

**USDA Forest Service National Advisory Committee
for Implementation of the National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule
November 7-9, 2017
Holiday Inn, 4360 Town Center Boulevard
El Dorado Hills, CA**

Introduction

The National Advisory Committee for Implementation of the National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule (the Committee) held its fourth meeting of the third charter from November 7-9, 2017 in El Dorado Hills, CA.

Objectives

Update the Committee on working group progress to date; continue implementation of 2017/2018 committee work plan; and initiate exploration of effective public engagement as a means of improving efficiency of plan implementation.

Attendees

- Committee members present: Mike Anderson, William Barquin, Susan Jane Brown, Robert Cope, Joan May, Peter Nelson, Michelle Nuttall, Candice Price, Angela Sondenaa, Thomas Troxel, Ray Vaughan, Lindsay Warness
- Committee members absent: Adam Cramer, Daniel Dessecker, Valerie Huerta, James Magagna, Russ Ehnes, Angelou Ezeilo, Martin Nie, Megan Sutton, Gabriel Vasquez
- Substitutes absent: Karen Hardigg, Caitlyn Pollihan
- Forest Service: Chris French – Designated Federal Official, Barnie Gyant, Andrea Bedell-Loucks, Maia Enzer, Crystal Merica, John Rupe, Shasta Ferranto, Bob Davis, Mary Beth Hennesey, Julia Riber, Sonja Lin, Jim Oftedal, Mark Metcalfe, Michael Tighe
- Facilitation Team present: Pam Motley
- Public present: Nick Goulette, Danna Stroud, Dan Totheroh, Daniel Rossman, Sue Britting, Pamela Flick, Craig Thomas

Actions and Agreements

1. Due to budget constraints and emerging agency priorities, the agency will sunset this Committee after the charter expires on February 3, 2018.
2. The Committee will hold its last meeting in Washington, DC on January 30 – February 1, 2018.
3. The Committee will develop final draft recommendations (including a ‘Path Forward’ recommendation that facilitates continued collaboration and partnership with the Forest Service after the charter sunsets) for conveyance at the January meeting.
4. The process for finalizing recommendations includes Committee review and comment on all draft recommendation material. Only full Committee consensus recommendations will be conveyed to the Secretary and Chief.
5. The Committee established a new Path Forward working group and reinitiated two working groups: Objections, and Wildlife/SCCs. These working groups are in addition to the four current working groups: Monitoring, Adaptive Management, Shared Stewardship, and Youth Engagement.
6. The Committee discussed setting deadlines for several steps of the process to finalize recommendations – see page 6. *(The final timeline will be communicated with the Committee after the meeting).*
7. The Committee proposed a format for the finalize recommendations – see page 6. *(The proposed format may change based on input from the Committee co-chairs. The final format will be communicated with the Committee).*

8. The co-chairs will draft a memo to the Chief summarizing the key points discussed at the meeting. The draft memo will be shared with the full Committee for high level review prior to conveying it to the Chief.

Meeting Summary

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Chris French, Forest Service Designated Federal Official (DFO), welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Committee members for their service. Bernie Gyant, Region 5 Deputy Regional Forester, welcomed the Committee and stressed the importance of an efficient planning process and the development of land management plans that are adaptable to changing conditions. Mr. Gyant also touched on the importance of partnerships at every level and stage of the process. Joan May, Committee co-chair, welcomed the Committee and shared thoughts from fellow co-chair, Jim Magagna, who was not able to attend.

Forest Service Updates

The DFO, Chris French provided an update on the agency's work to increase efficiencies in Environmental Action Decision Making (EADM). This effort will not circumvent best available science or decrease transparency. Chris also updated the Committee on the agency's current budget constraints and the strain that the recent large wildfire season has had on the budget. To address funding issues, the Forest Service is pausing several land management (forest) revision starts and limiting travel and training. Given these budget constraints and emerging agency priorities, the Chief will sunset this Committee after the charter expires on February 3, 2018. The Forest Service Leadership believes that this Committee has been instrumental to improving implementation of the 2012 rule. The Chief is committed to continuing dialogue with stakeholders around the rule and asks that the Committee develop a recommendation that facilitates continued collaboration and partnership with the Forest Service. Committee members voiced their disappointment but also their commitment to finalize recommendations by the end of the charter. Members shared their thoughts on key factors for a successful collaborative model. This collaborative group should: help share lessons learned; remain transparent for the American public; be based on sound scientific knowledge; build on the creativity, experience and relationships within this Committee's membership; clearly describe the decision space; and be cost efficient for the agency. It is also important that the agency remain accountable to this collaborative partnership.

