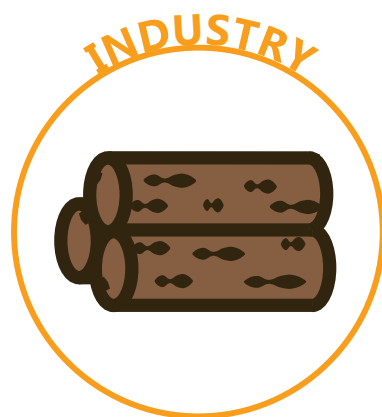




# Public Participation Strategy

## For the Forest Plan Revision Process at the Wayne National Forest

August 2020 Edition



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Forest Plan Revision Team  
Wayne National Forest

## **Note:**

This is a living document. It will be regularly updated through the forest plan revision process. Any future dates and plans are tentative and subject to change. Contact the forest plan revision team for any questions or to check if this is the most up-to-date edition available.

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# Introduction

The Wayne National Forest is currently revising its 2006 Land Management Plan (2006 Wayne Forest Plan). Each national forest and grassland in the United States is governed by a land management plan (forest plan) in accordance with the National Forest Management Act. Forest plans set desired conditions, standards, and guidelines for management, protection, and use of the national forest. Monitoring tracks relevant conditions over time, measuring management effectiveness, and evaluating effects of management practices.

Much has changed since the 2006 Wayne Forest Plan was signed. There have been changes in ecological, social, and economic conditions in the area, as well as changes in resource demands, availability of new scientific information, and promulgation of new policy, including the 2012 planning rule.

In 2012, the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) released a new National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule (2012 planning rule). The 2012 planning rule emphasizes public participation during each phase of the forest plan revision process. In order to better understand the needs of the public and the benefits that national forests provide, the 2012 planning rule emphasizes engagement with a diverse set of stakeholders, including: local, regional, and national audiences; private land owners in the plan area; Federal, state, and local governments; federally recognized Tribes; and those who may not have participated in a forest plan revision process before, such as youth, low income, and minority populations within the study area.

A forest plan is a collaboratively developed and science-based framework for integrated resource management and guiding project and activity decision-making. It does not authorize projects or activities, commit the Forest Service to take action, or regulate uses by the public.

Forest plans include the following components:

- **Desired conditions** – A description of specific social, economic, and/or ecological characteristics of the plan area, or a portion of the plan area, that are described in terms specific enough to allow progress toward their achievement. Desired conditions are what drive the plan. All management activities should be aimed at the achievement of the desired condition for those resources in the area where the project is located. Desired conditions can be thought of as goals that in part help define a collective vision for the national forest in the future.
- **Objectives** – An objective is a concise, measureable, and time-specific statement of a desired rate of progress toward a desired condition or conditions and should be based on reasonably foreseeable budgets. Objectives, along with the strategies used to accomplish them, can be thought of as the tools that will be used to reach the desired conditions. Objectives are mileposts along the road toward desired conditions.
- **Standards** – These can be thought of as the rules the national forest will operate within as it develops projects to accomplish objectives and move closer to the realization of desired conditions. These are mandatory constraints on project and activity decision-making.

- **Guidelines** – Describe a constraint on project and activity decision-making that allows for departure from its terms, so long as the intent of the guideline is met. In other words, guidelines are mandatory unless they are replaced by something that is equal to or better than the existing guideline.
- **Suitability of lands** – Specific lands within a plan area identified as suitable for various multiple uses or activities based on the desired conditions applicable to those lands. The forest plan also identifies lands within the plan area as not suitable for uses that are not compatible with desired conditions for those lands. Every forest plan must identify those lands that are not suitable for timber production (required by the National Forest Management Act).
- **Management areas or geographic areas** – These areas are where special plan components are developed, in addition to the national-forest-wide plan components, to guide specific management needs.

Additionally, the forest plan revision process involves the discussion and identification of the **distinctive roles and contributions** of the national forest. That is, what is truly unique and distinctive within the national forest compared to the surrounding landscape?

The Wayne National Forest seeks to continue working with partners and neighbors toward improving forest health and resiliency, supporting jobs, and providing multiple uses and ecosystem services. For the most up-to-date information on the forest plan revision process on the Wayne National Forest, including public participation opportunities, visit [our planning web page](#).

## Purpose and Document Layout

The purpose of this *Public Participation Strategy* is to:

- Provide clear, consistent, and easily implementable guidance for the Wayne National Forest to involve the interested public, interested federally recognized Tribes, public agencies, and elected officials in the forest plan revision process.
- Identify specific activities and communication tools that Forest Service staff will use to provide information, solicit input, engage in dialogue to understand issues and consider solutions that balance a variety of needs, and respond to input on national forest planning from the public, Tribes, and agencies.
- Identify opportunities to build and maintain working relationships, trust, capacity, and commitment to the forest plan revision process and the resulting plan.
- Identify opportunities for shared learning and understanding between and among the Forest Service and public participants.
- Encourage public participation and feedback in the planning process.

This Public Participation Strategy will be reviewed and revised as needed.

