



**Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests
U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service, Southern Region
4931 Broad River Road Columbia, S.C. 29212**

**Contact: Michelle Burnett
803-920-6167**

Oct. 17, 2012 (FMS 17)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FRANCIS MARION NATIONAL FOREST ASKS USERS TO “HELP PLAN THE FOREST’S FUTURE”

Agency Kicks Off Forest Plan Revision with Two Community Conversations

(Columbia, S.C.) The Francis Marion National Forest announced today it is beginning a process to revise its Land and Resource Management Plan. Commonly referred to as the forest plan, it provides direction for managing the forest’s longleaf pine restoration activities; recreation areas; vegetation; rivers and tributaries; wilderness areas; fish and wildlife, including the red-cockaded woodpecker; and cultural and heritage assets.

“The Francis Marion National Forest plays a unique role in South Carolina’s coastal landscape,” said Acting Forest Supervisor Keith Lawrence. “A revised forest plan will further enhance the national forest’s contribution to South Carolina’s ecological, social and economic sustainability.”

The Francis Marion National Forest is one of the first national forests to revise its forest plan under the new Forest Service planning rule. Forest Service managers and scientists from the state’s coastal national forest today also are officially inviting people who are interested in the future of the forest to attend a series of Community Conversations to “Help Plan the Forest’s Future.”

“While we already have strong relationships in the community, which we hope to make even stronger, we want to invite private landowners, other federal and state agencies, members of the business and tourism industries, municipalities and local governments, recreationists – anyone who wants to help plan the forest’s future – to come to one of our meetings and have a conversation with us and others who share the same interest,” said Orlando Sutton, district ranger for the Francis Marion Ranger District.

The Community Conversations will take place on Oct. 25 and Nov. 15 as follows:

Oct. 25
6 – 8 p.m.
Macedonia Middle School:
200 Macedonia Foxes Circle
Moncks Corner, SC 29461

-more-

The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

2-2-2-2

FRANCIS MARION NATIONAL FOREST ASKS USERS TO HELP PLAN THE FOREST'S FUTURE

Agency Kicks Off Forest Plan Revision with Two Community Conversations

Nov. 15, 2012
St James-Santee Elementary
8900 North Hwy 17
McClellanville, SC 29458

Today marks the beginning of the three year planning process, which starts with a comprehensive assessment of conditions and opportunities on the national forest to help identify and evaluate relevant information. After this assessment is concluded late spring 2013, the next step is to draft a revised forest plan, including the development of an Environmental Impact Statement. Public involvement and collaboration will continue throughout the process.

The current forest plan was approved in 1995 and has provided management direction for the past 17 years. The new planning process will consider new or emerging issues and will use an all-lands approach to land management planning, recognizing that many management issues require an understanding of what is happening both on and off the national forest.

More information on the planning process can be found on the Francis Marion National Forest website at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/scnfs/fmpln. To be added to the forest plan mailing list or to submit comments and information to the planning team for consideration as the assessment is developed, send an email to comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us or call Mary Morrison at (803) 561-4000.

###

The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.