Working Group Updates

The members reviewed the Committee's process for finalizing recommendations. Although we are on a compressed timeline and will finalize recommendations by the January meeting, the Committee will still follow this agreed-upon transparent process which includes Committee review and comment on all draft recommendation material. Only full Committee consensus recommendations will be conveyed to the Secretary and Chief.

Adaptive Management WG – The working group (WG) is developing recommendations based on conversations and learning at the August 2017 Plan Components Workshop. The WG is continuing to discuss how to best balance the need for flexibility and regulatory certainty in plan components. The DFO requested that the WG include good examples of plan components that illustrate the recommendations and why the Committee likes the examples. If the Committee is not able to reach consensus on an issue, the DFO suggested explaining the conversation and sideboards then developing a recommendation that the agency take a deeper dive on the topic.

Shared Stewardship¹ WG – The WG is developing recommendations based on learning from the May 2017 Committee meeting and the August 2017 Plan Components Workshop. The WG would like to ensure that there is adequate synthesis of all draft recommendations because there is overlap between the WGs and a need to consolidate some recommendations. The DFO requested that the WG highlight how these recommendations align with the Secretary and Chief’s priorities. In addition, the DFO requested that the WG identify and address: 1) any agency policies that may be barriers to shared stewardship, 2) needs for improved communication within the agency and with partners/stakeholders; and 3) identify if there is a need to redefine or clarify ‘inherent capability’ to support shared stewardship.

Monitoring WG – The WG is developing recommendations to address the need for structural changes to ensure that monitoring is a priority within the agency; how third-party monitoring and partnering with the scientific community can build capacity and trust within communities; and the importance of broad scale monitoring. The DFO requested that the WG develop strong recommendations on how the agency can best leverage third-party monitoring.

Youth Engagement WG – The WG is developing recommendations on the importance of intentional youth engagement and the need to shift from ‘nice to do’ to mission critical within the agency. The WG will provide examples of on-going successful engagement strategies at the forest and regional levels. The DFO requested that the WG tie recommendations to land management plan revisions, identify if the rule or directives are inadequate in addressing youth engagement, and look at how to best connect on-going forest and regional-level programs to plan revision efforts, e.g. how to leverage existing partnerships and relationships.

Expert Panel - Exploring Approaches to Effective Public and Partnership Engagement

The Committee invited several stakeholders and Forest Service staff, currently engaged in plan revisions and shared stewardship in California, to the meeting to share information on the work that they are doing, including innovations and key challenges.

Nick Goulette, Executive Director, Watershed Research & Training Center, discussed opportunities to advance fire management through adaptive management and shared stewardship. The revision process presents the opportunity to engage and inform stakeholders and to address the mismatch between forest health needs and the agency’s current emphasis on fire suppression. The science for fire use management is strong but public support is lacking. Collaborative Fire Planning within the revision process could be used to address the need for flexibility in fire management, e.g. letting some fires in wilderness areas burn. Fire Management Zones within forest plans could be used to identify areas for fire use and areas that require full suppression. In addition, it would be useful to have the ability to adjust these zones, when conditions change, without having to amend the plan. The agency needs to not only address the fire funding issue but also how we currently manage fire, i.e. suppressing every fire even when fires are small, do not threaten structures, and provide resource benefits. Nick posed the following questions for the Committee to consider: *How can the revision process be used to initiate Collaborative Fire Planning? How can we develop an adaptive management framework within forest plans to address fire management that allows Fire Management Zone boundaries to be revised based on changing conditions without having to do a plan amendment?*

Jim Oftedal, Director of the Central California Consortium, discussed the Consortium and Generation Green’s work to engage youth. The effort focuses on three key factors: 1) educating the public that our

¹ The concept of “shared stewardship” is intended to encompass multiple approaches for the Forest Service to share responsibility for national forest management with willing stakeholders.

public lands belong to everyone – acknowledging that for some, these may be the only lands they will ever ‘own’, 2) environmental education for K-8th grade students and leadership mentoring for 9-12th grade students, 3) helping young people find environmental jobs. Their work is successful because they partner with “trusted community contacts” throughout various communities to serve as liaisons. The biggest challenge they face is limited funding. Jim posed the following questions for the Committee to consider: *How and when do you engage youth and underserved communities? How do you continue engagement after the forest plan revision is complete? Do you know your community or just the people that come to your office? How do we as humans do a better job of cultural transformation (build understanding that our public lands belong to everyone and because of this, we should all have a voice in their management)?*

