



Second National Roundtable: High-Level Summary

Introduction

On April 20-21, 2010, stakeholders met with the US Forest Service in the second of three national roundtables aimed at creating collaboration and dialogue around the revision of the Forest Service planning rule. This Roundtable, which was attended by approximately 75 people from a wide diversity of perspectives, focused on process topics including the social, economic and cultural contributions of Forest Service Lands to vibrant economies; providing for effective collaboration; the relationship between national forests and surrounding lands (all lands approach); planning revision and NEPA; and, adaptive management. The first Roundtable (April 1-2, 2010) focused on substantive topics, and the third Roundtable (May 11 - 12) will build on the results of the Science Forum and the preceding national and regional roundtables. This document summarizes key takeaways and themes from the second Roundtable.

Background

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 requires all national forests and grasslands to develop land management plans, the use and development of which is guided by the planning rule. The first planning rule was written in 1979. It was revised in 1982. There have been three attempts in the last decade (2000, 2005 and 2008) to rewrite the rule. The first attempt (2000) resulted in a rule that was considered un-implementable by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The most recent two attempts were enjoined in court for violations of the National Environmental Policy Act.

As the Forest Service approaches this latest rule revision, they have committed to trying something different – a nation-wide collaborative effort to educate, engage, and work with stakeholders to develop a rule that can succeed and endure over time. The collaboration process includes a Science Forum, roundtable meetings with stakeholders in all nine Forest Service regions, three national roundtables, an inter-agency working group, an internal Forest Service working group, Tribal consultation and collaboration, and online discussions. The input gathered through these events and mechanisms will be utilized by the Forest Service rule-writing team to help inform the development of the new proposed rule.

The Planning Rule revision has been designated as one of USDA's flagship projects for President Obama's Open Government Initiative. The Forest Service is going to continue to explore new and creative ways to make the rule development process more open, transparent and inclusive.

Stakeholder Discussion: Key Process Themes, Suggestions and Outstanding Questions from Prior Collaboration Events

Participants in this opening discussion were asked to identify key process themes, suggestions and questions from prior collaboration events that they thought should be considered in this third Roundtable. The discussion was initiated by Forest Service planning rule team members, Jessica Call and Martha Twarkins, who mentioned several points that had seemed particularly important, and/or recurred frequently, in the Science Forum and the First National Roundtable.

- Boundary spanners – people that can engage across perspectives – provide a lot of value to the land management process.
- The planning process must be collaborative.
- There is a need to pursue mechanisms for managing ecosystem services.
- Manage lands holistically and at the landscape level—avoid random acts of restoration.
- Monitoring is critical to any adaptive framework; yet it must be workable.
- Monitoring tools are evolving and we need to use them; but they are not the complete solution.
- No amount of data is a substitute for good decision-making.
- Many challenges require a landscape approach. We need to look at how forest lands are nested within the broader landscape
- Recreation is an important consideration for forest planning.
- It is important to involve the public from the beginning, starting with pre-scoping activities.
- The planning framework needs to be simple, meaningful, and streamlined.

Participants who engaged in the discussion mentioned the following points:

- It is important to define terms such as: “restoration,” “simple” and “adaptive management” “shared decision-making”, “collaboration”, “consensus”, “transparency”, “compatibility”, “effectiveness”, “efficiency”, “influence”, and “adaptive governance” in the new planning rule.
- There is frustration when the Forest Service makes planning decisions “inside the beltway,” without appearing to engage people who live, work and play in the forests.
- There should be a more vigorous approach to assessing the importance of recreation in national forests, using social science and economics.
- Science management is not equivalent to information management. The Forest Service needs to deal intelligently with uncertainty and risk through information management and adaptive management.
- It is important to think about what is really meant by simplicity in the planning rule.