# Public Participation and Collaboration

The goal of the Wayne National Forest's plan revision process is to develop a forest plan that is responsive to those who are affected by or have an interest in the management of the national forests, consistent with legal mandates. The 2012 planning rule requires the Wayne National Forest to provide meaningful opportunities for public participation throughout the forest plan revision process (36 CFR § 219.4). The 2012 planning rule defines a collaborative process as a structured manner in which a collection of people with diverse interest share knowledge, ideas, and resources while working together in an inclusive and cooperative manner towards a common purpose (36 CFR § 219.19).

As part of a collaborative process, the Wayne National Forest will engage people who participate in the forest plan revision process through a spectrum of public participation methods. As the responsible official, the forest supervisor will determine which methods are the most appropriate depending on the phase of planning, work product being developed, budget, and staff capacity. Public participation methods identified in the 2012 planning rule include informing, consulting, involving, and collaborating, as described here:

- **Informing** – The national forest will provide participants and the general public with balanced and objective information, and assist them in understanding work products prepared as part of the planning process.
- **Consulting** – The national forest will obtain participant feedback on draft work products at various points in the planning process.
- **Involving** – The national forest will work directly with participants to ensure their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered in the development of work products.
- **Collaborating** – The national forest will work directly with participants in preparing to make decisions at various points within the planning process. The national forest will create opportunities for dialogue to explore different perspectives, balance a variety of needs, and identify areas of common ground that can inform the planning process.

In addition to public participation, the national forest will also engage on-unit staff and meet additional consultation requirements such as government-to-government Tribal consultation, cooperating agency agreements, and the formal public input process under the National Environmental Policy Act. The national forest will integrate concerns and recommendations from all of these channels into the forest plan revision process.

## Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide how the engagement will occur during the forest plan revision process. The public engagement will be:

- **Transparent and inclusive** to increase the integrity of the revision process and decision.

- **Implementable and affordable** using existing Forest Service personnel to develop and implement the majority of the strategy and contracting expertise when needed/desired. The strategy will also take into account capacity for engagement of each party and contributions will be adapted as needed to respond to this capacity.
- **Adaptable over time** and dynamic in nature to respond to emerging needs, opportunities, and concerns.
- **Context driven** for different communities, geographic areas, and topic areas to ensure the needs of different communities within and surrounding the Wayne National Forest are met.
- **Consistent** in providing engagement opportunities early and throughout the planning process.
- **Accessible** to meet diverse skill sets and interest/time to engage. The strategy will consider possible limitations to participation and provide a range of options for public engagement to ensure wide public access to the planning process.
- **Solution oriented** to ensure creative and constructive dialogue, debate, and deliberation. Public engagement opportunities will facilitate problem solving and work to identify creative solutions.
- **Relationship building** to enhance the longevity of the forest plan by increasing buy-in and ownership of plan elements by the national forest and stakeholders during the revision process.

## National Environmental Policy Act

Forest plan revision will include completion of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental review process. The NEPA review part of the process occurs during the plan development phase, but the forest supervisor has discretion as to when to officially enter the NEPA process. The NEPA process provides a rigid set of milestones and comment periods, and the Wayne National Forest will meet those requirements. Individuals will have the opportunity to participate in the formal scoping, comment period, and objection process during the NEPA process. The forest supervisor issues the final decision on the forest plan.

Participating in the earlier stages of the process does not limit anyone's activity during the NEPA process. Individuals who contribute during the assessment and early plan development phases can participate in the NEPA process, including submitting formal comments or participating in the objection process.

## Decision Making

Members of the public and Tribes will provide input to the national forest regarding their concerns and recommendations. Where possible, the national forest will encourage people to provide suggestions that balance the various interests involved in the Forest Service's mission – "To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet

the needs of present and future generations.” **The forest supervisor is the responsible official who will make the final decision regarding what is included in the revised forest plan.**

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The **forest supervisor** will oversee the planning process for the national forest and is responsible for developing and making the final decision on a revised forest plan and environmental impact statement in accordance with the 2012 planning rule. The forest supervisor will provide national forest, regional, and national perspective on issues and policies affecting the national forest.

The **forest plan revision team lead** (team lead) will manage, organize, and serve as the primary point of contact for the revision process. The team lead will provide national-forest-level coordination and communication with the forest supervisor, Wayne National Forest staff, Regional Office, and participants in the forest plan revision process.

The **forest plan revision interdisciplinary team** (revision team) is comprised of a core team that is dedicated to the forest plan revision effort and will provide planning, public outreach and collaboration, writer-editor, and ecological expertise. In addition the revision team includes an extended team comprised of on-unit specialists that provide expertise in their resource areas.

The **forest leadership team** (FLT):

- **Forest public affairs officer** (PAO) will work with the forest plan revision core team to provide information and opportunities to contribute during the planning process to the public. The public affairs officer serves as the primary point of contact for the media, and prepares corresponding communication materials. The core team will work with the public affairs officer to ensure that forest plan revision meetings are publically noticed.
- **District rangers** will act as liaisons to forest communities and constituents on forest plan revision issues.
- **Staff officers** will ensure supervision of employees in support of timely completion of work and forest plan revision, as well as provide guidance and support on subjects and topics relevant to their expertise, experience, and supervisory role.

