



Lincoln National Forest

Forest Plan Revision

Public Participation Strategy

August 22, 2016

Purpose

The Lincoln National Forest is currently revising the 1986 Forest Plan. This public participation strategy is intended to provide a framework for communication, participation and collaboration among all parties involved, or desiring involvement in the forest plan revision (FPR) process. Engaging internal and external audiences throughout the multi-phase, multi-year process will be essential to the success of the revised forest plan. This is a living document that is anticipated to evolve based on input and feedback from all parties throughout the process.

Goals

- Establish and maintain open communication channels with internal and external audiences.
- Increase awareness, allow for shared learning and promote a common understanding of the importance of the planning process and the forest plan.
- Keep all concerned parties informed throughout the process.
- Provide opportunities to exchange data and information.
- Create a broad, clear decision-making process that improves the FPR process.
- Promote constructive open dialogue, debate and deliberation among different perspectives.
- Encourage input and feedback throughout all phases of the planning process.
- Build and maintain effective working relationships to help improve the problem solving process.
- Use proactive methods and tools to meet the expectations and information needs of interested parties.
- Communicate key messages regarding FPR and the resulting plan that will guide management decisions on the Lincoln National Forest for the next 15 years.

Background

The forest plan is a comprehensive document that guides forest resource management, use and protection. It aims to balance multiple uses and sustained yield of forest resources. It sets forth a vision for land management, describing the desired conditions within the forest, and lays out specific objectives, standards and guidelines for how to achieve those desired conditions.

U.S. Forest Service policy requires plans be revised periodically. The Forest Service's [2012 Planning Rule](#) directs forest plans to be science-based and developed with extensive public involvement and collaboration. The current Lincoln National Forest Plan (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/lincoln/landmanagement/planning/?cid=STELPRDB5176269>) was last revised in 1986, and has been amended 17 times, most recently in 2010. Many changes have occurred since 1986—environmentally, socially and economically. The plan revision process and, in particular, the assessment (described below) will determine what is working with the 1986 plan and identify where there is a need for change to plan direction.

This multi-year process involves three phases: assessment, revision and monitoring.

Phase 1. The Assessment

The assessment will look at conditions and opportunities on the Lincoln National Forest within the context of the broader landscape by identifying and evaluating relevant existing information from a variety of sources. Biodiversity; soils; watershed and wildlife habitat conditions; natural functions and processes on the land; areas of tribal importance; multiple uses and their economic contributions; and recreation are just some of items that will be evaluated during this initial phase.

Public engagement in this phase will provide opportunities to share data and knowledge of existing forest conditions and identify trends and perceptions of risks to social, economic and ecological systems. Public engagement will be particularly important in developing the potential list of species of conservation concern, determining geographic extent of the plan area's influence on social and economic conditions, and evaluating the potential need and opportunity for additional designated areas (e.g., wilderness, wild and scenic rivers). (Note: The process for wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, and other special designated areas will occur during phase II, described below.) This phase typically takes about a year to complete. The results of the assessment will help identify what “needs to change” in the current forest plan and provide information for developing plan components and direction in the revised plan.

Phase II. Plan Revision and NEPA

The goal of the plan revision phase is to determine which parts of the forest plan will be updated and to develop and adopt recommendations for doing so. The revision process includes the development of plan components (desired conditions, objectives, standards and guidelines) which reflect different management scenarios, known as “alternatives.” Development of a monitoring program with stakeholder involvement will also be part of the revision process. Environmental analysis will occur for all alternatives following the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

Public involvement during this phase of the revision process will be focused on the collaborative development of plan components and ensuring the use of best available scientific information. The “decision space,” or ability to influence the process for particular topics, will be further defined as we go through the plan revision phase. At this stage, the public will also have an opportunity to engage in the wilderness, wild and scenic river, and other designated areas processes (including inventory, evaluation, and recommendation). In addition, the NEPA process will provide opportunities to comment on the draft plan and accompanying analysis documents. An objection period will occur before the approval of the final plan and record of decision.