- The rule needs to be forward looking – e.g., consider what the needs are going to be in twenty years.
- Planning decisions need to be tied to budget considerations.
- Aviation is component of recreation.
- The new planning rule should facilitate the identification of desired future conditions in national forests; and those conditions should be connected to the values that the American public places in its forests.
- The planning process should include a way to engage the public on relevant issues (such as Pine Beetle in Colorado), and then foster strong relationships over time.
- There should be a requirement in the planning rule for monitoring forest regeneration after timber sales.
- It is important in the planning process to protect heritage resources, work with Tribes to manage important sites, and incorporate traditional tribal knowledge about healthy forests and habitat into management.
- Tribal coordination and consultation are critical in this process. There must be government to government consultation in addition to the Tribal teleconference.
- Most forest planners are foresters or biologists by training, not planners. The new rule should be implementable by non-planners, e.g., with checklists to make implementation easier.
- On the other hand, there is suspicion of checklists. They seem very limiting. There is a fear that if something is not on a checklist it will not be addressed.
- There needs to be more education of and more interaction with youth in forest planning and management. Youth need to play a role in forest decisions that will affect their future.
- The Notice of Intent focuses on ecological measures; the rule need to emphasize community social and economic performance measures as well.
- There needs to be less time and money spent on planning and more on projects.
- The planning rule should enable the use advisory communities at the forest level for the purpose of engaging local stakeholders, bringing science into the process, and striving to develop consensus on forest management. Resource Advisory Committees are a useful model.
- The rule needs to be flexible. A collaborative process involving stakeholders at the local level is one way to build flexibility into plans and the rule
- It needs to be recognized that the rule is not a “cosmic handbook” for planning.
- The Forest Service needs to be responsive to local concerns. The rule has to provide a way for local communities to inject their interests into the planning process.
- The planning rule should ensure a seamless delivery of recreation services within and among national forests.

Social, Economic and Cultural Contributions of Forest Service Lands to Vibrant Communities

The discussions on the Social, Economic, and Cultural Contributions of Forest Service Lands to Vibrant Communities focused on four topics:

- The provision of goods and services that contribute to vibrant local, regional, and national economies;
- Interdependency of social, economic, and ecological systems in a way that supports sustainable management of national forest and grasslands;
- The increasing importance of recreation access; and
- Budget considerations.

Goods and Services Contributing to Vibrant Local, Regional, and National Economies

Forests can aid in the provision of goods and services (including ecosystem services) that contribute to vibrant local, regional, and national economies. Participants discussed how it is important to understand the full impacts of the various goods and services that contribute to the economy with particular regard to understanding both the local and national value of what could be characterized as the “traditional” goods and services (e.g., grazing, logging, mineral extraction, etc.) as well as “newer” goods and services (e.g., carbon sinks, recreation, biomass, etc). Most agreed that it made no sense to mandate a specific method for calculating impacts, but participants did discuss the need for using a systems integration approach. Participants noted that it is essential to use an analysis that is developed in consultation with the public and is understandable to communities. All stressed the importance of using economic information to help inform planning, rather than just “checking the economic report boxes”. While many noted that the concept of “considering” such data is not strong enough language, there was little clarity on the appropriate wording or approach for increasing the impact of these studies. A variety of opinions were expressed, including:

- The rule should provide for a shift in the kinds of commodities that forests provide. For example, timber, coal, and oil and gas are shrinking industries in some areas. They are being replaced by other industries such as clean technology and recreation.
- The effects of past actions on local economies and communities should inform the predicted impact of new land management approaches.
- Ecosystem services are very valuable. Assessing their value is very challenging. Some suggested that assigning a dollar value to these services was the best approach for comparing their benefit to more traditional commodities. However, many people suggested that it was better to consider the intrinsic value of these services at the local level. Others suggested that the national value of these services should also be considered. Net present value may be a useful concept for analyzing resources.
- Forests may be a valuable resource as carbon sinks. Where geology permits, carbon

sequestration (i.e., underground carbon storage) should be considered.

- Past uses of national forests need to be part of the equation when thinking about future uses.
- The contributions of each individual forest need to be considered within the context of the larger landscape or system.
- Economic contributions should be considered within a multiple-use strategy.
- The rule could provide a framework for dealing with conflicts that arise between the Forest Service as a land manager and those who own resources not controlled by the Forest Service (e.g., mineral rights holders).
- The rule needs to be developed in the context of other legislation that affects national forest management.