The **national forest Tribal liaison** ensures that Tribes are aware of the planning process and opportunities for consultation and input.

**Regional planning specialists** including the regional planning director and regional planner act as liaisons between the Eastern Regional Office and the core team and forest leadership team at the Wayne National Forest level. This includes participation, as needed, in weekly core team meetings, facilitating discussions and requests between the Wayne National Forest and the Eastern Regional Office, and providing broader direction on planning priorities from the region and the National Headquarters.

**Members of the public, public agencies, and elected officials** participate in the public planning meetings, provide input and recommendations to the national forest, and engage in dialogue as



appropriate so that all parties can work together to understand issues and consider solutions that balance a variety of needs.

**Coordinating public agencies** help to identify parallel planning initiatives and potential opportunities for coordinating efforts, as well as areas where plans or policies may differ. These can include State, Federal, and Tribal entities.

## **Engagement throughout the Forest Plan Revision Process**

The forest plan revision process is broken into three distinct phases: assessment, plan development, and implementation and monitoring. Each phase involves different strategies for public, governmental, and internal engagement and collaboration. This section gives an overview of the types of engagement conducted or expected during each phase of the plan revision process and is subject to evolve as the process moves forward.

At a minimum, according to the 2012 planning rule, public participation is required:

- During the assessment process;
- When developing a forest plan proposal;
- On a draft forest plan proposal and accompanying NEPA documents;
- At the beginning of the objection period for a plan revision;
- To approve a final forest plan; and
- When reviewing the results of monitoring information.

### **Assessment Phase**

The intent of public participation in the assessment phase is to provide the opportunity for the public to share its knowledge of existing forest conditions with the Wayne National Forest and to identify concerns about trends and perceptions of risks to social, economic, and ecological systems. The assessment phase is intended to provide opportunities for public and governmental entities to participate commensurate with their interest and to support the development of relationships with and among members of the public that can form the basis of ongoing participation and engagement throughout the revision process. This phase also provides the opportunity to inform Wayne National Forest staff about the revision process and solicit initial input on changed conditions, trends, and perceptions. The following sections provide information on the types of completed engagement with the public as well as federal, state, and local governments and agencies during the assessment phase. Table 1 in Appendix A details specific dates or timeframes and expected audiences or participants for each engagement opportunity provided during the assessment phase.

## Public Engagement

Public participation and engagement during the assessment phase has included or will include all of the following activities and components.

- **Kick-off Meetings** – A round of six in-person meetings and two virtual engagement sessions held in conjunction with the publishing of the Notice of Intent to Initiate Assessment. The forest supervisor led this series of public meetings with support from the forest plan revision core team and forest leadership team. The intent of the meetings was to broadly describe the process of forest plan revision, the reasons for entering into this process, the laws and regulations guiding the process, and the expectations for the national forest and the public during the revision.
- **Monthly Update Calls** – Starting in July 2018, the core team began holding monthly update calls on the first Wednesday of each month at both 12PM and 7PM. These two identical calls are intended to provide an update to the public on the work accomplished and anticipated by the core team over the past month. Participants are muted during the update portion of the calls to cut down on interference and background noise, but the calls are opened up at the end for clarifying questions and comments from participants.
- **Working Group Orientations** – In order to solicit and channel discussions and input, the core team, with the support of the forest supervisor, developed a series of working groups meant to help members of the public come together to provide this information. The intent of these groups was not to provide recommendations to the core team, but rather to help people come together and gather relevant data and information to be used in the assessment phase. To kick-off these groups, the core team held a series of public orientation sessions in September and October 2018 on seven topics: biodiversity & forest health; air quality, water quality, and water supply; renewable energy; outdoor recreation; and community-focused groups for the areas surround the three units: Athens, Ironton, and Marietta. The core team also provided the option for members of the public to create their own working group if they felt like a topic was missing or not sufficiently covered in the other groups—this led to the creation of the working group on ecological forest management, climate protection, and sustainable economies.
- **Wilderness Inventory** – During the assessment phase, the Forest Service asked for public feedback on the process used for the draft wilderness inventory through explanations of the process on the monthly public update calls, orientation sessions on this topic in October 2018 in conjunction with working group orientations, and release of this process information of our planning website. The results of this inventory were included as a supplemental report to the draft Assessment and open to public review and feedback.
- **Working Group Meetings** – After the orientation sessions, some working groups met and worked independently of the Forest Service. This followed with the intent that the groups, though they were a way to elicit more public involvement, run relatively autonomously. However, some groups requested assistance from the core team in helping to reframe and review the expectations for the working groups during the assessment phase and to discuss information submitted to the Forest Service.

