

Chronology of National Forest Management Laws and Regulations

1897 - The Organic Act of 1897 authorized establishment of National Forest Reserves to improve and protect the condition of forested areas of the United States and to "furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of the people of the United States." Since then, a series of Acts have expanded or otherwise redefined these purposes.

1946 - The Administrative Procedure Act (APA) governs the process by which federal agencies develop and issue regulations. It includes requirements for publishing notices of proposed and final rulemaking in the Federal Register, and provides opportunities for the public to comment on notices of proposed rulemaking.

1960 - Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act authorizes and directs the Secretary of Agriculture to develop and administer the renewable resources of timber, range, water, recreation and wildlife on the national forests for multiple use and sustained yield of the products and services.

1974 - The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (or RPA) authorizes long-range planning by the United States Forest Service to ensure the future supply of forest resources while maintaining a quality environment. RPA requires that a renewable resource assessment and a Forest Service plan be prepared every ten and five years, respectively, to plan and prepare for the future of natural resources.

1976 – The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 is the primary statute governing the administration of national forests and was an amendment to the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974.

NFMA changed forest planning by obliging the Forest Service to use a systematic and interdisciplinary approach to resource management and it provided for public involvement in preparing and revising forest plans. These plans required alternative land management options to be presented, each of which have potential resource outputs (timber, range, mining, recreation) as well as socio-economic effects on local communities.

1979 - The Department of Agriculture Secretary Robert Berglund issued the first planning regulations for NFMA to guide the planning process.

1982 – Revision of the NFMA Planning Regulations. These revisions required that the Forest Service:

- identify issues, concerns, and opportunities (ICOs);



- Develop planning criteria for management actions;
- Collect data and information necessary to address ICOs;
- Group land into strata of similar physical features, such as vegetation, wildlife or soil type, to analyze the effects of management actions;
- Formulate a broad range of alternatives including a 'no action, alternative;
- Analyze the effects of each alternative on the environment;
- Select a preferred alternative; and
- Monitor and evaluate the plan by comparing the actual biological effects of the plan to the projections.

1990 – (Tongass Specific) The Tongass Timber Reform Act was placed into law to amend the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, and to protect certain lands in the Tongass National Forest in perpetuity, to modify certain long-term timber contracts, to provide for protection of riparian habitat, and for other purposes.

2000 - The 2000 revision of the planning rule described a new framework for NFS planning; made sustainability the foundation for NFS planning and management; required the consideration of the best available science during the planning process, and set forth requirements for implementation, monitoring, evaluation, amendment, and revision of land and resource management plans. The 2000 rule included transition provisions that allowed the Forest Service to continue to develop, revise, and amend forest plans using the provisions of the 1982 planning rule.

2012 - The 2012 Planning Rule is the first significant update to Forest Service planning procedures in 30 years (procedures were first established by the 1982 Planning Rule), reflecting decades of experience and lessons learned. The 2012 Planning Rule was designed to incorporate the concepts of adaptive management, scientific basis, and public participation into forest planning, acknowledging the need for flexibility and agility during times of change, and providing a stronger commitment to involving the public throughout the planning process. It was also designed to require a holistic and integrated approach to management, recognizing that management needs for ecosystem resources are interrelated, and that management for ecological, social, and economic objectives are also interrelated.