Interdependency of social, economic, and ecological systems

It is important to consider the interdependency of social, economic, and ecological systems in a way that supports sustainable management of national forest and grasslands. Many participants said the best way the Forest Service can contribute to the social, economic, and ecological well-being of communities is to focus on ecological health and stewardship because healthy ecosystems are the foundation of other services. Some participants believe the Forest Service should go beyond this and specifically manage to support social and economic goals of communities. Others said to do so would go beyond the mandate of the Forest Service, and that in any case international markets and choices made by communities independent of the Forest Service are usually more important drivers of economic and social well being. Participants also noted the importance of the Forest Service partnering with local organizations during the planning process. Specific suggestions included:

- National forest planning should include an examination of whether/how plans support the visions and plans that state and local governments develop for the future of their communities.
- While there is a strong desire to sustain, respect and honor local communities, it is hard to see what to put into the planning rule about this issue. Much of the work on this front is about building strong relationships; however the planning rule cannot mandate relationship building.
- The Forest Service should consider mandating increased economic support in forests when socioeconomic indicators, such as poverty, drop below an acceptable level.
- The Forest Service needs to use the best monitoring tools and data available to conduct socioeconomic analyses. These analyses need to focus on social factors just as much as economic factors.
- There is a continuing need at multiple levels - communities, local governments, and the Forest Service – to build capacity and share information about how to work together to create sustainable local communities and ecosystems.

- The Forest Service should coordinate with local communities and involve them in their decisions about land management.
- Some of the biggest challenges for supporting local communities occur after a catastrophic event such as fire. The process for responding and adjusting management in the wake of a catastrophe should be a consideration in the rule.

The Increasing Importance of Recreation Access

Participants stressed the increasing importance that recreation will have on Forest Service lands given the growing population in general and that of baby boomers, in particular. Many expressed concern that the topic of recreation was not mentioned in the Notice of Intent. To address the projected increase in recreation use, some participants expressed a desire for more access to Forest Service units by land, water, and air. A number of participants suggested that plans should be required to assess the ecological impact of any increased access. Many participants expressed concern that in today's electronic society children are losing their connection to the land. They suggested increasing interpretation and community partnering efforts as ways to help rebuild those connections. Specific suggestions from various participants included:

- The rule needs to require forest plans to address travel management, including winter and motorized travel.
- The rule could require forests to enhance visitor access - by road, water and air - within the context of ecological sustainability.
- The rule should encourage forests to build road systems that are the right size for the demands on the forest.
- Those recreation uses that have a greater impact or require more management should have higher user fees associated with them.
- Recreation is increasingly an important component of local economies and should be included in economic analyses.

Budget Considerations

Forest planning needs to happen within the context of the Forest Service budget. There is a danger of spending too much money planning and not having any money left for implementation. The cost of forest management actions prescribed in the plan should not exceed available funding. Partnerships with local governments, agencies and NGOs can sometimes be an avenue for leveraging and increasing available resources.

Providing for Effective Collaboration

The discussions on effective collaboration focused on:

- The difference between collaboration and input;

- Opportunities for and challenges to building more transparent and efficient processes;
- The need for a well-defined decision space; and
- The importance of involving a diverse array of stakeholders.

The Difference between Collaboration and Input

Participants highlighted the difference between collaboration and input. Many expressed frustration with traditional input mechanisms, where input was gathered but not necessarily used – a feeling exacerbated by un-transparent processes. They expressed the desire for real collaboration and transparency as to how their feedback is being used. Some participants suggested that the rule incorporate the concept of adaptive governance – which could entail stakeholders collaboratively identifying needs, problems, and opportunities, collaboratively creating solutions to those needs and problems, collaboratively implementing those solutions, and collaboratively monitoring those solutions in a continuous manner to feed back into the system.

Specific suggestions included:

- Collaboration should be tiered and implemented at various levels (national, regional, forest, project).
- Forests should collaborate with stakeholders in defining the forest vision and desired future conditions.
- Having stakeholders work together in a forest planning process can be a way to build mutual trust and respect. Stakeholder involvement, done well, can also lead to greater acceptance of outcomes, even when not all interests are accommodated.
- There is a difference between input and influence. Stakeholders are interested in influencing the process. Stakeholders are more likely to feel as though they are influencing the process if they can be involved in scoping and in collaborative groups.
- If input is gathered, it needs to be utilized. For example, the Forest Service blog looks like it is not being used. People need to understand the role of their input before they will engage.
- There should be efforts to collect meaningful input throughout the planning process, including during the initial stages because some decisions are made early.
- Traditionally, it seems that in most cases the Forest Service has conducted only the minimum legal amount of public involvement and collaboration. This planning rule process indicates that the Forest Service is ready to engage in collaboration and adaptive governance above and beyond what has happening previously. This process should be institutionalized for further planning rule processes and for future planning purposes.
- There also needs to be inter-agency collaboration with other entities that have decision-making power and resources that can be leveraged to achieve forest land management objectives.