Phase III. Implementation and Monitoring

After approval, the forest plan, including the monitoring plan, will be implemented. Monitoring provides feedback by tracking relevant changes over time, testing assumptions underlying management decisions, and measuring the effectiveness of management activity in achieving desired outcomes. The 2012 Planning Rule requires a monitoring report every two years after adoption of a new forest plan.

Guiding Principles for Participation and Collaboration

Public participation activities are integral parts of the plan revision process. The Lincoln National Forest is committed to working with all interested parties to develop a forest plan built on collaboration. Such a plan will reflect input from diverse stakeholders, incorporate local knowledge and experience, and conform to current law, regulation and policy.

Based on input received during the March 2015 Community Conversation series, the following set of collaborative principles and expectations were outlined.

Collaborative principles for all parties:

- Be respectful, objective, constructive and on-topic.
- Listen to and be respectful of divergent viewpoints.
- Identify and focus on common ground.
- Learn from the past but focus on the future; check your assumptions about others.
- Appreciate diverse educational backgrounds and experience.
- Share knowledge, data and information.
- Be willing to learn from one another.
- Value each other's time.
- Take responsibility for your role and commit to the process.
- Encourage the younger generation and minorities to participate.

Expectations for the Forest Service:

- Rely on, value and incorporate local knowledge; recognize the importance of the forest resources to adjacent communities.
- Be inclusive of all stakeholder groups and incorporate diverse perspectives.
- Communicate consistently, frequently, in a timely manner and in plain language.
- Explain where in the process there are opportunities to be engaged.
- Provide all relevant information regarding collaborative work with other entities.
- Be transparent; if change is necessary, provide an explanation.
- Use the best available science and communicate clearly about its origins, advantages, limitations and application in all phases of the process.
- Use common sense.
- Define the "decision space" and the scope of influence stakeholders might have for elements of the revision.
- Clarify constraints imposed by law, regulation and policy; differentiate between them and demonstrate compliance with all.
- Demonstrate progress through the planning process; follow through and follow up.
- Inform stakeholders on how input will be used.

- Demonstrate expertise, professionalism and accountability during face-to-face meetings and in documents.
- Utilize diverse ways of reaching stakeholders; include face-to-face local meetings, online formats and local publications.
- Utilize professional facilitators where possible.
- Provide timely feedback.

Expectations for the community stakeholders:

- Actively participate in and contribute to the plan revision effort.

Public Participation Process Agreements

This section describes the principles and best practices that the Forest may use in FPR:

- All public planning meetings are open to the public.
- All public planning meeting materials and notes will be made available on the Lincoln National Forest web site (www.fs.usda.gov/goto/lincolnforestplan). Hard copies will also be provided for public meetings.
- Public meeting agendas may be posted to the web site at least one week in advance.
- Participating in public planning meetings does not limit anyone's activity during the NEPA process. Individuals who contribute during collaborative planning workshops may participate in the NEPA process, including submitting formal comments or submitting objections.
- The Lincoln National Forest will seek information from individuals and organizations. However, per restrictions on the use of federal advisory boards, the Forest Service cannot ask a group, as a whole, whether consensus exists. The Lincoln NF will encourage self-convened workgroups around resource topic areas that will inform collaborative work sessions.

Who is Involved in Forest Plan Revision

All members of the public who share an interest in the future of land and resource management for the Lincoln National Forest are encouraged to participate in FPR. Inclusion of diverse perspectives, knowledge, skills, roles, jurisdictions, supports the development of a comprehensive plan. The Forest seeks to continue working with partners and neighbors toward improving forest health and resiliency, supporting jobs and providing multiple uses and ecosystem services.

