



Helena - Lewis and Clark National Forest Forest Plan Revision Frequently Asked Questions

What is a forest plan? A forest plan provides a planning and policy framework to guide a forest in managing its forest resources, goods, and services. Described as “the view from 30,000 feet,” forest plans are strategic and broad in scope and provide guidance in the decision-making process involved with site-specific projects. Forest plans have desired conditions, objectives, standards and guidelines, identification of suitability of areas for certain uses, and monitoring programs.

Why does the current forest plan need to be revised? The National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires that plans be revised every 15 years. The Helena -Lewis and Clark (HLC) National Forest is currently revising the 1986 forest plans (Land and Resource Management Plan). One plan will be developed for both forests. Revisions to the 1986 plans are long overdue and a lot has changed on the forest and surrounding areas. In addition, there is also new guidance for how forest plans are to be revised. The Forest Service’s 2012 Planning Rule directs forest plans to be science-based and developed with extensive public involvement. The 2012 Planning Rule provides for an adaptive, flexible framework that allows national forests to meet their current and future needs. The Rule also takes into account a new understanding of what constitutes forest health and how science can help inform land managers. The 2012 Rule is designed to ensure that forest plans maintain and restore ecosystems while providing for multiple uses. The Rule also emphasizes an all-lands approach to planning, while recognizing that many management issues, such as wildfire, water resources, and wildlife require an understanding of conditions across jurisdictional boundaries.

Why are the Forests preparing one plan and one Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)? The 2012 Rule focuses on the role of a forest within the larger landscape, with consideration given to all lands throughout the three phases of forest plan revision; assessment, plan development, and monitoring. Completing one plan and one EIS will be more efficient due to shared landscapes, similar issues,

and consistent application of the planning management process. As well as overlapping landscapes and users, each unit does have distinct issues and opportunities that will be addressed separately for each forest.

How can the public be involved? The HLC National Forest is committed to involving the public in a transparent, meaningful dialogue to help shape a forest plan that will result in the sustainable management of resources, goods, and services.

The HLC National Forest has completed the proposed action, which was developed based on the Assessment of the Helena and Lewis & Clark National Forest (HLC NF), the Need to Change, the Desired Conditions, and public comments we have heard over the past two years –through community conversations, letters, phone calls, meetings, and more. Public comments were vital in developing the proposed action and associated appendices.

The comment period for the proposed action began on December 1, 2016 when the Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register. The comment period will last for 120 days and will end on March 31, 2017. The [How to Comment](#) Link on the Proposed Action page of the FPR revision website has all the information about how to comment. You can also sign up for the forest plan revision email list on the [revision website](#):
(<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/hlc/forestplanrevision>)

For more [information on the 2012 Planning Rule](#), please refer to the following link:
(<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/hlc/forestplanrevision>).

What is the process and timeframe for revision? Please refer to the [Process and Timeline section](#) of the FPR website. The proposed action was released December 1st, 2016. The comment period ends on March 31st. The HLC will use the comments received to develop issues and alternatives to be analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which we hope to release to the public in late fall of 2017. There will be another comment period following that release. Then the FEIS and ROD will be developed and released in the late fall of 2018. Implementation of the plan will then begin.