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Dear Planning Partner:

We are proud to announce the release of the Draft Revised Land Management Plan (Draft Plan) and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the El Yunque National Forest. This Land Management Plan, once it is approved, will guide management activities on nearly 29,000 acres of National Forest System lands in Eastern Puerto Rico for the next 10 to 15 years.

You may find the Draft Plan in Spanish and the Draft Plan and DEIS in English online at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/elyunque/landmanagement/planning>. The DEIS in Spanish will soon be available on the website.

These documents reflect extensive public participation over the past four years through collaborative working meetings and other public input. We greatly appreciate the commitment of interested participants who have provided important contributions toward the development of the Draft Plan and DEIS. The documents reflect an interdisciplinary planning approach considering comments and input received, along with the directives associated with the 2012 planning rule.

The vision in the Draft Plan is to maintain a healthy accessible and sustainable forest that integrates multiple uses; provides economic, ecological and social opportunities; promotes education, environmental justice, and cultural and environmental identity and awareness for the conservation of its natural resources; and for adaptive forest management that is inclusive and collaborative.

### **Highlights of the Draft Plan and DEIS include:**

#### ***Providing sustainable ecological systems and adapting to changing climate conditions:***

- Under the new planning rule the focus is on protecting and conserving tropical ecosystems, particularly sensitive vegetation types and wetlands. These tropical ecosystems have 636 native and endemic plant species that have been identified, including 39 potential Species of Conservation Concern and 8 threatened and endangered plants.
- Protecting wildlife species diversity by enhancing and maintaining species habitat and ecosystem diversity (166 wildlife species in total, of which 4 are federally listed, 1 candidate for threatened and endangered status and 34 species of conservation concern).
- Enhancing landscape scale conservation efforts through identified geographic areas that provide opportunities for targeted conservation initiatives along stream corridors, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and riparian areas; along with connections to regional protected areas and adjacent private lands while improving immediate and long-term resilience to climate change effects.

#### ***Providing sustainable economic and social benefits to local communities by:***

- Identifying recreational settings at lower elevations and closer to surrounding communities that will help to protect sensitive ecosystems and heritage sites in upper elevations of the Forest.



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- Integrating access, recreation and tourism options in eastern Puerto Rico while aligning our recreation facilities and services with user demands, and our ability to maintain them through collaborative and partnership efforts.
- Proposing the Community Interface Resource Management Area (CIRMA) to provide for a variety of management practices such as agroforestry, forest products and recreation uses in sections of the forest encouraging sustainable forest management initiatives in the broader landscape with a community-based approach.

Future decisions on projects to implement the Land Management Plan will be made on a site-specific basis using appropriate analysis and documentation in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Three alternatives were developed and studied in detail. The preferred alternative emphasizes ecological and recreation sustainability while enhancing connections of with local communities.

Publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register (projected to be on September 30, 2016) initiates a 90-day comment period on both the Draft Plan and the DEIS. During this period, you may submit comments electronically to [commentselyunqueplan@fs.fed.us](mailto:commentselyunqueplan@fs.fed.us) or by mail to El Yunque National Forest, El Yunque Plan Revision, HC 01 Box 13490, Rio Grande, PR 00745. If you would like a hard copy or CD of any of these documents, please contact the Forest Service at 787-888-1880 or send a request by email to [commentselyunqueplan@fs.fed.us](mailto:commentselyunqueplan@fs.fed.us).

To view documents, submit comments or review comments that have been submitted, please visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=44662>. If you wish to establish standing for the objection process, you must submit either electronic or hard copy written comments.

### **Public Meeting Schedule**

The Forest Service is hosting the following public meetings in October to provide additional information about the Draft Plan and DEIS:

- Tuesday, October 4, 2016, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., Community Center, Maizales, Naguabo
- Thursday October 6, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., Mayor's Office, Las Piedras
- Tuesday, October 11, 2016, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., Activity Center, Complejo Deportivo Brisas del Mar/Complejo Capital del Sol, Luquillo
- Thursday, October 13, 2016, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., Activity Center, Rio Grande

Additional details on public meetings and other outreach activities related to the Draft Plan can be found on the Forest website <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/elyunque/landmanagement/planning> on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/elyunquenf](http://www.twitter.com/elyunquenf) on Facebook: Colaboración Bosque Nacional El Yunque or by calling our offices at 787-888-1880.

Thank you for your continued interest in the El Yunque National Forest.

Sincerely,



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Forest Supervisor