



Gila National Forest– Forest Plan Revision

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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. Forest plans are consistent with and do not override law, regulation, or established policy.

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 Gila National Forest is currently revising the 1986 Forest Plan (Land and Resource Management Plan). The Gila Forest Plan has been amended over the years as needed to adapt to changes in management, but significant changes on the forest and surrounding areas now warrant plan revision. 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 and collaboration.

The 2012 Planning Rule provides for an adaptive, flexible framework that allows national forests to meet their current and future needs, taking 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.

How will the 2012 Planning Rule be implemented? The 2012 Planning Rule provides the Forest Service an overarching framework for individual national forests and grasslands to use in the development of forest plans. The Agency recently finalized the directives to provide additional guidance for implementing the 2012 Planning Rule. The directives provide a framework for adaptive management that was established in the 2012 Planning Rule. The Agency’s 30 years of experience with land management planning under the 1982 Planning Rule suggested the need for the adaptive management approach which helps managers respond more quickly and effectively to changing conditions and needs.

The framework consists of a three-part cycle during which the Forest Service will:

- (1) **assess** conditions, stressors, and opportunities on national forests and grasslands within the context of the broader landscape by rapidly identifying and evaluating relevant existing information from a variety of sources;
- (2) **develop, revise or amend** land management plans; and
- (3) **monitor** conditions to detect changes on the unit and across the broader landscape,

to test assumptions underlying management decisions, and to measure the effectiveness of management activity in achieving desired outcomes.

Where is the Gila in the Forest Plan Revision process? The Gila will begin their revision effort in March 2015 with community conversations for the purpose of hearing how people want to be involved in the revision process.

The Gila will put out a public notice in Spring 2015 signifying the beginning of the assessment phase of Forest Plan Revision. The process, from beginning to end, will be a multi-year effort to complete, with the public being encouraged to provide input throughout the process.

How can the public be involved? The Gila National Forest is committed to involving the public in a meaningful, substantive dialogue to help develop a forest plan that will result in sustainable management of its resources, goods and services for the next 15 years.

During the initial assessment phase, the forest will work with federal and state agencies, tribes, local governments, communities, private landowners, and other partners to develop a mutual understanding of the context for forest plan revision, and of current and desired conditions of the Forest.

Members of the public may be involved throughout the planning process in a number of ways, including:

- Participating in community meetings or collaborative work sessions. These sessions will be announced through press releases and will be posted on the Gila's forest plan revision web site: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gila/home/?cid=STELPRD3828671>
- Inviting one of the Gila's Planning Team staff to make a presentation and answer questions at your organization's meeting. Contact Matthew Schultz, Gila Forest Planner, at (575) 388-8280 if you're interested.
- Sharing your suggestions, comments and information by:
 - Sending an email to gilaplan@fs.fed.us
 - Sending mail to Gila National Forest Plan Revision, 3005 E. Camino del Bosque, Silver City, NM 88061-7863.

Will the revised forest plan affect the current motor vehicle use map (MVUM) on a particular ranger district? Generally no. The travel management analyses, decisions, and resulting motor vehicle use maps for a ranger district will be supported by the revised forest plan. The revised plan will not alter those previous travel management decisions and MVUMs. Motor vehicle use maps are generally updated by the Forest every two to three years. Updates are based on new, relevant information and circumstances. Modifications of authorized routes can be considered during public participation opportunities at those times.

Why is the Gila considering potentially suitable wilderness areas for designation now? The 2012 National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule 36 CFR 219 §219.7(c)2(v) requires that, during forest plan revision, the Forest responsible official (Forest Supervisor)

shall: identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and determine whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation. The Gila is currently undergoing plan revision, and must consider areas potentially suitable for wilderness. If a preliminary administrative recommendation is made, it will ultimately be submitted to Congress for a decision on wilderness designation.

Where can I find more information about the 2012 Planning Rule and the final directives? You can navigate online to: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/planningrule/>