- **Meetings with NGOs and Other Organizations** – Some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and groups have reached out to the core team and requested informational meetings about the forest plan revision process. When possible, the core team has and will continue to meet with these groups and provide them with information about the process, including how members of that group can best get involved. Some organizations which have already met with the core team include a high school class with the Hathaway Brown School and a class with Ohio University.
- **Outreach at Events** – In addition to the outreach described above, the core team also participated in outreach at larger events, expositions, and academic conferences around the state of Ohio. This allowed for outreach to a broader audience that did not or could not attend the meetings we hosted. These events allowed the team to inform more people about the forest plan revision process and how to get more involved.
- **Public Engagement after Draft Assessment Release** – After the Draft Assessment and accompanying draft supplemental reports were released, a 45-day public review period commenced. The review period was extended by two weeks based on public requests (60-days total). Members of the public were encouraged to review the documents and provide feedback. In order to provide opportunities for clarification or to ask questions of the team, the following engagements were planned.
  - ◆ **Wayne National Forest Open Houses** – The Wayne National Forest open houses were intended to be broad in nature and encompass all staff areas of the Wayne National Forest, including forest plan revision. They were an opportunity to share our recent successes, allow staff to meet with interested members of the public, and give the public an opportunity to meet with the new forest supervisor. Because they were held during the 45-day review period for the draft assessment documents, members of the public were also welcome to ask questions of the forest plan revision team, provide feedback on the assessment documents, and get a better sense of how the forest plan revision effort fits into the overall makeup and structure of the national forest. The Wayne National Forest held three open houses, one in each unit, with a total of over 100 attendees across all of the events. Event participants heard from and met with the forest supervisor spoke with staff, looked at posters compiled to highlight staff area successes in recreation, operations, natural resources, fire, and forest plan revision. There were also posters representing the Wayne National Forest as a whole and the Ohio Interagency Forestry Team.
  - ◆ **Virtual Working Group Meetings** – The core team set up two opportunities to meet with working group members from across all seven working groups using WebEx and a conference call line on Wednesday, February 12, from 7-8:30PM and Friday, March 6, from 12-1:30PM. These meetings were intended to review some important background information regarding the forest plan revision process, discuss key findings from the assessment and provide examples, and lay out expectations for the working groups moving into the plan development phase. While these meetings were focused on the working group members and their contributions, they were advertised on our webpage and during our public update calls and anyone was welcome to attend. Attendance was light with five people attending the first call and one person attending the second call,

but the collaboration specialist, forest plan revision team lead, and forest supervisor discussed all of the topics mentioned above, and, with other members of the core team, answered participant questions.

## **Tribal, Federal, State, and Local Government and Agency Engagement**

Tribal, Federal, State, and local Government and Agency participation and engagement during the assessment phase has included or will include all of the following activities and components.

- **County Commissioner Meetings** – During the assessment phase, the collaboration specialist and team lead spoke at county commissioner meetings across the 12 counties with Wayne National Forest land. They described the forest plan revision process, anticipated timelines, and opportunities for engagement throughout the process.
- **Interagency Forestry Team** – Members of the forest plan revision team are engaged with the Interagency Forestry Team to connect with forest management agencies across southeast Ohio. This team involves agencies with a mission of forest management in a 17-county area in southeast Ohio and includes membership by Ohio Department of Natural Resources Divisions of Forestry and Wildlife, Ohio State University Extension, Central State University Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Forest Service State & Private Forestry, Forest Service Northern Research Station, and the Wayne National Forest. This involvement will continue throughout the forest plan revision process.
- **National Park Service** – Early in the assessment phase the core team, members of the forest leadership team, and the forest supervisor met with representatives from the National Park Service, North Country Trail Association, and the Buckeye Trail Association to discuss the North Country National Scenic Trail route through the Wayne National Forest. This was followed by a day in the field to discuss the trail and how it can be incorporated into a revised forest plan. More engagement is expected in the plan development phase.
- **Tribal Engagement** – During the assessment phase, the core team and Wayne National Forest leadership team worked to engage Tribes through a series of letters, webinars, and phone conversations. There are over 40 federally recognized Tribes with ties to this area, and the core team worked with our Tribal liaisons at the unit and regional level to determine the scope and scale of this engagement effort. The first step in this engagement was a webinar in the late winter of 2018. This was intended to lay out the forest plan revision process and possible points of Tribal engagement outside the scope of the formal government-to-government consultation process. The second of these engagements was during the spring of 2019 when a similar webinar was planned, and members from five interested Tribes attended the call. After this call, the Delaware Tribe indicated their interest in further involvement in this process through Cooperating Agency Status. A memorandum of understanding recognizing this status was finalized in December 2019, and a Delaware Tribe representative is now working on the core team for the duration of this process to bring Tribal perspective and knowledge to the planning process. Moving forward, the core team will continue to work with the Delaware Tribe in this manner and engage other Tribes as appropriate and desired.

## Plan Development Phase

Public participation opportunities are provided during the plan development phase to identify public interests and concerns regarding the plan area, develop zones of agreement relevant to plan components, include the public in designing effective plan components, and solicit engagement in concurrent efforts such as species of conservation concern and suitability of lands.

The Forest Service Handbook lays out guidelines for general areas of public participation during the plan development phase.

