

## Chapter 1

# Introduction

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## Location and History

The Wayne National Forest (WNF), located in 12 counties of southeast Ohio, is the state's only national forest. The Forest's proclamation boundary encompasses approximately 875,000 acres, of which the Forest Service owns and manages over 238,000 acres. The hills of southeast Ohio, the unglaciated region of the state, lie within the Ohio River Basin. Ecologically, this area is considered part of the Southern Unglaciated Allegheny Plateau, which reaches into western Pennsylvania, southeast Ohio, western West Virginia, and a part of eastern Kentucky.

The WNF is situated in the core of the hill country, the most heavily forested part of the state. Just 200 years ago, most Americans viewed this region of the Allegheny Plateau as part of a vast wilderness. It had been inhabited by various Native American cultures for thousands of years prior to the arrival of immigrant settlers in the 18th and 19th centuries. Ongoing research conclusively shows that Native Americans had extensive impacts on their environment, even if those effects are no longer obvious.

Many people still view the Wayne as a remnant of the forest primeval. But the impacts of industry and agriculture over the past 200 years have left indelible marks upon the land. Virtually all the forests that covered Ohio when non-native immigrants arrived were cut for timber and firewood and to make way for farms and settlements. Mining for iron ore, limestone, coal, and clay scarred hillsides and polluted many streams. As factories closed and farms failed in the 1930s, the Forest Service began to acquire and restore what were once dubbed "the lands that nobody wanted."

## Purpose of the Forest Plan

This Final Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) will guide all natural resource management activities for the Wayne National Forest for the next 10 to 15 years. It describes desired resource conditions, resource management practices, levels of resource production and management, and the availability of suitable land for resource management.

The purpose of the Forest Plan is to provide management direction to ensure that ecosystems are capable of providing a sustainable flow of beneficial goods and services to the public. More specifically it establishes:

- How the Forest should look if the Forest Plan is successfully implemented (Goals and Desired Future Conditions)
- Measurable, planned results that contribute to reaching desired conditions (Objectives)
- Required action or resource status designed to meet desired future conditions and objectives (Standards)
- Preferable action used to reach desired future conditions and objectives (Guidelines)
- Management direction to be applied Forest-wide
- Management direction to be applied only to specific management areas
- Monitoring and evaluation requirements
- Designation of land as suitable or not suitable for timber production and other resource management activities.

Land use determinations, standards, and guidelines constitute a statement of the Forest Plan's management direction; however, the actual outputs, services, and rates of implementation will depend on annual budgets.

## Revising the 1988 Forest Plan

The previous Forest Plan was issued in 1988. National Forest Management Act regulations require that forest plans be revised every 10 to 15 years (36 CFR 219.10). To meet that requirement, the WNF began Forest Plan revision efforts in 2002. This Revised Forest Plan is a result of that process.

The Revised Forest Plan is based on the alternative identified by the Regional Forester as the selected alternative in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement (January 2006)* (FEIS).

The revision is a result of extensive analyses and considerations described in the accompanying FEIS. The FEIS refers to or explains the planning process and the analytical procedures used to develop the Final Forest Plan. The FEIS also summarizes other alternatives for the Forest Plan considered in the planning process.

## Forest Service Planning Rules

This Forest Plan revision was conducted under the 1982 version of the Forest Service planning rules as stated in 36 CFR 219. In January 2005 the Forest Service released a new set of final planning rules. The transition language in the 2005 planning rules allow national forests which had already started a plan revision (as had the Wayne) to complete their revisions under the 1982 rules. Subsequent revisions or amendments to the Forest Plan will be developed under planning rules applicable then.

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## Relationship of the Plan to Laws and Other Documents

Numerous laws and regulations provide direction for management of the Forest. The following paragraphs highlight a few of these laws, regulations, and direction.

### Organic Administration Act

The Organic Administration Act authorized the creation of what is now the National Forest System. The law established forest reserves “to improve and protect the forests within the boundaries, or for the purpose of securing favorable water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States....”

### Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act

In this act, Congress again affirmed the application of sustainability to the broad range of resources over which the Forest Service has responsibility. This act confirms the authority to manage the national forests “for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes.”

### National Forest Management Act

The National Forest Management Act requires that National Forest System land be managed for a variety of uses on a sustained basis to ensure in perpetuity a continued supply of goods and services to the American people. Regulations implementing the act also establish analytical and procedural requirements for developing, revising, and amending forest plans. This Forest Plan revision embodies the provisions of the National Forest Management Act and regulations on forest plan implementation.

### National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act ensures that environmental information is made available to public officials and citizens before decisions are made and before action is taken. This disclosure helps public officials make decisions based on an understanding of environmental consequences and take actions to protect, restore, and enhance the environment. Essential to this process are accurate scientific analyses, expert agency input, and public involvement, all of which have been part of the revision process.

The revised Forest Plan has been analyzed and the potential effects have been disclosed in the accompanying FEIS. The Act also requires environmental analysis and disclosure for some site-specific actions implemented under the Forest Plan.

## Endangered Species Act

One purpose of the Endangered Species Act is to conserve the ecosystems upon which endangered or threatened species depend. The Act requires Federal agencies to carry out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

## Forest Service Directives

Management direction in the Forest Service Directive System, including the Forest Service Manual (FSM) and the Forest Service Handbook (FSH), is part of forest plan management direction and is not repeated in this Forest Plan. Management direction also includes applicable laws, regulations, and policies, although they may not be restated in the Plan.

Direction for managing National Forest System land comes from a variety of levels. National and regional direction includes laws, executive orders, regulations, and Forest Service policy. The hierarchy of management direction is illustrated below, beginning with national and regional direction at the highest level and ending with site-specific, project-level direction when the Forest Plan is implemented.

## Hierarchy of Management Direction for National Forests

- **National Management Direction**

- Federal Laws
- Code of Federal Regulations
- Executive Orders
- Forest Service Manual
- Forest Service Handbook
- Interim Directives
- Letters of Direction

- **Regional Management Direction**

- Regional Supplements to Forest Service Manual or Handbook
    - Letters of Direction

- **Forest Plans**

- **Forest-wide Management Direction**

- Goals
        - Objectives
        - Standards and Guidelines

- **Management Area Direction**

- Desired Condition
          - Standards and Guidelines
          - Allowable Management Practices

- **Project-level Direction**

- Project Decision Documents (for instance, Decision Memos, Decision Notices and Records of Decision)

## Environmental Impact Statement for This Forest Plan

A Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) related to this Revised Forest Plan has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The FEIS documents the analysis of seven alternatives for management of the Wayne National Forest. The FEIS also discloses the effects of each of the seven alternatives.

This Final Revised Forest Plan is a detailed plan for implementing the selected alternative from the FEIS.

## Wayne National Forest Fire Management Plan

The WNF Fire Management Plan is an implementation plan for the management direction for wildland fire, prescribed fire, and hazardous fuels, found in the Forest Plan.

The Fire Management Plan provides an overview of fire management programs on the Forest and serves as a reference document of operational procedures for WNF personnel. The Fire Management Plan must be consistent with the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan does not repeat the information in the Fire Plan.

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## Management Direction

Management direction is guidance for managing resources and uses on National Forest System (NFS) land.

Management direction in the Forest Plan has been developed for resources (e.g., wildlife and vegetation) on a Forest-wide basis and for management areas. Chapter 2 contains management direction that applies Forest-wide. The more specific direction for management areas is in Chapter 3.

Some management direction refers to “existing conditions”. Existing conditions are those found at the time of Forest Plan revision.

## Goals, Desired Future Conditions, and Objectives

Goals and desired future conditions are broad statements that describe the environmental, social, or economic conditions that the Forest Service will strive to achieve. They are generally timeless and may not be measurable. Goals and desired future conditions describe the ends to be achieved, rather than the means of doing so. They provide a narrative description of the land and other resources expected when objectives and their associated standards and guidelines are fully met.