- Collaboration is an iterative process that can feed into adaptive management and restoration over time.
- Elected officials should have a prominent role in any collaboration effort because of their unique role representing other stakeholders.
- Because local governments are exempt from FACA, they could be used to convene advisory committees to help guide forest planning.

Opportunities for and Challenges to Building more Transparent and Efficient Processes;

Participants expressed a strong desire for efficiency and transparency in the planning process. They did note that these two ideals are often difficult to reconcile, and are not usually hallmarks of government functioning. It will be important to take these difficulties into account when trying to build these ideals into the planning process.

- Striving for efficiency may result in going too fast. It is more important to conduct planning process collectively and collaboratively than to do them quickly. History tells us that trying to go too fast has can result in failure.
- Transparency means that stakeholders can see how a decision is made and what the justification is for the decision.
- Efficiency needs to extend beyond just the planning process; it should also apply to plan implementation. Litigation during implementation can greatly slow the management process.

The Need for a Well-Defined Decision Space

Participants discussed the need for a well defined decision space, i.e., clarity about the role of collaboration vis a vis the decision making process and about who has decision making authority. When stakeholders invest in collaboration they need to clearly understand the limits of their input. Ambiguity can lead to distrust and a sense of disempowerment, particularly when stakeholder input seems to be discounted.

- It is important to understand the legal limits and obligations of the Forest Service. It is also important to define the extent to which input from collaborative groups can and will be used in decision-making processes.
- Laws such as the National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act already dictate certain actions that need to happen in forests. It is helpful for stakeholders to be aware the legal context for forest management.
- Collaboration should focus on the aspects of forest management where their input can actually make a difference. It is not useful to have stakeholders discuss options for things they cannot change.

- For plan revisions and amendments, it will be important to define what is working and should not change, as well as addressing new needs that any collaborative process should focus on.
- Ongoing monitoring and readily available data will help stakeholders understand where their attention should be focused. Data and collaboration lead to adaptive governance.

The Importance of Involving a Diverse Array of Stakeholders

Participants recognized that there are many stakeholders involved in these issues and all should have the opportunity to be engaged in the collaboration process. Many participants stressed the need to involve more diversity and lower the barriers of entry for disadvantaged stakeholders.

- It is important to identify and reach out to the important groups and communities that need to be involved in the process.
- Sometimes the culture of the Forest Service resists input from specific groups or communities. All groups need to have a chance to participate in the collaborative process.
- Some groups do not have the resources or time to attend meetings, including for example some Tribes, cultural groups, community-based groups and forest workers. Resources should be available to support participation.
- It is important to involve youth; they have a lot to say. However, youth may not feel comfortable attending collaboration meetings unless they have been specifically invited.
- There should be deference to local stakeholders who understand and are directly affected by forest plans; however, there should be opportunities for non-local forest users to engage and offer feedback as well.
- Constant communication with stakeholders and efforts to connect forest users to the land will keep people excited and involved in the process.

“All Lands” Approach

The “All Lands” Approach discussions focused on:

- Whether the planning rule is the only or even primary means for implementing this concept;
- What is meant by utilizing an “all lands” approach; and
- The extent to which this type of approach should be mandated in the rule.

Whether the Planning Rule is the Only or Even Primary Means for Implementing this Concept

Many participants expressed interest in and/or enthusiasm for the concept of an “all lands” approach, depending on how it is defined and implemented. Almost all forest lands are connected in some way to lands beyond their jurisdictional boundaries. There was concern, however, about whether the planning rule is the only or even the primary means for implementing this concept. Many suggested that this concept is broader than forest planning, and that effective implementation would require changes to be made throughout the agency through various policies and directives – not just through changes in the planning rule.

