teams, one for each area associated with the ranger districts. A fifth overall group with points of contact from each team also works with the Cibola to provide consistency across the Forest.

The Landscape Teams have provided invaluable support, expertise, and knowledge and greatly improved the process and the draft plan. They have co-hosted and co-designed the public meetings, improved public outreach, reviewed public comments, and provided input on the draft desired conditions, standards and guidelines, management areas, and areas suitable for wilderness recommendation. We have promoted a model of the Cibola working as a partner at the table with all interests rather than being in the center of issues; this approach has promoted greater understanding among the participants and set the stage for meaningful dialogue, even on contentious issues. The Landscape Teams and the Cibola jointly designed a Shared Stewardship Workshop to reach out to non-governmental interests to build a more collaborative process now and for implementing the plan.

The preliminary Draft Plan is now complete and will be released to the public on July 18 for a 45-day comment period ending August 31, 2016. A series of collaborative public workshops are scheduled to present the preliminary Draft Plan for review and discussion. The workshops will provide an opportunity for the public to understand how to review the plan and engage in dialogue with each other and diverse interests to find a shared vision and common ground for these places. We will work with Landscape Teams to review public comments, modify the draft plan and management areas, prepare the draft EIS alternatives and analyses, and draft a biological assessment to analyze effects.

Another draft plan and EIS will be released in the spring of 2017 with more public workshops and a 90-day comment period. Formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will begin at this time. In spring/summer 2017, we will respond to comments and make adjustments to the draft plan and draft EIS, and continue formal consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The final plan, EIS, biological opinion, and draft Record of Decision by the Forest Supervisor are expected to be released in the winter/spring of 2018. This will begin a 60-day objection period. Objections need to be resolved within 90 days by the Regional Forester. We anticipate releasing the final revised Forest Plan, final Record of Decision, and final EIS in the summer of 2018. Implementation and monitoring of the revised Forest Plan will begin in the summer 2018. We appreciate your involvement in developing a Forest Plan that has a shared vision and common ground with broad support from all users.