The Lincoln National Forest counts among its plan revision stakeholders:

- Agency partners – Federal, State, county, local
- Businesses and chambers
- Clubs and community groups
- Community members
- Civil rights organizations
- Educators, students (college, high school, secondary, elementary)
- Elected officials – national, regional, local
- Environmental and conservation organizations
- Federally recognized Indian Tribes
- Fire safety and community protection groups
- Forest Service employees and retirees
- Interested individuals (local, regional, national)
- Local government
- Low-income populations

- Media
- Minority populations
- Private landowners
- Permittees
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts/Natural Resource Conservation Districts
- University Cooperative Extension, Researchers
- Volunteer and stewardship groups
- Youth and youth-related organizations

It is a goal of the planning process to identify common objectives with Tribal, state, and local governments, and find opportunities to resolve or reduce conflicts. The interdisciplinary team (IDT) will review the planning and land use policies of other public agencies to understand and give consideration to their objectives. The Lincoln NF will consider ways the revised forest plan could contribute to compatibility between the Forest and other agency plans. Requests for cooperating agency status are encouraged from eligible state, local and Tribal governments, but are applicable only during the NEPA process for the plan revision phase and will be considered at that time. Meetings will be conducted with government agencies to discuss issues, concerns, and management plans.

The 2012 Rule specifically identified that forests seek out and engage low-income, youth, and minority populations. To engage low-income populations in FPR, the Forest will identify non-profits and social services organizations that provide support to low-income populations to suggest possible approaches and opportunities. To engage youth in FPR, the Forest will use web/social media and identify and participate with youth organizations which have natural affinities to the National Forest such as: Youth Conservation Corps, Boy & Girl Scouts, 4H, and Future Farmers of America. The Forest will also contact science and natural resources teachers at the elementary, secondary and university levels to discuss opportunities to include FPR in their lessons. To engage minority populations in FPR, the Forest will identify and work with community leaders to suggest possible approaches/opportunities and gathering places to hold listening sessions, dialogue and discussions about use and management of the Forest. Bilingual English/Spanish versions of FPR materials/handouts may be produced.

Methods

Information needs and public involvement levels may change throughout the FPR process. Public input, feedback, and collaboration are some of the effective ways members of the public can participate. It is important that the Forest ask interested individuals how they want to be informed and be involved in various activities. The Lincoln NF will use the following techniques and approaches to engage diverse stakeholders.

1. Update and maintain the forest plan revision web site (www.fs.usda.gov/goto/lincolnforestplan), the main repository for updates, notices, public participation opportunities, background materials and links to other references.
2. Distribute news releases when new steps are taken in the FPR process. Distribution will target stakeholders including those individuals and organizations on the forest plan revision email list (see below) and will utilize media whenever wider distribution is needed.
3. Publish legal notices in the *Alamogordo Daily News*, the newspaper of record for the Lincoln National Forest, Supervisor's Office. Legal notices may also be published in the *Ruidoso News* and *Current Argus* in Carlsbad, other newspapers of record for the districts.
4. Publish notices in the Federal Register as required by the 2012 Planning Rule Final Directives.
5. Use Twitter to send brief updates and links to additional information.
<https://twitter.com/LincolnUSForest>

6. Accept public comments including written comments from stakeholders via the forest plan revision inbox, Inf_fpr_comments@fs.fed.us. Accept postal mail at: Lincoln National Forest Plan Revision, 4363 Las Palomas Road, Alamogordo, NM 88310.
7. Maintain an email distribution list for FPR to send out information on updates, notices, invitations to provide comments, and other opportunities for public participation. Please visit https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAFS/subscriber/new?topic_id=NEPA_45148_S, and enter your email address to be added to the mailing list.
8. Provide presentations for organizations and other entities upon request. Presentation materials are also posted on the FPR web page. Availability to host and attend these meetings will depend on the status of FPR and availability of team members at that time.
9. Distribute outreach materials such as FAQs, newsletters, information sheets, and handouts at outreach events and post these to the web site.
10. Contact local community members via phone or other correspondence as appropriate. Post flyers in communities to announce upcoming events or important developments in the FPR process.
11. Attend important events in the local communities at a Lincoln National Forest booth to provide information on forest plan revision.
12. Host public meetings, open houses, and workshops in surrounding communities throughout the planning process. Availability to host and attend these meetings will depend on the status of FPR and availability of team members at that time.
13. As suggested by the collaboration cadre, consider forming an informal sounding board including a broad spectrum of individuals/groups that will help provide input on how communities wish to be engaged in forest plan revision. This suggestion will be explored further by the Lincoln NF during the forest plan revision process.
14. Consider the use of other technologies to enhance collaboration and outreach including ArcGIS Online (web page application with advanced features for displaying spatial/map-based information), Talking Points Collaborative Mapping (spatial/map-based commenting software), and similar tools.