- Boundaries are permeable. An “all lands” approach could be useful for achieving many different management objectives, including protecting at-risk species, creating resilient ecosystems, protecting watersheds, historic preservation, supporting interstate trails and providing recreational access.
- Each national forest and grassland needs to define its specific role, contribution or niche in the context of a greater landscape.
- An “all lands approach” is already being employed in some contexts. For example, coordination already occurs with respect to wildlife habitat and wildfire.
- The rule could require coordination with state, regional, and county agencies that support forest management and provide connectivity to adjacent lands. Forests should utilize and build upon inter-agency arrangements that are already in place.
- If an all lands approach is mandated in the planning rule, it may imply that the Forest Service should take the lead on coordinating agencies and landowners. Traditionally, the Department of Interior and specifically National Park Service have served more often as leads in such efforts. A more active role on the part of the Forest Service could be seen by some as over-reaching from Washington DC; however, in some instances it might be appropriate for the Forest Service to assume a lead because of their significant land management responsibility in a region.
- The urban-forest interface is growing, and the types of coordination that will be required will change accordingly.
- Planning for commodity extraction and production could be done in conjunction with a market analysis to assess demand.
- There needs to be explicit efforts to work with the states in planning rule development and implementation. States have a significant stake in the rule
- Some responses to climate change will require action at large scales. The Forest Service should be prepared to work across all of its lands to manage an effective response.

What is Meant by Utilizing an “All Lands” Approach

It will be important to think about what is meant by utilizing an “all lands” approach. Three potential trajectories were mentioned: (1) contextual, where Forest Service lands are managed with an understanding of their unique role in the greater landscape, (2) cooperative and

complementary, where the Forest Service works with surrounding land owners to enhance the likelihood of compatible and complementary uses, and (3) reactionary, where Forest Service lands are managed to compensate for or react to land management practices occurring beyond their boundaries over which they do not have control or authority. These are not mutually exclusive trajectories.

- The Forest Service could coordinate and/or cooperate with local and regional planning processes.
- The term “all lands” is a political term and is not well defined. The Forest Service should consider the types of interactions it wants beyond its boundaries and build a framework to promote those.
- Federal agencies need to collaborate more with one another because there are a lot of shared land management goals across agencies. It is very challenging for state and local governments to try and coordinate with multiple agencies when those agencies are not coordinating with each other. In particular, it is important that the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service are working with each other.
- Consultation and coordination with Tribes will be a key component of any “all lands” approach.

The Extent to which this Type of Approach should be Mandated in the Rule

There was tension in the discussions around the extent to which an “all lands” approach should be mandated versus encouraged. Many were worried that if this concept were to be mandated in the planning rule, it would appear that the federal government is attempting to regulate state or private lands where it has no jurisdiction; incentives could be a better way to achieve the purposes of an all lands approach. Others suggested that an all lands approach could be a way for the Forest Service to be more accountable for coordinating its land use and land management decisions within the broader landscape. Still others noted that implementation of an all lands approach should not prevent the Forest Service from meeting requirements specified in the National Forest Management Act – especially with regard to species diversity. Additional specific comments included:

- If the Forest Service wants to employ an all lands approach, there needs to be vocal support from the Chief and the Secretary.
- The Forest Service could promote the spirit of collaboration across jurisdictions throughout the agency. This spirit could be included in the rule, but further training and agency support will be required to make it a reality.
- Data management will be important to the success of an “all lands” approach. The Forest Service will need to utilize the best data available, and share information with other agencies, academics, and citizens. Some worried that the Forest Service already has difficulty using the data it collects, and that there may not be resources to share and manage data effectively.

- Requiring that plans consider things outside of their boundaries is vaguely defined and could open up plans to legal challenges.
- An “all lands” approach should be mandatory for resources such as national historic sites and interstate trails that have congressionally mandated protection.

Planning Revisions and NEPA

The discussions regarding Planning Revision and NEPA focused on:

- How the planning process could be best framed as an iterative process with continual updates and changes to forest plans;
- Using collaboration and coordination to increase buy-in and build plans that are more robust and focus on issues relevant to forests and communities;
- Ways that the planning process can be more efficient through tiered approaches that reduce redundancy; and,
- Making the amendment process simpler and more effective

Framing Planning as an Iterative Process

Participants discussed how best the planning process could be framed and positioned as an iterative process, and the plans as living documents.

