

Francis Marion National Forest

Draft Forest Plan Reviewer's Guide

Thank you for your interest in the Francis Marion National Forest's forest plan revision effort!

We invite you to participate in reviewing the draft forest plan and provide your comments during this important phase of the plan revision process. The 90-day public comment period started on August 15, 2015 (with publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register). To be most helpful, please submit comments no later than November 11, 2015.

Tips on Effective Commenting

There are a few important points you need to know about how the Forest Service considers comments. If you are going to take time to comment, you want it to count so please consider the following information.

Substantive comments (defined at 36 CFR 219.62) provide factual information, professional opinion, or informed judgment that is relevant to the action being proposed. Substantive comments are specific, comparative, or solution-oriented. A substantive comment provides the reasons why and goes beyond just expressing an opinion. Comments such as "The proposed action looks good" (example of a non-specific comment) is not substantive. We want to know why the proposed action looks good, "The proposed action looks good because it..." Substantive comments might include providing new information, identifying issues, providing the basis or rationale for an opinion, or identifying sources of credible research which could be considered for the environmental analysis.

This is not a voting process. Comments are considered on basis of content not quantity. While all comments will be considered, we find substantive comments related to the proposed actions the most useful.

Examples of Substantive Comments:

- Please change the scenic integrity objective guideline for the xxx recreation area to very high because this recreation area is very important not only to the local community, but also to visitors from around the state.
- In the "Wando area", I feel strongly that lands in Management Area 2 should have active timber management to manage wildlife risk for the nearby communities. Please see the attached County Land Use Plan that identifies infrastructure and community values that are at risk from nearby dense timber stands.
- I am concerned about loss of wildlife habitat due to the spread of invasive plant species. I think the Forest Service should be monitoring for new invasive species occurrences.

Examples of Non-Substantive Comments:

Non-substantive comments are those outside the scope of the proposal, appear as a “vote” (the NEPA process is not about voting), do not provide supporting rationale, or they lack sufficient specificity to be tied to an issue or to help consider a possible alternative (e.g., they are emotional and without rationale). These comments are not helpful to identify any needed changes in management direction.

Examples:

- I do not support this project at all. It is not in the best interest of the general public. (Lacks specific information)
- Please close Road #xxx. (Site-specific travel management is outside the scope of forest plan revision)
- Please incorporate by reference my comments on project XX (Lacks information specific to this proposed action)
- The Clean Water Act should be repealed. (Legislative actions are outside the scope of forest plan revision)

Why It's Important—Eligibility to Object

Following the environmental analysis, when the Forest is ready to finalize the revised forest plan and issue a record of decision, there will be a pre-decisional administrative review period (described in 36 CFR 219 Subpart B of the 2012 Planning Rule [Federal Register, Vol. 7, No. 68, p 21162-21276]). This is also known as the objection period. This process gives an individual or entity an opportunity for an independent Forest Service review and resolution of issues before the approval of a plan revision. If you have unresolved issues with the revised forest plan, you may submit an objection to the draft decision at that time if you have established “standing”, or eligibility.

Substantive comments including the associated name and address of the commenter, give an individual standing to object to the decision. Anonymous comments will be accepted and considered; however, they will not provide standing for objection. Subpart B identifies who may file objections to a plan revision, the responsibilities of the participants in an objection, and the procedures that apply to the review of the objection (36 CFR 219 Subpart B, §219.50).

Individuals and entities who have submitted substantive formal comments related to this plan revision during the opportunities for public comment for this decision may file an objection.

Where to Submit Comments

Please submit comments using one of the methods below (listed in order of preference for ease of processing and cost to the taxpayer in the content analysis process):

Web Form: <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?project=40695>

***Please note: when you submit a comment using the online option, please be certain you click the "I am not a robot" button! You should receive confirmation of your successfully submitted comment in a pop-up box. If you do not receive this confirmation, it is your responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.*

Email: FMPlanRevision@fs.fed.us using one of the following formats – directly in the body of the email or attachment to the email using word document-preferred format (.doc or .docx), portable document format (.pdf), rich text format (.rtf), text (.txt), and hypertext markup language (.html).

The Collaborative Mapping Tool Website: <https://my.usgs.gov/ppgis/studio/launch/13328>. This tool allows you to submit geographic-specific comments.

Postal Mail:

Francis Marion National Forest
Forest Plan Revision
4931 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212

Fax: 803-561-4004

Comments received, including names, addresses, email addresses and phone numbers of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record, and will be available for public inspection.

When the 90-day comment period ends, we will review and analyze the comments to identify any new issues and refine forest plan direction.

If you wish to read comments that we have received, go to the Public Reading Room: <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/ReadingRoom?project=40695>. (*Once a comment is submitted, it may take up to 24 hours for it to register in the reading room*).