

Proposed Planning Rule Amendment Frequently Asked Questions

Background

The 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR Part 219, Planning Subpart A—National Forest System Land Management Planning) provided direction on how to amend land management plans, but did not explicitly direct how to apply substantive requirements set forth in the 2012 Planning Rule (requirements for sustainability, diversity, multiple use and timber) when amending plans developed under the 1982 Planning Rule. Because there are substantial differences between the 2012 Rule and the requirements of 1982 Rule that formed the basis of all existing plans, conversations with the Planning Rule Federal Advisory Committee (Committee) and agency planning staff suggested that additional clarification would be helpful.

Therefore, the Forest Service, after consultation with the Committee and the field, is proposing a Planning Rule amendment. The proposed amendment would clarify that an individual plan amendment is not expected to meet *all* of the substantive requirements for sustainability, plant and animal diversity, multiple uses, and timber set forth in the 2012 Rule. However, the responsible official must meet those specific requirements that are directly related to the plan direction being changed by the amendment.

In addition to clarifying the amendment process, the proposed amendment would restore a sentence relating to maximum forest opening size that was removed in error from the CFR in a previous technical amendment to the Planning Rule. To correct the mistake, the original sentence will be restored as published in the CFR on April 9, 2012.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions are all put forth in the context of proposed amendment to the 2012 Planning Rule. The Federal Register Notice, which includes the Preamble and Text of the amendment can be found [here](#)¹.

Q1: What does the proposed Planning Rule amendment do?

A1: This proposed amendment to the 2012 Planning Rule would clarify the Department and Agency's expectation for plan amendments, including expectations for amending 1982 Rule plans. While the 2012 Planning Rule includes direction specific to national forest plan amendments, the 2012 Planning Rule did not explicitly direct how to apply substantive requirements set forth in the 2012 Planning Rule (requirements for sustainability, diversity, multiple use and timber) to those plans developed under the 1982 Planning Rule.

Q2: Why are we pursuing this Planning Rule amendment now?

A2: There are currently 43 forests in the midst of amendments or about to start the plan amendment process for plans that were developed using 1982 Rule procedures. In total there are 88 amendments to 1982 Rule plans currently being worked on across the U.S. By implementing this guidance now, the Agency can ensure a more consistent interpretation of how to address the

¹ Full web site path: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/planningrule/amendments>

2012 Planning Rule's requirements for sustainability, plant and animal diversity, multiple use, and timber when amending plans developed under the 1982 Rule.

Q3: How does this proposed Planning Rule amendment change the planning process?

A3: This proposed amendment does not alter or change the process for forest planning, it simply clarifies interpretation. This proposed amendment clarifies how the responsible official determines which topics are and are not required to be addressed, as well as how to document associated rationale.

Q4: Does this proposed Planning Rule amendment apply to future forest plan amendments?

A4: Yes. The focus of this proposed amendment is to clarify how to amend plans developed or revised under the 1982 rule procedures. However, the clarifications will continue to be relevant in the future, when amending plans developed or revised under the 2012 planning rule.

Q5: Where did the need for this proposed Planning Rule amendment come from?

A5: Because all of the Forest Service's current land management plans were developed under the 1982 Rule procedures, the clarifications in this proposed amendment will help provide consistent implementation of the 2012 Planning Rule across the country. The proposed amendment was developed in close coordination with the [National Advisory Committee for Implementation of the National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule](#)², and is based on experience gained by early adopter forests, public input garnered through plan amendment processes, and extensive dialogue with the National Advisory Committee.

Q6: How does this proposed Planning Rule amendment impact the public?

A6: The proposed Planning Rule amendment should have no impact to the public, distinct from the original 2012 Planning Rule. The proposed amendment would simply clarify direction to the field to help ensure consistent implementation of the 2012 Rule when amending plans developed using the 1982 Rule.

Q7: Does this effect the public's ability to participate in the planning process?

A7: There are no changes to the public participation processes set forth in the 2012 Planning Rule. The 2012 Rule requires that responsible officials provide meaningful opportunities for public engagement throughout the planning process. There are resources available to help citizens, non-government organizations, local governments, Tribal governments, and others to understand both the forest planning process and how to engage.

Please see the general resources at the [Forest Planning website](#)³; the [Citizens Guide to the forest planning process](#)⁴; and the [Guide to forest planning process for State, Local and Tribal Governments](#)⁵. We encourage all interested parties to engage in the forest planning process in all phases of national forest planning.

² Full web site path: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/planningrule/committee>

³ Full web site path: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/planningrule>

⁴ Full web site path: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd518208.pdf

⁵ Full web site path: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd518206.pdf

Q8: How do I provide comments to the proposed Planning Rule amendment?

A8: There are three ways to provide comments concerning the proposed amendment:

1. Public participation portal: <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?project=NP-1403>.
2. Facsimile: Fax to: 202-649-1172. Please identify your comments by including ‘‘RIN 0596-AD28’ or ‘‘planning rule amendment’’ on the cover sheet or the first page.
3. U.S. Postal Service: The mailing address is: USDA Forest Service Planning Rule Comments, 2222 W 2300 S, Salt Lake City, UT 84119.