- **Identifying the need to change** – The “need to change” document is intended to help focus the planning effort. While the responsible official is required to identify a preliminary need to change the plan to inform development of plan components and other content at the beginning of the planning phase, public feedback on this document will help ensure that the focus of the planning effort reflects public concerns and community needs.
- **Developing potential plan components and other plan content** – Public input in the development of plan components and other content will be tailored to the needs and capacity of the public and the Wayne National Forest.
- **Ensuring the use of best available scientific information** – Public feedback regarding the accuracy, reliability, and relevance of scientific information helps ensure the use and documentation of best available scientific information.
- **Providing an opportunity to comment on proposed plan and accompanying NEPA analysis documents** – Public notification and use of notice and comment procedures is required (36 CFR 219.16). Public engagement opportunities early in the 90-day comment period will be provided so members of the public may be well informed about the proposed plan and provide meaningful comments.

## Public Engagement

Public participation and engagement during the plan development phase can include all of the following activities and components. These are subject to change based on needs and capacity of the public and the Wayne National Forest during the plan development phase. Table 2 in Appendix A details specific dates or timeframes and expected audiences or participants for each engagement opportunity provided during the plan development phase.

- **Need to Change Engagement** – Using comments from the assessment engagement described above, the Forest Service will develop a preliminary need to change document that will be released after the final assessment release. This document will be used to inform the development of the proposed revised plan. There will be a review period to gather public input and feedback following the release of this document, and inputs into this document will be continually updated throughout the plan development phase.
- **Wilderness Evaluation** – Based on the information developed and obtained during the wilderness inventory completed in the assessment phase, the Forest Service developed a process to be used in the wilderness evaluation that was released for public review on July

17, 2020. The review period for the proposed evaluation process runs until August 31. Members of the public will also be able to provide feedback on the wilderness evaluation and provide information on the specific character or features of parcels under consideration. Field trips to parcels under consideration may be organized during the plan development phase with those that submit feedback.

- **Species of Conservation Concern** – The regional forester is the responsible official for identifying any species of conservation concern in a plan area. Identifying the species of conservation concern usually occurs during the planning phase, but may occur at any time. The potential plant species of conservation concern were released with the draft Assessment. The potential wildlife species of conservation concern were released with the final Assessment. As the potential species of conservation concern are made publically available, the core team will solicit public input. Opportunities to provide input on the potential species of conservation concern will continue throughout the plan development phase, to include NEPA official comment periods.
- **Listening Sessions** – Tentatively planned as online engagements with the possibility of in-person as health and safety guidelines permit, these listening sessions will engage diverse groups of audiences, geographic units, and small groups in conversations about visions for the future of the national forest and the role the national forest holds ecologically, socially, and economically in the local area, state, and nationally. These are intended to start conversations and help the revision team identify emerging themes related to important aspects of plan development. The forest plan revision team will lead these sessions using guided questions developed from information shared with the team over the past two years related to plan components.
- **Mapped Driving Routes & Field Trips** – The forest plan revision team is working to put together a map of key locations around the national forest with a description of why they are relevant in moving towards distinctive roles and contributions or desired conditions for each unit. These will be posted on our website for download and allow people to visit these locations to learn more in their own time. In addition, the forest is planning a day where Forest Service employees or partners will be available at different locations to provide additional information, answer questions, and engage with the public.
- **Fall School Engagement** – In order to engage young people in the forest plan revision process, the Forest Service Handbook recommends outreach to local teachers, educators, and community leaders. By partnering with local non-profit organizations such as Rural Action, the forest plan revision team is planning on engaging with educators through the Appalachian Green Teachers Conference in the fall of 2020. Additionally, the team is planning a poster contest geared towards elementary-aged students to get them thinking about what the national forest means to them and what they want to see in the national forest in the future.

Further opportunities for engagement through comment periods and public update calls will be available throughout the plan development phase including the NEPA process. We will update this document and provide further information as these opportunities develop.

## Federal, State, and Local Government and Agency Engagement

- **County Commissioners** – Where applicable, the forest plan revision team has been reading through existing county plans of the 12 counties with Wayne National Forest ownership. During the plan development phase, the Forest Service will use this information to inform potential distinctive roles and contributions of the Wayne National Forest and keep interested county commissioners informed through discussions of how forest planning and county planning efforts can work together. More details on the specifics of these engagements are forthcoming.
- **Congressional Briefings** – Periodic updates will be made to local Congressional members and their staffs.
- **Tribal Consultation and Continued Involvement** – The Wayne National Forest will continue to work with the Delaware Tribe under the memorandum of understanding established in December 2019 granting them Cooperating Agency Status. The core team will also continue to work with the forest supervisor and Tribal liaison to inform all Tribes that work with the Wayne National Forest how they can be involved as we move through important phases in this process and engage in formal government-to-government consultation as required. In addition to informing and consulting, the Wayne National Forest will set up a listening session with relevant tribes on traditional ecological knowledge and how to incorporate that information into the revised forest plan.
- **Interagency Forestry Team** – As stated above, forest plan revision core team involvement with this team will continue throughout the plan revision process. During the plan development phase, the core team will work with members of the Interagency Forestry Team to discuss distinctive roles & contributions of the national forest, desired conditions, and other plan components. Through this team, the core team will also continue to work with members of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in various agencies to find alignment in goals and priorities across the forested landscape of Southeast Ohio.

