



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **FOREST SERVICE RELEASES ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTION FOR NEW PLANNING RULE**

***Instructions will guide forest and grassland managers in carrying out new rule***

WASHINGTON, March 17, 2005—The U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service today issued the proposed administrative policy for implementing its new planning regulation, which governs the 155 national forests and 20 grasslands. The public will have 90 days to comment on the policy.

The interim "National Forest System Land Management Planning Directives," a summary of which will be published in the Federal Register in the next several days, can be found in the Forest Service Manual and the Forest Service Handbook, essentially internal "how to" guidebooks. The directives detail procedural requirements and responsibilities for forest and grassland managers to implement the new planning rule, which became effective Jan. 5.

"This policy direction will provide consistent overall guidance to our line officers as they begin to revise their forest plans using the new planning rule," said Forest Service Associate Chief Sally Collins. "These instructions are essential for realizing the vision outlined in the new rule—to provide future generations with healthier forests, cleaner air and water, and more abundant wildlife while sustaining a variety of forest uses."

The policy includes guidance on how to develop an Environmental Management System tool to improve performance and accountability, afford the public with improved public participation opportunities, provide for species protection by taking into account the best available science, and develop guidelines on forest activities, such as hazardous fuels reduction.

--Chapter 20 of the handbook outlines how planning documents are used to develop an Environmental Management System following internationally-accepted standards. It also shows how planning documents will be used to help conduct comprehensive, independent audits of the Forest Service's work.

--Chapter 30 of the handbook details the public participation, collaboration, consultation, and notification process and describes each party's responsibilities and relationships in these processes. It also provides guidance for the pre-decisional objection process.

--Chapter 40 of the handbook describes plans for sustainability while taking into account the best available science. It also states how to analyze for ecosystem and species diversity as well as how to identify species-of-concern and species-of-interest.

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--Chapter 60 of the handbook gives guidance on timber and forest vegetation resource planning, including for guidance identifying lands suitable as well as not suitable for timber production.

Forty-two forests will revise their forest plans in the next several years; several units are slated to begin this year. The new rule and the proposed directives are available at [www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma](http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma).

The directives are effective immediately, but may only be in effect for up to 18 months. Written comments on the directives may be sent to: USDA Forest Service Content Analysis Team, ATTN: Planning Directives, P.O. Box 22777, Salt Lake City, UT 84122. Send faxed comments to 801-517-1015 or e-mailed comments to [planningdirectives@fs.fed.us](mailto:planningdirectives@fs.fed.us) or through [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).

The final planning directives, which will take into account public comments received during the 90-day comment period, will be released within 18 months.