Forest Service Teams

The plan revision interdisciplinary team is comprised of the Forest leadership team, core team, and extended team. The Regional Office planning team also participates in the interdisciplinary process and provides direction and oversight of documents. These teams and their roles are described below.

1. Lincoln NF Interdisciplinary Team (IDT)

- *Forest Planner*: Manages, organizes and serves as the primary point of contact for the revision process.
- *Core Team*: Six-member team (including the Forest Planner) dedicated to the FPR effort that provides planning, social, economic, recreation, wildlife, vegetation, soil and water, and writer-editor expertise.
- *Extended Team*: 25-30-member team comprised of Lincoln NF employees including district specialists, Regional Office staff and contractor support devoting a portion of their time to the revision effort in social, economic, and ecological areas—e.g., air, cultural resources, fire, GIS, infrastructure, lands/special uses, mineral/energy, range, recreation, scenery, silvicultural, social and economic resources, tribal resources, soils, and water resources.
- *Communications Team*: 11-member team that includes employees at both the Supervisor’s Office and each of the three districts. Team members are responsible for leading and fostering advanced methods for public participation, engagement, and collaboration. They also assist the team and help facilitate community conversations, workshops, and other public meetings as needed.

- *Logistics Team*: Four-member team that helps provide administrative support for revision efforts. Purchasing, contracting, budgeting, grants and agreements, and human resource management contribute to the overall success of plan revision efforts.

2. Forest Leadership Team (FLT)

- *Lincoln NF Supervisor*: Responsible official (decision-maker) for approval of the plan revision.
- While the Agency is committed to public participation and encourages collaboration, the Forest Supervisor is the responsible official and is accountable for all formal land management planning decisions affecting NFS lands and may not relinquish that responsibility. The Forest Supervisor may consider the recommendations of collaborators, but is not obligated to follow the recommendations in making a decision.
- *District Rangers (DRs)*: Liaisons to forest communities and constituents on plan revision issues
- *Public Affairs Officer (PAO)*: Prepares communication materials in cooperation with the core team. Main point of contact for the media.
- *Staff Officers*: Supervision of employees in support of timely completion of work and plan revision.

3. Regional Office (RO) Planning Team

- Facilitates understanding of the 2012 Planning Rule and other directives and policy.
- Reviews all revision documents and provides input.
- Provides technical assistance for conducting ecological and socioeconomic assessments per the 2012 Planning Rule.

4. Regional Leadership

- *Regional Forester*: Oversight of the needs for change and focus of plan revision. Reviewing officer for the objection process.

Action Plan Lincoln National Forest 2015-2019

The following tables identify key steps and target dates for engaging the public and completing the plan revision. Also noted are actions completed to date (August 2016).