## NEPA Phase

This section describes the anticipated engagement during the NEPA phase of forest plan revision. In preparing the revised forest plan, the Forest Service is required to conduct environmental effects analysis consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act. The forest supervisor, as the responsible official, has discretion as to when to begin NEPA during the plan development phase. The Wayne National Forest is electing to work with the public and our partners to build a draft plan before entering the NEPA phase to expand opportunities for engagement and involvement. The public will be provided an opportunity to comment on a proposed plan and accompanying NEPA analysis documents. The NEPA process includes the following components, each with opportunity for public involvement:

- **Scoping** – Scoping is an early and open process for public engagement within the NEPA process. The Wayne National Forest will use the preliminary need to change and proposed plan developed with public and partner engagement to solicit public feedback. NEPA scoping will begin with publication of a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement in the Federal Register. This action will allow the public

time and opportunity to comment on these documents before the preparation of the environmental impact statement.

- **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** – The Forest Service will prepare a draft EIS that describes the affected environment and estimates the effects of each alternative on planning area resources. The draft EIS will be published. Formal notice of availability will be published in the Federal Register and in the newspaper of record, initiating a 90-day public comment period. The forest plan revision team will ensure that opportunities for public engagement occur during the 90-day comment period so that members of the public are well informed about the draft forest plan and provide meaningful comments. This will include in-person and virtual public meetings, working with established community groups and local governments to convey information about the draft findings, and providing resources on our webpage such as frequently asked questions and reader guides.
- **Draft Decision/Proposed Forest Plan** – Following the comment period, the Forest Service will review and respond to the public comments received. Public input will be used to refine the forest plan and prepare a final EIS. The final proposed forest plan, final EIS, and a draft record of decision will be published, and formal notice of their availability will be posted in the Federal Register and in the newspaper of record.
- **Objection Period** – The objection procedures are a pre-decisional review process that provides an additional opportunity for the public to express their concerns to the Forest Service prior to a final decision by the responsible official. Publication of the legal notice for the draft record of decision initiates a 60-day objection filing period. Only those who have submitted substantive formal comments<sup>1</sup> during opportunities for public comment are eligible to object. Objections must demonstrate a link between the objector’s prior substantive formal comments and the content of the objection. Eligible objections will be reviewed by the objection reviewing officer (the regional forester) over a 90 day period. Objectors and interested persons will be invited to participate in resolution meetings. At the conclusion of the objection period, the reviewing officer will issue a response to objections and may issue instructions to the responsible official.
- **Final Plan Approval/Record of Decision** – The final forest plan approval and record of decision may be issued as soon as the reviewing officer’s response is issued and any instructions are addressed. Formal notice of the final forest plan will be posted in the Federal Register.

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<sup>1</sup> Substantive formal comment is defined as “written comments submitted to, or oral comments recorded by, the Responsible Official or their designee during an opportunity for public participation provided during the Planning process, and attributed to the individual or entity providing them. Comments are considered substantive when they are within the scope of the proposal, are specific to the proposal, have a direct relationship to the proposal, and include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider.” (36 CFR 219)



## Implementation and Monitoring Phase

This section describes the anticipated engagement during the development of the monitoring program. This engagement is required as part of the plan revision process and is intended to:

- Obtain public input on potential questions and indicators that will comprise the monitoring program.
- Develop a shared sense of ownership and support for the monitoring program.
- Provide opportunities to design and carry out multi-party monitoring.
- Learn of other monitoring information available, and
- Improve the plan monitoring program.

This section will be updated as more information is available.

## Engaging a Wide Range of Members of the Public

Direction in the Forest Service Handbook indicates that public participation strategies should provide opportunities for young people and others who have not traditionally been engaged in forest management in order to broaden the impact of the strategy.

The Wayne National Forest is using and will continue to develop a wide variety of tactics for engaging audiences such as youth, low-income populations, and minorities in the forest plan revision process. We are reaching out to local non-profit organizations, community leaders, and partners to assist in this effort.

Our goal is that all of our engagement opportunities are tailored to a wide variety of audiences including those mentioned above, but we recognize that there can be barriers to involvement for those that have not been involved in the forest planning process before, those that may not have access to transportation, or those without internet capability to join engagement efforts. As we work with community organizations, leaders, and partners, we hope to be able to overcome some of these barriers by meeting people where they are, limiting the time it takes for people to meaningfully engage in the process, and providing enough variety in engagement types and opportunities for those that wish to be involved to find what works for them.

Discussions so far involve outreach to community schools to engage with youth on their connections to the national forest and broader outdoors, and a focus on connecting the national forest to basic life necessities such as drinking water, fresh air, job opportunities, food, wood products, cultural and religious practices, and healthful lifestyles.

These efforts are ongoing and we will update this document as more information on specific tactics and plans are solidified.

## Public Engagement Principles for All Parties

These principles are meant as guidelines to help ensure the public engagement process is robust, fair, and meaningful to all participants. These guidelines are flexible and can be adapted over time as needs, participants, and topics shift, but the overall goal of an open and inclusive process remains. The principles include:

- 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 experiences.
- 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 to participate.
- Create a safe, welcome atmosphere that empowers everyone.

