



Forest Service Planning Rule Public Engagement

The Forest Service's National Planning Rule is one of the Obama Administration's Open Government Initiatives. In the spirit of open government, the proposed rule was developed using an open, participatory, and transparent process, and was informed by:

- Science and input from scientists,
- Over 26,000 comments to the Notice of Intent,
- Input from 3000 members of the public who attended the more than 40 public roundtables hosted by the Forest Service before the development of the proposed rule,
- 16 Tribal consultation meetings,
- Forest Service employee feedback and agency expertise, and
- Over 300 comments posted to the Planning Rule blog.

We are now entering a very different phase of the process for developing a new NFMA planning rule. The proposed rule and draft environmental impact statement have been released to the public, and we are now in a formal public comment period. This phase has specific legal sideboards established by the Administrative Procedure Act (APA). Under the APA, in order for public input on a proposed rule to be considered in the development of a final rule, that input must be clearly documented in a written record available for any member of the public to inspect. For this reason, we are not using public dialogue to inform changes between the draft and final rules: the feedback must be formally submitted in writing for consideration.

The public forums we are holding during this phase will have a different focus than the 2010 roundtables. These forums are designed to increase openness and transparency by making agency officials available to the public for questions about the proposal and the intent behind provisions in the proposal. Our intent is to increase understanding of and provide the public the opportunity to ask questions about the proposed rule and accompanying documents, to help inform the development of formal written comments by members of the public. The Forest Service will not be soliciting or accepting public comments at the forums.

Public forums to facilitate public understanding of the proposed rule and accompanying documents will be held throughout the country. A schedule of forum dates and further information is available on the planning rule Website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/planningrule>.

How to Submit Formal Comments

In order for a comment on the proposed rule to be considered and become part of the record for the development of the final planning rule, it must be submitted in writing by **May 16, 2011**. Any comments on the DEIS must also be in writing and received by that date.

It would be helpful if comments:

- Identify the section or sections of the proposed rule a comment is referring to (each rule section is numbered);
- State each concern, criticism, and suggestion (including suggested rule text) as clearly and specifically as possible; and
- Focus on this rulemaking, and not on other issues or concerns regarding the Forest Service.

Comments on the proposed rule and/or the DEIS can be submitted through:

1. The World Wide Web/Internet Website at <http://www.govcomments.com> or <http://www.regulations.gov>
2. Mail: Forest Service Planning DEIS

c/o Bear West Company
132 E 500 S.
Bountiful, UT 84010

3. Fax: 801-397-1605

For mail and fax, please identify your written comments by including "planning rule" on the cover sheet or the first page.

All comments, including names and addresses, when provided, are placed in the record and are available for public inspection and copying. The public may inspect comments at <http://contentanalysisgroup.com/fsrd>.