- NFMA requires a revision every 15 years, but that should not preclude small changes between major revisions through adaptive planning or adaptive governance. An iterative process with periodic adjustments should make plan revisions less cumbersome.
- A tiered planning approach (national, regional and forest) would help the agency and public have a more common understanding of the issues at stake.

Collaboration and Coordination to Increase Buy-in and Build Plans that are More Robust

A common suggestion was to identify collaborative leverage points in the iterative process, and to increase collaboration through formal and informal channels that better align the plan development and NEPA processes.

- The Forest Service should develop clear guidelines for how and when inter- and intra-agency collaboration and coordination should occur.
- Land management planning should entail a collaborative process in which NFMA provides the framework for defining common ground and NEPA to analyze proposed actions. A collaborative process can help in the development of a shared vision; produce buy-in from participants; foster a sense of ownership in plans; help ensure that relevant topics are

addressed and relevant solutions are proposed; and, ultimately lead to more useful and legally robust forest plans.

- The planning process should be designed to work within the Forest Service's budget constraints.
- The role of cooperating agencies in the planning process should go beyond just reviewing draft documents. They could help resolve big issues and smooth out the process.
- Forests should endeavor to identify where there is agreement among stakeholders about forest planning issues so more time and energy can be devoted to controversial issues.
- To be efficient, the rule-writing team should start with a review of the 1982 rule, and only change the pieces that are deemed ineffective.

Making the Planning Process more Efficient

Efficiencies should not be confused with shortcutting or streamlining any necessary procedural or substantive requirements. Planning is a complex process that will necessarily take some time. Rather, efficiencies should be explored through innovative approaches such as standardized reporting requirements; requiring EIS summaries; combining EIS analysis across multiple forests; or, ongoing analysis that would decrease NEPA response times. Nearly all participants said forest planning should be subject to NEPA requirements. Many said that it is essential to do a full EIS. There was an emphasis on the need for NEPA alternatives to be realistic.

- The rule should provide clear and unambiguous guidance to forest planners about the steps and requirements in the planning process, including for example "check lists" of issues that have to be considered. However, forests should decide how to address the issues.
- The data necessary to assess land management decisions should be collected and available on a consistent basis. A system of triggers and thresholds, informed by regular monitoring of ecosystem indicators, will allow for appropriate management changes when necessary.
- Utilize scoping and pre-scoping in the NEPA process to inform the development of draft plan proposals. If the input from the scoping processes is used in a transparent manner, there will be more public buy-in.
- To cut down on redundancy, there should be a clearer, more stream-lined connection between upper level Forest Service strategic planning and planning at the forest level.
- The planning process should be "tiered" appropriately; there will be different kinds of analysis and levels of certainty associated with plans at the forest, regional, and national levels.
- The Forest Service needs to strike a balance between specificity and flexibility. Specificity provides accountability, but also makes the process more complex and more open to

litigation. On the other hand, flexibility cannot be open-ended. The rule should give structured guidance on how to respond to change conditions.

- The rule should provide higher-level guidance, and an accompanying manual should provide more details and specific examples of how the rule could be implemented.
- The Forest Service could consider a mandatory timeline to ensure that the planning process stays focused.

Making the Amendment Process Simpler and More Effective

There is lack of consistent understanding and application of the amendment process, which may be a function of lack of understanding, inadequate training, or the vagaries of decentralized decision making. Greater consistency for triggering the amendment process, and internal training on how to amend the plans should be considered as means to address the current variance across the country in how plans are amended.

- The current process of amending forest plans is onerous, difficult and time consuming, and does not enable managers to respond quickly and effectively to change.
- The amendment process should be simpler and faster.
- Plan amendments after catastrophic events (such as fire) should be streamlined so that new management policies can be put in place more rapidly and therefore be more effective.
- Monitoring around standards and guidelines can help forests understand why certain objectives are or are not being achieved, and enable them to develop better responses when problems arise.
- Plans should anticipate management that will be required in the fifteen year planning horizon. If action is required that is not in the forest plan, the Forest Service should revise the plan.

