

Notice of Initiation for Revision of the Kaibab National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

The Forest Service (FS) is revising the Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the Kaibab National Forest. A Comprehensive Evaluation Report (CER) was prepared to evaluate how management under the current forest plan is affecting the current conditions and trends related to sustainability. The CER summarized and integrated information from the Ecological and the Socio-Economic Sustainability Reports. These and other supporting documents can be accessed on the Kaibab's Web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/kai/plan-revision/> or by request.

The CER and subsequent Management Review identified four priority topics that will serve to focus the scope of this plan revision. These topics reflect the priority needs and potential changes in program direction that will be emphasized in the development of forest plan components: 1) Modify stand structure and density towards reference conditions and restore historic fire regimes; 2) Protect and regenerate aspen; 3) Protect seeps, springs, ephemeral wetlands, and North Canyon Creek; and 4) Restore grasslands by reducing tree encroachment in grasslands and meadows.

In addition to the priority needs for change topics, the plan revision process will develop consistent, efficient, and scientifically-based plan components to provide direction for 1) Management response following large disturbance events; 2) Managing energy corridors, renewable energy development requests, mining exploration and development, travel management implementation, special-use management, and special forest products collection; 3) Managing for a balanced range of recreation opportunities, within the limits of the administrative and resource capacity.

The Forest Service will also review the results of the Wilderness Needs Assessment and the eligibility of Kanab Creek as a Wild and Scenic River. Where necessary, further evaluation will be conducted to consider and recommend potential wilderness. Other needs for change may be addressed in the proposed plan, or incorporated as amendments in the future. Forest plans are intended to be adaptive. An updated CER will be prepared at least every five years. This iterative process facilitates the incorporation of new information and needed changes into the forest plan.

The plan revision process for the Kaibab National Forest officially began with the publication of the Notice of Initiation in the Federal Register April 20, 2009, although collaboration and public involvement in support of the Kaibab's forest plan revision has been ongoing for about two years. Many public comments regarding forest plan revision have already been received at public meetings and through e-mail, phone calls, and letters. The FS is committed to continued collaboration with the public and open participation in the development of the revised forest plan. Public meetings will be held following release of the initial proposed draft plan, which is scheduled for July 2009. The dates, times, and locations of these meetings will be posted on the forest's Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/kai/plan-revision/>. A more refined draft of the proposed forest

plan will be available for predecisional review in the fall of 2009, with approval of the final plan scheduled for September 2010.

The Forest Service is soliciting public comments on the CER. Substantive comments received prior to by June 15, 2009 will be of the most value in evaluating the need for change topics outlined in the CER and for developing the initial proposed draft plan. It is important to participate in the plan revision process as only those parties who participate in the planning process through the submission of written comments may submit an objection later in the proposed plan development process pursuant to 36 CFR 219.13(a). Comments received during the planning process, including names and addresses of those who commented will be part of the public record available for public inspection. The Responsible Official shall accept and consider comments submitted anonymously.

Send written comments to Kaibab National Forest, Attention: Forest Plan Revision Team, 800 S. 6th St., Williams, Arizona 86046; via e-mail to comments-southwestern-kaibab@fs.fed.us; or via facsimile to (928) 635-8208, with "Forest Plan Revision" in the subject line. For further information on the plan revision process, contact: Ariel Leonard, Assistant Forest Planner at (928) 635-8283 or email: aleonard@fs.fed.us.