

Preface

A Reader's Guide to the FEIS

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is organized into a preface, seven chapters, and twelve appendices. A packet of alternative maps accompanies the document, and the map for the selected alternative is located in the Revised Plan.

Preface - This section briefly describes the contents of each chapter and appendix in the FEIS (listed below). It also gives a brief history of forest planning and summarizes the development of the Revised Plan and FEIS.

Chapter 1 - "Purpose, Need, and Significant Issues" describes the rationale behind this forest plan revision. It explains the need for change and discusses the revision topics. The decisions to be made in the Revised Plan are discussed, and the issues that were raised but not specifically addressed in the revision process are identified.

Chapter 2 - "The Alternatives" describes the process used to develop alternatives, lists important points common to all alternatives, describes the seven alternatives, and identifies the selected alternative. Alternatives initially considered then eliminated from detailed analysis are briefly discussed. The effects of the seven alternatives on major topics are summarized.

Chapter 3 - "The Affected Environment and Consequences" describes current conditions on the Routt National Forest and the consequences of implementing each alternative, with a focus on significant issues and effects.

Chapter 4 - "List of Preparers" lists those instrumental in writing the documents.

Chapter 5 - "Agencies, Organizations, and Individuals" lists those who received copies of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Revised Plan.

Glossary - A glossary of terms provides definitions of technical and legal terms.

Literature Cited - This section lists the references cited in the FEIS.

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Appendices - Appendices provide additional information and detail on subjects addressed in the FEIS.

Appendix A - Issues, Concerns, Opportunities

Appendix B - Description of the Analysis Process

Appendix C - Roadless Area Inventory and Evaluation

Appendix D - Biological Diversity Assessment

Appendix E - Wild and Scenic River Inventory and Evaluation

Appendix F - Research Natural Areas

Appendix G - Silvicultural Methods

Appendix H - Research Needs

Appendix I - Watershed Disturbance Tables

Appendix J - Biological Assessment and Evaluation

Appendix K - Response to Public Comments (Separate Document)

Appendix L - Prescriptions Not Used in the Selected Alternative

Development of the Revised Plan and EIS

Brief History of Forest Planning

The Forest Service has prepared land management and resource use plans to guide inventories, identify special management areas, calculate sustainable use levels, and monitor resource conditions and trends since its inception. The planning process has evolved over time and increased in complexity in response to increasing demands for forest resources, changing desires and expectations of the American public, and changes in the legal statutes regulating federal land management activities.

Management of National Forest System lands is currently governed by several key pieces of federal legislation: the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act (1960), the National Environmental Policy Act (1969), the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (1974), and the National Forest Management Act (1976). These laws directing federal land management have also greatly impacted planning on national forests.

The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 requires management of the National Forest System lands to ensure coordination of multiple uses and a continued supply of goods and services for the American people. The broad multiple use categories under this act are outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) incorporates environmental analysis and public participation into the land management planning process. The NEPA process is intended to help public officials make decisions based on an understanding of environmental consequences and take action to protect, restore, and enhance the environment. The process also ensures that environmental information is made available to public officials and citizens before decisions are made and actions are taken. Implementation of NEPA requires accurate scientific analyses, expert agency input, and public review.

The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (RPA) provides a comprehensive framework for planning on the national forests. While enactment of the RPA did not substantially alter planning procedures, it did make the development and maintenance of Land and Resource Management Plans a legal requirement. The RPA was amended in 1976 by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA).

The enactment of NFMA provided additional legal direction for forest planning. Regulations for implementing NFMA were developed in 1979 and updated in 1982. The 1982 regulations detail the specifics of the forest planning process. Analytical and procedural requirements for development, revision, and significant amendment of forest plans are established. Requirements for monitoring and evaluating forest plan implementation are set.

Under NFMA, procedures for formulating and evaluating alternatives are described, and the alternatives are required to represent a full range of resource outputs and expenditure levels.

Steps Taken in the Development of the Revised Plan and EIS

NFMA regulations require a monitoring and evaluation program on each forest. The objective of the program is to ascertain how well the current forest plan is performing.

In December 1991, the Routt National Forest published its Monitoring and Evaluation Report for the period 1984 to 1991. This report monitored and evaluated Forest plan implementation and identified significant changes in forest resource conditions or public demands. The report also initiated the process of identifying possible modifications to the 1983 Plan.

The Rocky Mountain Regional Guide was developed under NFMA guidelines and issued in May 1992. It provides broad national and regional forest planning direction for all forests in the Rocky Mountain region. The national and regional planning strategies in the Regional Guide are incorporated in the Revised Plan.

In May of 1992, the Routt National Forest held a series of open house meetings to identify parts of the 1983 Plan that potentially required modification and to present findings from the Monitoring and Evaluation Report. During the meetings, possible changes to the Plan were discussed and refined. The results of the meetings and the refined changes were mailed nationwide to more than 3,500 people who had previously expressed interest in activities on the Routt National Forest. As part of the mailings, the following questions were asked:

- Did we omit an important topic?
- Did we include an unnecessary topic?
- Did we adequately describe the topics?

Public comments and comments from federal, state, and local agencies were considered and incorporated into the Purpose and Need/Planning Criteria document, published in September 1992. This document determined the initial scope of the revision process, summarized public comments received, and identified how each topic would be addressed. The revision topics are as follows:

- Biological Diversity
- Roadless Areas/Wilderness
- Timber Suitability/Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ)
- Recreation/Travel Management
- Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) was published in June 1993. The AMS determines the Forest's ability to supply goods and services in response to public demand, based on past and present land uses and current management direction. The AMS evaluates how well the 1983 Plan addresses critical issues or revision topics. It also provides a basis for formulating a broad range of reasonable alternatives. A list of preliminary alternatives was included in the AMS.

A Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the Federal Register in July 1993. The NOI summarized work completed on the scope of analysis, public involvement, revision topics, and preliminary alternatives.

In September 1993, five alternatives responding to the revision topics were developed. An additional alternative was submitted by the Colorado Environmental Coalition (CEC). During a series of open houses and media disclosures in September 1993, the Forest solicited comments from the public on the five alternatives and the CEC proposal. The public was asked

if the range of alternatives adequately addressed issues and concerns, and if not, whether alternatives need to be added, modified, or eliminated.

The Forest received many written responses, including an additional detailed alternative proposal from the Jackson County Multiple Use Coalition. Based on comments received, the Forest analyzed, developed, and refined the seven alternatives. Chapter 2 discusses the alternatives in detail. The next step in the revision process was to describe existing conditions and estimate the effects and environmental consequences of the alternatives. These conditions, effects, and consequences are discussed in Chapter 3.

The DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan were published in February of 1996. The public comment period for the Revised Plan and EIS, as required by law, is a minimum of 90 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability of the documents in the Federal Register. The public comment period was extended an additional 45 days. A total of 299 letters were received with comments on the DEIS. These comments and Forest Services responses can be found in Appendix K.

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