Adaptive Management

The discussions regarding Adaptive Management focused on:

- Creating a greater understanding of the definition of effective adaptive management and whether and how the term adaptive management is referenced at the planning rule level; and,
- The need for effective monitoring practices to continuously and effectively evaluate progress based on new available data.

Definition of Effective Adaptive Management

Several participants expressed a desire for a common, more precise understanding of adaptive management and how it might be incorporated or referred to in the planning rule. The general concept of adaptive management is as a structured process that allows for decision making to keep pace with changing conditions. Participants suggested using the wording in current Forest Service NEPA regulations as an initial point of reference for a more detailed definition.

- The definition needs to make clear that adaptive management is not simply ‘flexibility;’ but rather a structured framework for reducing uncertainty, analyzing and reducing risks, and addressing unforeseen changes.
- There is a need to establish clear guidance in the new rule about how to utilize an adaptive approach for determining when and under what conditions amendments to forest plans should be made.
- There have to be clearly defining desired outcomes in order to determine whether or not management practices are, in fact, making progress towards those outcomes.
- The public should have the opportunity to engage in adaptive management processes.

The Need for Effective Monitoring

A comprehensive and continuous monitoring regime as essential to effective adaptive management. Some thought that the planning rule should establish monitoring standards for various types of landscapes, and stipulate that the best and most applicable monitoring practices be utilized to determine if management practices are achieving desired outcomes. Others thought monitoring techniques should not be prescribed at the planning rule level. One approach might for the rule to describe good monitoring characteristics.

- The planning rule could list specific criteria for forest to use in determining what to monitor and which monitoring strategies to employ, but provide enough flexibility at the forest level to accommodate local conditions.
- The planning rule should be prescriptive enough to ensure accountability while enabling forest managers to apply their professional judgment.
- The planning rule should make the link between monitoring, desired outcomes, key indicators and triggers for forest plan amendments – i.e. the process of adaptively managing in the face of changing conditions.
- Flexibility and the ability to respond quickly are important, but should not shortchange the need to identify problems correctly and to determine how emerging scientific information and data will help inform sound management practices.
- It is important that the rule enable and foster innovation. Climate change represents an example of an issue where the science and technology are evolving quickly – managers need to be able to take advantage of innovations in order to respond appropriately.
- The need for up-to-date data is essential for designing and amending sound forest plans.

- Monitoring has to be funded.

Stakeholder Discussion: Third Roundtable and On-Going Collaboration

At the conclusion of the meeting, participants were asked to comment on what from the two initial roundtables were some of the “best ideas” and outstanding questions that should be further explored? A few members of the rule-writing team opened the discussion:

- The Forest Service has pushed the reset button. They have learned that early outreach pays big dividends and are seeing the value of this kind of process.
- The Forest Service has tremendous leadership support for this endeavor.
- It will be a challenge in the planning rule to create the right bridges between landscapes and local communities.
- The planning rule can become abstract, but the passion of stakeholders makes the process come to life. This is an incredibly valuable experience.
- If every single interest mentioned by stakeholders were to be explicitly addressed in the rule, it would become too cumbersome. It is important that we somehow find the shared language and process to allow all interests to be addressed without overburdening the rule.
- It is important to address recreation in the rule, and to make connections to economic value, access, and travel management.
- Discretion, accountability and flexibility are all important, but challenging to capture in a rule.
- The critical issue of monitoring needs more discussion.
- The rule has to balance local, regional, and national interests.

Participants then offered their perspectives:

1. What ideas, concepts and concerns should be explore in further depth at the third roundtable? How should the third roundtable be structured?

- The participation, interest, and passion of everyone involved is impressive. It would be nice to see further discussion of extractive industries, minerals, oil and gas, etc.
- Continue to explore the economic contribution of forest lands to local communities and better ways to coordinate forest planning with local governments. This is especially important for counties with a high percentage of federal land where there is a small tax base. The planning process needs to be fair and equitable for the small communities that are surrounded by forest lands.
- We need to think about how to engage more people as land stewards.