Mark Metcalfe, Regional Economist, USFS Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5), provided information on innovative partnerships between the Forest Service Region 5 Regional Office and local governments during recent plan revisions. To address data gaps, the agency worked with Chico State University and local governments on joint identification of community-level social/economic information and indicators during pre-assessment and assessment phase. The Forest Service also worked with Inyo County, via their Cooperating Agency Status, to collect survey information on forest benefits. This information was then used to develop spatial mapping of the economic and social benefits that the forest provides. These maps were used to develop alternatives around land use, land designations, and access. These efforts were extremely beneficial to the revision process. The efforts strengthened relationships and improved the forest plan. Mark believes that this process is replicable on other forests. Although, the on-going challenge for forests lies in the tension between the desire for strong collaboration/innovation and the tight timeline requirements. Mark posed the following questions for the Committee to consider: *How do we get more counties involved in the revision process? How do we foster this engagement before and after plan revision, i.e. make it a continuous relationship?*

Danna Stroud, Mt. Whitney Area Representative, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, provided background on the Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative’s role in the Inyo National Forest plan revision. In Inyo County, recreation is one of the main economic drivers for communities; many of the businesses are dependent on the revenue created by tourism and travel to the area. In preliminary alternatives for the draft plan, recreation was not heavily referenced. The Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative formed with the purpose of developing a collective recreation lens to address key issues in the plan. The group was successful because they created a neutral space for dialogue, went out into the communities to gather information, focused on desired conditions (rather than issues), and provided an intersection between local and national interests. The group developed a recreation strategy that was shared with the forest. The forest was very receptive to the input and as a result, the group believes the plan has a very robust recreation perspective. Danna posed the following questions for the Committee to consider: *Is there a role for state/county/local government to play in facilitating/informing the forest planning process? How can forest planning staff with ongoing limited resources support interested collaboratives?*

The panelists stressed the need to begin building relationships before revisions start. To effectively leverage partner capacity during the revision process, relationships need to already be in place. To get the public interested in plan revisions, the agency needs to make the process relevant to stakeholders, i.e. answer why forest plans are important, why stakeholders should engage, and what change may result from their participation. Multiple panelists shared their desire to see partnership and shared stewardship opportunities described in the plan (via plan content). One panelist suggested that using measurable objectives to identify partnership opportunities, may help partners fundraise for needed activities like trail

or facility improvements. One panelist stated that the agency cannot afford to deliver everything to everybody; there is a need to focus on partnerships and desired conditions and then prioritize needs.

Committee reflections included: the need to lead with relationships, vision, and desired conditions; the importance of partnering with local community leaders to serve as ambassadors; the need to start building relationships before the revision process starts; the benefits that result from forests' willingness to participate with and listen to collaborative groups; the importance of 'customer service' within the agency; the awareness that plans don't need to be perfect – instead invest time in relationships and develop an adaptable plan that can be amended as needed; the importance of building ownership in forest plans – the public can be our best allies; and the role that this Committee can play in sharing success stories and lessons learned. One member noted, the high cost of revision efforts are not lost if other forests and stakeholders learn from earlier revision forests' experiences.

Dan Totheroh, Inyo County Supervisor, joined the meeting on Wednesday, November 8 to discuss how Inyo County partnered with the forest on their plan revision. He reflected that, although the forest plan is important, the relationships with stakeholders and partners is more important to the overall future management of the forest. The relationships between local governments and the Inyo National Forest had been very adversarial in the past; the revision process offered the opportunity to strengthen these relationships which led to a better forest plan that has stakeholder support. Dan cautioned against emphasizing the need to increase efficiencies during the revision process; it can lead to ineffective and unsupported plans. In addition, forests need to be mindful of addressing both local and national needs. Forests should clearly explain to local communities that they are an important voice, but still just one voice. It is paramount that forests clearly define the decision space within revisions, including regulatory limitations. Oftentimes, local governments and communities do not understand what is flexible and negotiable within a plan, and what isn't (based on Federal regulations).

Working Group Report Outs

The working groups reported out on progress made during breakout sessions.

Adaptive Management WG –

The WG continued discussions around “Flexible Accountability” and will work on developing a list of conditions that forests should consider when determining whether to emphasize flexibility or regulatory certainty within plan components. The recommendations will also address planning for uncertainty, the need for plan components to meet the definitions within the rule, management approaches, other plan content, and the need for clear and concise language. The WG will use good examples of plan components to illustrate recommendations.