Pre-Assessment				
Target Date*	Activity/Action	Stakeholders/Participants	Responsible Party	Date Accomplished
Jan 2015	Collaborative Workshop	Gila & Lincoln NF IDT & FLT	Collaboration Cadre	Jan 2015
Feb 2015	Brief County Commissioners	Counties	District Rangers	Feb and March 2015
Feb 2015	Develop external web page	All	Webmaster	Feb 2015
Feb 2015	Develop outreach materials	FS and non-FS	Core Team/FLT	Feb 2015
Feb 2015	Schedule Community Conversations	All	Core Team/FLT	Feb 2015
Feb 2015	Create SharePoint site for FPR	FS	Webmaster	Feb 2015
Feb 2015	Outreach for Community Conversations	All	Districts, Extended & Core Team	Feb 2015
Feb 2015	News Release to introduce FPR	Media, General public	PAO	Feb 2015
Feb 2015	Internal email to all employees	Lincoln NF employees	Forest Supervisor, PAO	Feb 2015
Feb 2015	Utilize social media to expand outreach	FS and non-FS	PAO	Feb 2015
March 2015	Outreach for Community Conversations	All	Districts, Extended & Core Team	March 2015
March 2015	Conduct internal briefings at Districts/SO	Lincoln NF employees	Core Team	March 2015
March 2015	Hold Community Conversations	All	Forest-wide, Collaboration Cadre	March 26 – 30, 2015
March 2015	Summarize Generation Wall input	All	Core Team	March 2015
March 2015	Summarize Community Conversation input	All	Core Team	April 2015
March 2015	Web updates	FS and non-FS	Webmaster	March 2015
Mar/Apr 2015	Present at organization meetings	Organizations	Core Team	March and April 2015
Mar/Apr 2015	Present at local government meetings	Local government	District Rangers, Core Team	March and April 2015
May 2015	Initiation of Assessment in Federal Register	All	Core Team, Forest Supervisor	June 25, 2015
June 2015	Legal notice on initiation of assessment	All	Core Team, Forest Supervisor	June 25, 2015
June 2015	Post Community Conversation summaries	All	Webmaster	June 2015
July 2015	News Release on initiation of assessment	All	PAO	July 2015
July 2015	Communicate with Tribal Leaders	Tribes	District Rangers, Archeologists	Ongoing
July 2015	Distribute Public Participation Strategy	All Stakeholders	PAO, Core Team, FLT	July 2015

*Ongoing activities and actions include communications that occur periodically or throughout planning as required. All public involvement opportunities will include early notification of stakeholders and participants.

Assessment Phase

Target Date*	Activity/Action	Stakeholders/Participants	Responsible Party	Date Accomplished
Ongoing	Meetings with Tribes	Tribal representatives	Archaeologists, District Rangers	Spring 2016; Ongoing
Ongoing	Present at local government meetings	Local government	District Rangers, Core Team	Ongoing
Ongoing	Provide updates on status of process	Congressionals	District Rangers, PAO, Core Team	Ongoing
Ongoing	Present at organization meetings	Organizations	Core Team	Ongoing
Ongoing	Engage low-income populations	Low-income populations	Core Team, PAO, Districts	Ongoing
Ongoing	Engage youth populations	Youth	Core Team, PAO, Districts	Ongoing
Ongoing	Engage minority populations	Minority populations	Core Team, PAO, Districts	Ongoing
Ongoing	Conduct internal briefings at Districts/SO	Lincoln NF employees	Core Team	Ongoing
May 2015	First meeting w/ Regional Office A-Team	Core and Extended Team	Regional Office Analysis Team	July 6-8, 2015
May 2015	Conduct visits at Districts	Lincoln NF employees	Core Team	August 2015
May-Sep 2015	Call for existing, available data	Agencies, NGOs, public	Core Team	Nov 2015; Ongoing
May-Sep 2015	Meetings with agencies	Agencies	Core and Extended Team	May- Sept 2015
June 2015	Develop newsletter	All stakeholders	Core Team	Jan 2016 (& ongoing)
June 2015	Conduct visits at Districts/SO	Lincoln NF employees	Core Team	August 2015
Jun-Aug 2015	Public meetings on Assessment Phase	All	Forest-wide, Facilitator	Apr-Oct 2015
Jul-Sept 2015	Field trips: topics and locations TBD	All	IDT, FLT, Districts	Ongoing, as needed
Sep-Nov 2015	Public Workshops on Assessment topics	All	Forest-wide, Facilitator	November 2015
July 2015- Oct 2016	Development/writing of the draft assessment report	Lincoln NF employees w/ input from All	Core Team, Extended Team	Ongoing
Nov 2016	Draft Assessment Report to RO	Regional Office, Lincoln NF	Core Team, Extended Team	
Jan 2017	Draft Assessment Report released to public	All	Core Team	
Jan 2017	Public meetings (“need for change”) for Assessment Report	All	Forest-wide, Facilitator	
Feb 2017	Final Need for Change Document for RO Review	Lincoln NF employees	Core Team	
March 2017	Regional Forester Briefing on Need for Change to the current forest plan	Lincoln NF employees	FLT, Core Team	
March 2017	Final Assessment Report and Need for Change released to public	All	Core Team	