## Expectations for the Forest Service

In addition to principles that guide the collaborative process, the Forest Service is committed to upholding expectations for action throughout the forest plan revision process. These are not exhaustive, but get to the desire of the Forest Service to ensure this process is meaningful for all involved—including laying out where there is room for discussion and where topics are beyond the scope of forest plan revision. These expectations include:

- Rely on, value, and incorporate local knowledge; recognize the importance of the national 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.
- Define the “decision space” and the scope of influence stakeholders might have for elements of the revision.

- Clarify limitations 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.
- Use diverse ways of reaching stakeholders; include face-to-face local meetings, online formats, and local publications.
- Provide timely feedback.

## Public Participation Process Agreements

This section describes the principles and best practices that the Wayne National Forest will use in the forest plan revision process:

- All public planning meetings are open to the public.
- All public planning meeting materials will be made available to the public on the Wayne National Forest website.
- Participating in public planning meetings does not limit anyone's activity during the NEPA process. Individuals who contribute during collaborative planning workshops can participate in the NEPA process, including submitting formal comments or challenging decisions.
- The Wayne National Forest will provide hard copies of draft documents to individuals who reach out to the team through phone or email to request these documents.
- The Wayne National Forest seeks information from individuals, and may ask an individual whether they agree with a recommendation. However, given federal restrictions on the use of formal advisory bodies, the Forest Service will not ask a group as a whole whether consensus exists.

# Appendix A: Summary of Planned and Completed Public Engagement Opportunities throughout the Forest Plan Revision Process

**Table 1: Wayne National Forest Assessment Phase Public Engagement**

Target Date*	Activity/Action	Participants	Responsible Party	Date Accomplished
Ongoing	Webinar for interested Tribes	Tribal representatives	Forest Supervisor, Tribal Liaison, Collaboration Specialist	February 2018, May 2019, Ongoing
Ongoing	County Commissioner Outreach	County Commissioners	Team Lead, Collaboration Specialist	May/June 2019, Ongoing
Ongoing	Status updates	Congressional Members and their staff	Public Affairs Officer in coordination with Core Team	Ongoing
Ongoing	Monthly update calls	All	Core Team	Ongoing – first Wednesday of each month
March-April 2018	Public Roll-out Meetings	All	Forest Supervisor, Core Team	March-April 2018
July 2018	North Country Trail Organization Meeting	NPS, Buckeye Trail Association, North Country Trail Association	Forest Supervisor, District Ranger, Core Team	July 2018
August 2018	North Country Trail Field Meeting	NPS, Buckeye Trail Association, North Country Trail Association	Forest Supervisor, District Ranger, Core Team	August 2018
September-October 2018	Working Group Orientation Meetings	All	Core Team	September-October 2018
October 2018	Wildlife Society Conference	Academics and public land managers	Core Team	October 2018
October 2018	Biodiversity Working Group Follow-Up Meeting	Biodiversity Working Group, All	Core Team	October 2018
November 2018	Outdoor Recreation Working Group Follow-Up Meeting	Outdoor Recreation Working Group, All	Core Team	November 2018
December 2018	Field Meeting with Hathaway Brown Sustainability Class	High school students from Hathaway Brown	Core Team	December 2018
February 2019	Organization Meeting with National Association of Royalty Owners (NARO)	NARO	Core Team	February 2019
February 2019	Working Group Update Webinars	Working Group Members, All	Core Team	February 2019

Target Date*	Activity/Action	Participants	Responsible Party	Date Accomplished
March 2019	Marietta College Guest Lecture	College students, All	Core Team	March 2019
March 2019	Outdoor Field and Stream Expo	All	Core Team	March 2019
March 2019	OU Conservation Biology Lecture	College Students	Core Team	March 2019
April 2019	Field Meeting with University of Cincinnati Class	College students	Core Team, District Ranger	April 2019
May 2019	Tribal Engagement Webinar	Tribal Representatives	Core Team, Forest Supervisor	May 2019
May/June 2019	Meetings with County Commissioners	County Commissioners, All	Core Team	May/June 2020
January 2020	Lifelong Learning Institute Lecture	All	Core Team	January 2020
January – March 2020	45-Day Public Review Period for Draft Assessment	All	Core Team	March 2020
February 2020	Tree Talks Guest Appearance	Landowners, All	Core Team	February 2020
February/March 2020	Wayne National Forest Open Houses	All	Forest Supervisor, District Rangers, Staff, Core Team	February/March 2020
February/March 2020	Working Group Virtual Meetings re. Draft Assessment	Working Group Members, All	Forest Supervisor, Core Team	February/March 2020
March 2020	OU Conservation Biology Lecture	College Students	Core Team	March 2020