Goals can be found in Chapter 2 of the Forest Plan. Desired future conditions describe what the Forest should look like in the future and can be found in the management area descriptions of Chapter 3.

Objectives are measurable steps taken within a specific timeframe to move towards a desired future condition. They can be found in Chapter 2. Objectives are generally achieved by implementing site-level projects or activities.

## Standards and Guidelines

Standards and guidelines give specific technical direction for managing resources. They provide another link in moving toward the desired conditions. Standards and guidelines that apply Forest-wide are found in Chapter 2 of this Forest Plan. Standards and guidelines that apply to specific management areas are found in Chapter 3.

Only measures specific to the WNF are included in the standards and guidelines. Laws, regulations, and directives that apply to the entire National Forest System are not reiterated in standards or guidelines. In addition, desired conditions and objectives that have a prescriptive component are not repeated in standards or guidelines.

Standards set limits for management activities. These limitations are designed to help the Forest attain desired conditions and fulfill objectives. Standards also ensure compliance with laws, regulations, executive orders, and policy direction. Deviations from standards must be analyzed and documented in Forest Plan amendments.

Guidelines are preferred limits to management actions and are expected to be followed. They help the Forest to reach the desired conditions and fulfill objectives, but in contrast to standards, guidelines permit some operational flexibility to respond to variations needed for specific situations. Deviations from guidelines must be analyzed during project-level analysis and documented in a project decision document. However, these deviations do not require a Forest Plan amendment.

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## Implementation

### Implementing the Forest Plan

The Revised Forest Plan provides a framework and context that will guide the Forest’s day-to-day resource management operations (See “Hierarchy of Management Direction for National Forests”). It is a strategic, programmatic document and does not make project-level decisions.

The National Forest Management Act requires that “permits, contracts and other instruments for use and occupancy” of NFS land be “consistent” with the Forest Plan (16 U.S.C. 1604(i)). In the context of a revised Forest Plan, the National Forest Management Act specifically conditions this requirement in three ways:

- These documents must be revised only “when necessary”
- These documents must be revised as “soon as practicable”
- Any revisions are “subject to valid existing rights.”

### Basic Management Principles for the Wayne National Forest

A set of fundamental principles guides management of the Wayne National Forest. Direction in the Forest Plan adds to and qualifies these basic principles.

#### Principle 1

The Forest Service will follow laws and regulations as well as policies in Forest Service Manuals and Handbooks that relate to managing National Forest System land. The Forest Plan is designed to supplement, not replace, direction from these sources.

#### Principle 2

The Forest Service will coordinate management activities with the appropriate local, State, or tribal governments as well as with local, State and other Federal agencies.

#### Principle 3

The Forest Service will actively consult and collaborate with interested agencies, organizations, groups, and individuals.

#### Principle 4

The Forest Service will manage the Wayne National Forest for multiple uses. The WNF is open for any legal public activity or management action, unless specially restricted in law, policy, or the Forest Plan. While allowed, such activities and actions may require administrative review and authorization before they are implemented.

## Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is a strategy that views decision making as part of an on-going process. As projects and treatments are implemented and vegetation changes across the landscape, scientific findings and the needs of society may indicate some practices are more effective than others. Monitoring the results of actions will provide a flow of information that may indicate the need to change or adapt the types and combination of treatments.

## Site-specific Projects

“Implementing the Forest Plan,” means developing and implementing site-specific forest management projects to move towards the desired conditions established in the Forest Plan.

Goals and desired future conditions help form the purpose and need for site-specific projects. For a specific area, the difference between the existing condition and Forest Plan goals or desired future conditions may identify a need for change. Proposing a site-specific project is identifying a possible practice that would move the site-specific area from its existing condition towards the desired future condition, or in some cases, the possible practice would prevent the existing condition from moving further away for the desired future condition.

Project-level compliance with the National Forest Management Act is primarily concerned with consistency with the Forest Plan and the act’s regulations.

Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) involves the environmental analysis of a specific proposal, documentation of the analysis, and public disclosure of analysis including the effects of the specific proposal following the direction in Forest Service manuals and handbooks and direction from the Council on Environmental Quality.

Environmental analyses of site-specific projects will use as its foundation, the data and evaluations in the FEIS for the Forest Plan and direction located in the Forest Plan.

The following are examples of project-level decisions that may require additional environmental analyses and disclosure as the Revised Forest Plan is carried out:

- Wildlife habitat improvement and restoration projects
- Timber harvest
- Prescribed burn projects
- Watershed improvement projects

- Trail or road construction.

## Operational Activities Exempt from the NEPA Procedures

Resource inventories, budget projections, action plans, and schedules do not require additional environmental analysis and disclosure at the project level.

The following are examples of operational activities that do not constitute site-specific decisions and, therefore, are exempt from NEPA procedures:

- Developing five-year wildlife action plans
- Developing fire-situation reports
- Conducting monitoring activities that are not ground disturbing
- Conducting timber stand examinations
- Scheduling maintenance for developed recreation sites
- Preparing land ownership adjustment plans.

## Budgets

Annual Forest budget proposals are based on the activities and actions required to achieve the desired conditions and objectives of the Forest Plan.

The National Forest System appropriation from the U.S. Congress provides funds for stewardship and management of all 192 million acres of NFS land and the natural ecosystems on that land across the country. Portions of those funds are allocated to the Eastern Region of the Forest Service. Funding for the Eastern Region is then divided among specific units, one of which is the WNF. These appropriated funds are key for translating the desired conditions and objectives stated in the Forest Plan into on-the-ground results.

Upon receipt of the budget, the Forest annually prepares work plans to fund specific programs and projects. This budget is a result of program development, annual work planning, and monitoring processes. These processes supplement the Forest Plan and make the annual adjustments and changes needed to reflect current national, regional, and local priorities within the overall management direction contained in the Forest Plan. Therefore, the funding distribution between program components, and the intensity or level of activities in those programs, is a reflection of the Forest Plan as well as priorities established by the U.S. Congress.

The final determining factor in carrying out the intent of the Forest Plan is the level of funding, which dictates the rate of implementation of the Forest Plan.

## Forest Plan Amendments

This Revised Forest Plan is adaptable. As the Plan is implemented, unanticipated situations or circumstances may arise. The directives that guide forest planning outline procedures for changing direction by amending forest plans.

Most proposed activities will be consistent with direction in the Forest Plan. When proposed management actions are found to be inconsistent with Forest Plan direction or site-specific analysis shows an error in the Forest Plan, the Plan or the proposal must be adjusted according to the analysis. Adjusting the Forest Plan may require a Forest Plan amendment.

The need to amend management direction may result from a number of circumstances or situations. Some examples include:

- Changes in physical, biological, social, or economic conditions
- Recommendations of an interdisciplinary team based on the results of monitoring and evaluation
- Determination by the Forest Supervisor that existing or proposed projects, permits, contracts, cooperative agreements, or other instruments authorizing occupancy and use are appropriate, but not consistent with elements of the Forest Plan management direction
- Errors in planning found during implementation.

Conflicts may be identified between different sections of management direction. For instance, there could be discrepancies in the selected alternative map and the narrative description of the selected alternative. The Forest Plan does not prioritize management direction; therefore, a discrepancy would need to be resolved by determining the management intent using a variety of information, such as the planning record, FEIS, and the Forest Plan.

The decision level for Forest Plan amendments lies with the Forest Supervisor. The Forest Supervisor will determine whether a Plan amendment is needed, and if so, what level of NEPA analysis is required based on the planning and NEPA regulations then in effect.

## Forest Plan Revision in the Future

The Forest Supervisor is required to review conditions of the land at least every five years to determine if the Forest Plan needs revision. If monitoring and evaluation indicate that immediate changes are needed, and these needed changes cannot be handled by amendment, then a Forest Plan revision would be in order. The National Forest Management Act prescribes that Forest Plans be revised at least every 15 years.