*Ongoing activities and actions include communications that occur periodically or throughout planning as required. All public involvement opportunities will include early notification of stakeholders and participants.

Plan Revision and NEPA Phase

Target Date*	Activity/Action	Stakeholders/Participants	Responsible Party	Date Accomplished
Ongoing	Meetings with Tribes	Tribal representatives	Archaeologists, District Rangers	

Plan Revision and NEPA Phase

Target Date*	Activity/Action	Stakeholders/Participants	Responsible Party	Date Accomplished
Ongoing	Present at local government meetings	Local government	District Rangers, Core Team	
Ongoing	Present at organization meetings	Organizations	Core Team	
Ongoing	Meetings with agencies	Agencies	Core and Extended Team	
Ongoing	Engage low-income populations	Low-income populations	Core Team, PAO, Districts	
Ongoing	Engage youth populations	Youth	Core Team, PAO, Districts	
Ongoing	Engage minority populations	Minority populations	Core Team, PAO, Districts	
Ongoing	Conduct internal briefings at Districts/SO	Lincoln NF employees	Core Team	
March 2017	Notice of Intent to Revise Plan	All stakeholders	Core Team, Forest Supervisor	
April 2017	Identify cooperating agencies and develop agreements	Agencies including Federal, State, and local governments	Core Team	
2017	Develop desired conditions	All stakeholders	Forest-wide, Interested stakeholders	
2017	Build NEPA alternatives	All stakeholders	Forest-wide, Interested stakeholders	
TBD	Topic: Species of conservation concern	All stakeholders	Forest-wide, Interested stakeholders	
2017-2018	Develop plan components	All stakeholders	Forest-wide, Interested stakeholders	
2017-2018	Develop monitoring plan	All stakeholders	Forest-wide, Interested stakeholders	
2018	Public Review of Draft plan and DEIS	All stakeholders	Core Team, Forest Supervisor	
2018-2019	Response to comments	Lincoln NF, Regional Office	Core Team, Forest Supervisor	
2019	Adjustments to plan and DEIS	Lincoln NF, Regional Office	Core Team, Forest Supervisor	
2019	Develop proposed final Forest Plan & EIS	Lincoln NF, Regional Office	Core Team, Forest Supervisor	
2019	Selection of preferred alternative	Lincoln NF	Forest Supervisor	
2019	Consultation w/ US Fish and Wildlife Service	USFWS, Lincoln NF	Core and Extended Team Bios	
2019	Notice of Objection Period	All stakeholders	Forest Supervisor	
2019	Approve Final Plan and EIS	Lincoln NF, Regional Office	Forest Supervisor	
2019	Record of Decision	Lincoln NF, Regional Office	Forest Supervisor	

*Ongoing activities and actions include communications that occur periodically or throughout planning as required. All public involvement opportunities will include early notification of stakeholders and participants.

Implementation and Monitoring Phase

Target Date*	Activity/Action	Stakeholders/Participants	Responsible Party	Date Accomplished
2021	Biennial monitoring report publicly available	All; partners TBD	Planner	
2021	Public review of monitoring report	All	All stakeholders	