

## **Sunny Oaks Project Development Framework Presentation Transcript**

A note about the transcripts. These transcripts contain the raw closed captioning that was captured real-time while the presentation was being given. They were typed by a person at the pace that the presenter was speaking. As such, they contain grammatical and spelling errors. More major errors that could potentially change the meaning or understanding of the material were corrected by the Sunny Oaks planning team to reflect what was actually stated; however, less major errors were left in place.

Hello everyone, my name is Rachel Orwan. I'm the Forest NEPA Planner for the Wayne National Forest and I would like to discuss with you how we develop projects in the U.S. Forest Service.

A question that I am asked fairly frequently is why don't we just leave National Forest alone to grow old? There are various federal laws that directed the creation and now the management of National Forests for multiple benefits to the American public. I'd like to go through a few of those with you now.

The Forest Reserve Act of 1891, is a federal law that allowed the President of the United States to set aside forest reserves from the land in the public domain. It's not necessarily relevant to the history of the Wayne National Forest at this point since the lands that make up the Wayne now were not in the public domain at that time. They were privately owned.

Next comes the Organic Act of 1897. That's a federal law provided the main basis for the management of the forest reserves. This act stated that the intention of new forest reservations was to improve and protect the forest within the reservation, or for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessity of the citizens of the United States.

Following that the Forest Service was established in 1905 and then the Weeks Act followed after that in 1911. The Weeks Act is a federal law allowing for the use of federal funding to purchase forest land for conservation. These were privately owned lands. And a quote from the law: Purchase such forested, cut over, or denuded lands within the watersheds of navigable streams as in his judgment may be necessary to the regulation of the flow of navigable streams or for the production of timber. This act is important because it's what allowed for the establishment of the Wayne National Forest and all of the other national forests in the eastern part of the country. Those lands were privately owned and this act allowed for those lands to be purchased and to become public.

Then in 1960 the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act. This is a federal law directing U.S. Sec. of Agriculture to administer the renewable resources of timber, range, recreation, and wildlife on the national forests for multiple uses and sustained yield of products and services. To define multiple use – management of all the various renewable resources of the national forests so that

they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people. And a definition sustained yield – the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high-level annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of the national forests without impairment of the productivity of the land.

Following that in 1969, the National Environmental Policy Act signed into law on January 1, 1970. This law provides that any time a federal agency develops and has decision authority over a project that may affect the human environment, that agency will conduct what amounts to a cost-benefit analysis prior to committing any resources. It also provides for the public to have a voice, through a public commenting process. The idea being that when federal officials take a pause before acting to consider both the beneficial and the potential negative outcomes of actions, in light of public input, that better more informed decisions can be made.

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 or NFMA is a federal law that amended that Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974. Required the creation of management plans for national forests. These plans are to be based on assessments of present and anticipated uses of the national forests and the renewable resources they contain. It directed that national forests use a NEPA process to develop and analyze the plans that provided for involvement of the public. Set goals for the National Forest through that management plan. What important role does the forest play – nationally, regionally, and locally and allow the public to give their opinion.

Our job here as employees in the National Forest System is to take that legislative framework and determine how we can find the best course of action to move forward with to provide the goods and services – both tangible and intangible – to the American public.

What is a Forest Plan? When I talk with the public about our Forest Plan I describe it as a vision of what the National Forest can look like in the future. It contains broad goals and objectives. It describes and allocates lands of the Wayne National Forest into management areas. Think of management areas as a way that cities are zoned. SO for instance, my pointer is pointing to this fuchsia area that I'm circling now. These lands are allocated to a specific management area. Meaning that the lands within this area would be managed for the same goals and objectives. The areas that are darker in color are lands that are the Wayne National Forest. The areas that are lighter in color are private lands, with the idea that if we were ever to purchase any of these lands from a willing private landowner they would be incorporated in to this management area. The Forest Plan contains estimated levels of activity and they include things like acres of certain types of timber harvest, miles of trail, amount of campgrounds, that sort of thing. The Forest Plan contains standards and guidelines, which are tools that tell us more specifically what we can and cannot do to reach those broad goals and objectives. The Forest Plan contains monitoring criteria - observations and data collected periodically that helps us to determine if we are doing a good job or if the actions we are taking are having the anticipated effects in reaching the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan. A Forest Plan is programmatic – that means that the Forest Plan does not commit any money or time or resources to doing anything. Specific projects come later and use the Forest Plan as a starting point.

A little about what's in our Forest Plan currently. Analysis was completed that helped in building the Forest Plan. Found 35% of land animals found in the Wayne National Forest rely on young brushy forest. Young brushy forest is a thick tangled mess of a lot of brush, shrubs, a lot of young trees that are very dense but also small. The analysis also found that oak forests provide valuable food and shelter to a variety of wildlife and plants both in their young form and then as they grow older when they produce acorns, which are a primary fall and winter food for an abundance of wildlife. Native pine forests provide important nesting and foraging areas and thermal cover during severe winters. Large blocks of mature forest are also very important. Each of these forest types that I've described were given special designation in the 2006 Forest Plan. Providing these forest types provides for a resulting diversity of plant and animal species. The take home is that diversity is key.

Now what? We have our Forest Plan. Those assessments that determine the importance of those different forest types also found that the Wayne National Forest is in a unique position to provide habitats in decline. Habitat that is not likely to occur on private land. Private lands are often held in much smaller acreage. The acreage parcel size in Ohio is something like 17 acres. So using that as a lens then we look back at the Forest Plan and we determine what we can do to begin to meet those broad goals and objectives in order to realize the vision that is contained in the Forest Plan.

We develop specific projects to meet those goals and objectives. Projects should be consistent with the Forest Plan. They should look to reach or get closer to goals and objectives and they should follow Forest Plan standards and guidelines. What are these? As mentioned they are tools that tell us what we can and cannot do. Forest Plan guidelines are a little bit more flexible in that we can depart from a guideline provided we explain why and how we're meeting the overall intent. Standards need to be followed. Unless a Forest Plan amendment is part of the project which allows for a forest to depart from the standard. Guidelines have a little more flexibility. We can depart from Forest Plan guidelines in projects provided that we give a rationale and describe how we are still meeting the intent of that guideline.

And that's it for this segment of the overall presentations. Thank you for joining me.