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- There needs to be more clarity about formal Tribal consultation and how input from the Tribal consultation call will be incorporated. A teleconference does not seem as effective as these roundtable events.
 - The Forest Service should specifically include heritage and archeological sites in the rule.
 - The Forest Service should consider using the term “natural and cultural” resources instead of simply referring to “natural resources.”
 - Coordination with local governments is very complex. It is important to bring county commissioners and other local officials into the process. The expectation for how this should be done is different and unique in different communities.
 - The policy-making process needs to be informed by science – this is critical and will lend credibility to plans. It is important to create a framework in the rule to encourage the use of emerging areas of information monitoring and assessment that are better and cheaper.
 - Transforming scientific concepts into policy is challenging and will take work, but need to be further explored.
 - The “all lands” approach needs to be better defined.
 - States agencies and governors need to be involved in these discussions.
 - The rule making-process needs to address how to more clearly define and implement science-based restoration.
 - Overarching regional direction for landscape level restoration is critical.
 - The planning rule should require that plans comply with the Wild Horses and Burros Act.
 - There needs to be a further discussion of collaboration and consensus building.
 - We need to have further discussion about how multiple-use is incorporated into the rule.
 - Timber harvesting should be dealt with separately from other extractive uses because it can be a tool for achieving management goals such as restoration. Do not assume however that the timber industry wants to remain in “janitorial mode”.
 - The rule should enable continued partnerships with ranchers.
 - Local decision-making should be enhanced by the rule.
 - An emphasis on monitoring and data to inform decision making will help the rule withstand challenges.
 - The nexus of authority, where and how decisions are made, should be further explored.
 - The planning rule revision provides an opportunity to create a collective national view and voice about what we expect of our national forests. We as a nation need to articulate what we want from the national forests. It is important to not marginalize the uses that are already there.
 - Wildland fire needs to be further addressed.

- The third roundtable should include a discussion of benefits derived from all our national forests, i.e., how do cultural sites, wilderness areas, recreation, commodities etc. contribute value to this nation socially, culturally and economically? The rule is an opportunity to express these values for a national audience.

2. How do we give people information about what has happened in the roundtable process to date? Synthesis of these meetings?

- Make sure that people who have not been previously involved are able to participate in the discussion.
- Make clear the variety of vehicles for participation, and emphasize that all voices are equally important.
- The next roundtable should focus on the “how” as opposed to the “what”
- Whether in the planning rule or not, planners need information and tools for interacting effectively with stakeholders and integrating multiple points of view.
- These professionally facilitated national roundtables are happening in Washington DC, but most forest land is in the west. While it is great that there are roundtables being conducted around the country, the facilitation at the regional level was different, and discussions were more forest plan and project focused. The discussion at this meeting is very different. It would be nice to see this type of meeting in the regions.
- The methods of participation used in this process could also be useful at the plan level.
- Think about ways to engage urban interests who do not live near national forests.
- To the extent that the rule expresses a collective national voice, it should be easier to get the budgetary wherewithal to support the plan. It is budget allocations that will breathe life into the document.
- It is difficult for many industry representatives to make it to national meetings due to the economic situation. However, it should be noted that they were strongly represented at many regional meetings.
- Recreation continues to draw a lot of interest at these meetings and should be emphasized in the rule.
- The Forest Service should not use this process to address climate change. Rather, the rule should focus on flexibility to address changing conditions.

3. What would you like to see beyond the third roundtable?

- Add some transparency to the Jack-in-the-box nature of rule-making. It would be useful for interested stakeholders to be able to see some of the language and principles that are being developed as drafting proceeds. There are important nuances developed in the drafting stage; it would be great to let people continue discussions throughout the process.

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- Do not place too much emphasis on the use of electronic media for stakeholder input. To do so could exclude some stakeholders from participating.
 - Take advantage of the Open-Government Initiative – it should add transparency and daylight to the rule-making process. The Forest Service should continue to innovate and explore ways to engage stakeholders in the process.
 - The Forest Service should be willing to share draft or potential rule language with the public. Do so in a way that does not raise FACA considerations and with the clarification that draft language is analogous to a trial balloon – and that comments on such draft language are not the same as formal NEPA comments.
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Conclusion

All of the input from this meeting will be taken into consideration by the rule writing team. In addition, it will help form the basis for further deliberation at the third national roundtable, scheduled for May 11-12 in Washington DC at the Legacy Hotel in Rockville, MD, and beyond. The Forest Service is deeply grateful to the roundtable participants for their time and wisdom, and looking forward to upcoming opportunities for further interaction.