

Honorable Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Honorable Tom Tidwell, Chief, United States Forest Service  
United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Issuance of Forest Service Directives Implementing the 2012 National Forest  
Management Act Planning Rule

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Chief Tidwell:

January 30, 2015

On behalf of the National Forest Management Act 2012 Planning Rule Federal Advisory Committee, we congratulate the Department and Forest Service on the issuance of the Forest Service's Directives implementing the new Planning Rule!

As you know, we are a 21-member Committee comprised of a diverse range of stakeholders that represent a microcosm of the various publics served by the Forest Service and the National Forest System: our membership comprises state and local elected officials, American Indian Tribes, youth, conservation organizations, motorized and human-powered recreation interests, the timber, energy and mineral, and grazing industries, scientific community, private landowners, commercial and recreational hunting and fishing interests, and the public at large.

The Committee believes that the 2012 Planning Rule is a great step forward in collaborative, science-based management of our precious national forests. To that end, the Committee has worked in close collaboration with the Forest Service over the past two years to review and provide advice on the Directives, which provide a roadmap for the development of forest plans that will meet the needs of all Americans. While we have not yet fully reviewed the final Directives, we can offer the following insights.

First, it is clear to the Committee that the Forest Service has listened to the Committee's advice, and together with comments from the public and other stakeholders, has made changes to the Directives that reflect the input of the more than 16,000 Americans who commented on the Directives. In particular, we note that the Directives reflect our advice on various topics such as outreach to and involvement of the broad spectrum of Americans in forest planning, guidance on the evaluation of wilderness quality lands, leveraging information from external sources in the planning process, and the role of socioeconomic monitoring with respect to forest plan implementation. The Forest Service's willingness to listen and change accordingly reflects a phenomenal investment in shared learning, and models the iterative approach to planning and decisionmaking envisioned by the 2012 Planning Rule.

Second, as we move forward with implementation of the 2012 Planning Rule and Directives, the Committee would like to offer our continued assistance with identifying and solving natural

resource challenges associated with forest management. We welcome the opportunity to help improve the forest planning process, which will result in forest plans that are more durable and have better results for the land and its communities. As the 2012 Planning Rule intends, we believe that working together will have better results on the ground than going it alone.

Finally, we would like to commend your staff involved in the development of the Directives. For many of the Committee members, the dedication, wisdom, and expertise of your staff have restored our faith in the democratic process and the ability of government to do the people's business. Your staff truly embodies the spirit of collaboration and shared decisionmaking expressed in the Planning Rule.

Again, congratulations on the release of the final Directives implementing the 2012 Planning Rule. We look forward to the next phase of the Committee's work, and continuing to work in partnership with the Forest Service and the Department.

Sincerely,

Rodney Stokes, Co-Chair  
Public-at-Large

Susan Jane Brown, Co-Chair  
Blue Mountains Forest Partners