Monitoring WG –

Pete Nelson and Craig Thomas, Sierra Forest Legacy, gave a presentation on their recent collaborative work with Region 5 on ‘Monitoring of Species and Habitats in Sierra Nevada National Forests’. The group developed a report that provides recommendations from a panel of independent scientists concerning how the Forest Service should consider performing monitoring of plant and animal species and their habitats within the Sierra Nevada National Forests. The Monitoring WG discussed the potential of building off some of these recommendations. The WG will also use the draft white paper as a starting point to develop recommendations. The WG requested continued support from Jamie Barbour and Priya Shahani of the EMC Adaptive Management Staff. The DFO suggested that the WG learn more about the agency's national reporting requirements and reach out to Michelle Tamez on citizen-science monitoring.

The DFO also requested that the WG link the need for national consistency to broad scale monitoring efforts and emphasize how monitoring can provide a bridge between plan components and public trust.

Shared Stewardship WG –

The WG made great progress during the breakout session and will continue to work on draft recommendations to address policy barriers, fiscal capability, using existing authorities, the cohesive strategy, wildlife objectives, recreation, youth engagement, tribal shared stewardship – including sacred sites and traditional property, monitoring, enabling conditions and readiness, and the use of other plan content.

Youth Engagement WG –

The WG will develop recommendations around why engaging youth is important to planning, the benefits to hiring youth, the need to address the divide between communities, and the importance of funding youth programs – including how to increase training for employees who are already in place but do not have the expertise needed to engage youth. The DFO requested that the WG explore ways that forest plans could serve as conduits for youth engagement, e.g. developing educational plan components (desired conditions, goals and objectives) for conversation education and employee training.

Committee Business

Next Meeting – The Committee will hold its last meeting in Washington, DC on January 30 – February 1, 2018. The meeting objectives are to: discuss, finalize, and submit consensus recommendations to the agency, dialogue with the Chief, and celebrate success.

Path Forward – The DFO requested that the Committee develop recommendations for continued collaborative dialogue around forest planning. There are several examples of non-FACA collaboratives that effectively work with the agency including DOI's recreation collaborative and the CFLR coalition. The mission of the collaborative will be to assist with implementation of the 2012 Rule.

Working Groups – The Committee established a new Path Forward WG to address the Chief's request to develop recommendations for continued collaborative dialogue around forest planning. The Committee also reinitiated the Objections and Wildlife/SCC WGs to continue dialogue on draft recommendations that were initiated during the last Committee charter. These WGs will be added to the current WGs: Monitoring, Adaptive Management, Shared Stewardship, and Youth Engagement. Committee members are welcome to join any/all of the WGs.

Process/Timeline for Finalizing Recommendations – The Committee will develop final draft recommendations for the January meeting. The group discussed setting deadlines for several steps of the process. The steps in the process will include: WG level review of WG recommendations, Committee level review of WG recommendations and Committee level review of draft Integrated Recommendations. The facilitation team will schedule WG and full-Committee calls as needed. *(The final timeline will be communicated with the Committee after the meeting).*

Format for Final (Integrated) Recommendations – The group proposed a format for the final recommendations.

- Part 1: Letter to the Secretary and Chief, written by Committee co-chairs. The letter will summarize key aspects of the Committee's recommendations and connect these to the Secretary and Chief's priorities. It will also emphasize that the recommendations pertain to all forest management, beyond

planning and articulate what successful implementation of the recommendations would look like to the Committee (including on-going evaluation of the rule and the ‘path forward’ recommendation).

- Part 2: Recommendations. Organized by WG – Shared Stewardship, Youth Engagement, Adaptive Management, Monitoring, Path Forward, Objections, Wildlife/SCCs. The recommendations will follow the format: 1) Opportunity Statement – why this issue is important and Committee’s observations from the field; 2) Recommendations; 3) Examples – either plan components or successful programs/approaches; 4) On-going Implementation – if appropriate, how the Committee would like the agency to implement the recommendation and how the agency can continue to dialogue with the public on implementation/lesson learned.

Memo to the Chief – The co-chairs will draft a November 2017 memo to the Chief. Key points to include in the memo are: an appreciation of the Chief’s support and commitment to the rule, gratitude for the agency’s support of the Committee (access to leadership, implementation of the Committee’s recommendations, staff support) which facilitated the Committee’s success, a high level summary of the recommendations that the WGs are drafting and how they relate to the Chief’s priorities, a request for continued dialogue with the agency about implementation of the rule, and an acknowledgement of Region 5’s positive work with stakeholders during the revision process (a success story to share with other regions).