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

**Table 2. Wayne National Forest Plan Development Phase Public Engagement**

Target Date	Activity/Action	Participants	Responsible Party	Date Accomplished
Ongoing	County Commissioner Outreach	County Commissioners	Team Lead, Collaboration Specialist	May/June 2019, Ongoing
Ongoing	Status updates	Congressionals	PAO in coordination with Core Team	Ongoing
Ongoing	Monthly update calls	All	Core Team	Ongoing – first Wednesday of each month
Ongoing	Species of Conservation Concern Feedback	All	Core Team	
August 2020	Wilderness Evaluation Process Engagement	All	Core Team	
August/September 2020	Introductory Plan Development Engagement Webinar	All	Core Team	

<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Activity/Action</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Date Accomplished</b>
September 2020	Need to Change Engagement	All	Core Team	
September 2020	Listening Sessions	All (multiple opportunities for different small groups to engage)	Core Team	
Fall 2020	Wilderness Evaluation Public Engagement	All	Core Team	
September – December 2020	Mapped driving routes with field trips	All	Core Team	
October/November 2020	Fall School Engagement	Youth (students, parents, teachers)	Core Team	

# Appendix B: How to Submit Feedback

**Table 3. Methods to submit feedback.**

Method	Contact Information
On-line Comment Portal (preferred during official comment periods)	<a href="https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=53485">https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=53485</a>
Email	<a href="mailto:wayneplanrevision@usda.gov">wayneplanrevision@usda.gov</a>
Phone	740-753-0555
Mail	Attn: Forest Plan Revision 13700 US-33 Nelsonville, OH 45764

# Appendix C: Goals and Practices of Public Engagement

**Goal 1:** Identify, build and maintain working relationships, trust, capacity and commitment to the forest plan revision process and the forest plan.

**Practices:**

1. Design and chart out timely rollout and updates for public involvement and work to date within the forest plan revision process throughout the entirety, adjusting in times of flux and demands for public information.
2. Provide a clear path for public interaction and expectations at the onset of forest plan revision, outline what is within the scope of forest plan revision and clearly discuss what is not and why.
3. Clearly articulate the function forest plan revision holds within the context of future operations and decision-making on the Wayne National Forest.
4. Acknowledge, address, and clarify issues, conflicts, and expectations within the scope of forest plan revision as they arise.

**Goal 2:** Facilitate, encourage, and support shared learning, understanding, and feedback between the Forest Service and participants in the forest plan revision process.

**Practices:**

1. Design engagement opportunities such as formal listening sessions, office hours, update calls, public meetings, and opportunities for shared learning throughout the forest plan revision process.
5. Co-host or develop partner/third party hosted meetings with key organizations in communities, fostering a broader understanding from interested constituents and publics.
6. Use electronic communication and social media platforms to facilitate a variety of avenues for sharing and providing feedback.

**Goal 3:** Provide a strong foundation for work with local, State, Tribal, and federal government entities for consultation and coordination at the start and throughout the entire forest plan revision process.

**Practices:**

1. Meet with and clearly outline forest plan revision timeline and opportunities for consultation and coordination with local, State, Tribal, and federal government officials.
7. Clearly articulate what is within the scope of forest plan revision and expectations as a local, state, Tribal, or federal government entity for involvement.



**Goal 4:** Promote a common understanding of facts and figures and facilitate an inclusive, transparent process that provides diverse opportunities for meaningful public involvement in the planning and decision-making process.

**Practices:**

1. Set clear expectations and timeline of public involvement, when comment periods exist, allow timely discussion and feedback on what is within the scope of forest plan revision.
8. Develop consistent facts and figures through a variety of written methods that are reflected in talking points, key messages, and briefings.

**Goal 5:** Inform and engage employees in all aspects of forest plan revision, particularly at key milestones in the process.

**Practices:**

9. Use Forest meetings, staff and line officers and electronic mediums to share Forest Plan messages, updates, and progress.
10. Provide an interactive one-stop-shop web based opportunity where employees can find updates and information (i.e., Sharepoint or Pinyon).
11. Build shared ownership and knowledge among the leadership team and employees.
12. Develop consistent process and milestone messaging for all employees to use.

## Appendix D: Meeting Participation Guidelines

Public meetings are an important component of public engagement during the forest plan revision process. To ensure productive discussions, participants in public planning meetings and webinars will be asked to adhere to the following meeting participation guidelines:

- **Use common conversational courtesy** – Avoid third-party conversations at the table. Actively listen to what is being communicated and work to not interrupt others while they are speaking.
- **Be comfortable** – Please help yourself to refreshments or take personal breaks. If you have other needs, please inform the meeting organizer.
- **Honor time and share the air** – Help everyone stay on track and on time, and achieve the meeting goals. Stay aware of the balance between how much other people are speaking and you are speaking.
- **Be honest and candid while treating each other with respect** – Help everyone to clearly understand your comment. Recognize that everyone cares about the forest, brings different experiences, expertise, and insights to the conversation, and deserves respect.
- **All ideas and points of view have value** – All ideas have value in this setting. If you hear someone else say something that you do not agree with, that's okay. The goal is to better understand each other and better communicate.
- **Avoid editorials** – It will be tempting to analyze the motives of others or pass judgement on their actions. Please talk about your ideas and recommendations.
- **Humor is welcome** – It just should not be at another person's expense.
- **Think innovatively and welcome new ideas** – Creative thinking and problem solving are welcome when the situation calls for it.