

APACHE-SITGREAVES NATIONAL FORESTS



Announces the Release of the Proposed Plan and DEIS

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests has developed a proposed land management plan and a programmatic draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for public review and comment. The final land management plan will replace the current plan, written in 1987, and provide guidance for managing the 2.1 million acre Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests for the next 10 to 15 years. The proposed plan is based on best available science and years of collaboration with the public, Tribes, other federal agencies, and state and local governments. The DEIS evaluates four alternatives, including the proposed plan and the current plan, and discloses the environmental consequences that could occur under each alternative. Comments received on the proposed plan and DEIS will inform the decision on the final land management plan that is expected in spring 2014.

Major Themes of the Proposed Plan

The proposed plan emphasizes **Maintenance and Improvement of Ecosystem Health** by:

- Restoring and/or maintaining all 14 vegetation types that occur on the forests. Mechanical and fire restoration treatments would result in a reduction of excess tree densities, return of natural fire regimes, well-distributed old growth, aspen regeneration, and restoration of historic grasslands.
- Restoring priority watersheds and moving riparian areas to proper functioning condition.
- Sustaining and/or restoring habitat for fish and wildlife.

The proposed plan emphasizes **Managed Recreation** by:

- Providing a balance of outdoor recreation opportunities that visitors seek (motorized, nonmotorized, developed, dispersed).
- Managing existing special areas (e.g., national recreation trails, eligible wild and scenic rivers) and recommending 7,100 acres of additions to Escudilla and Bear Wallow Wilderness areas.

The proposed plan emphasizes **Community-Forest Interaction** by:

- Reducing excess fuel loads and the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire to nearby communities.
- Providing an abundant source of wood that can contribute to wood-processing and biomass industries, provide fuelwood for local families, and trees to tribes for traditional and cultural purposes.
- Continuing livestock grazing that contributes to the cultural diversity and stability of local communities.

Major Changes from the 1987 Plan

- More strategic—provides direction for the future based on issues we face today (e.g., uncharacteristic wildfires, invasive species).
- Describes desired conditions—what we (public and Forest Service) want the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs to look like and provide.
- Focuses on ecosystem restoration including treatment strategies that would result in healthier and more resilient conditions, reduced risk of uncharacteristic wildfire, and increased availability of wood byproducts for local and regional markets.
- Reduces the number of management indicator species (MIS) from 17 to 3 and identifies 2 ecological indicators.
- Adds direction to contain, control, or eradicate invasive plant and animal species.
- Manages for sustainable recreation by emphasizing maintenance of existing recreation areas, trails, and other developments.
- Sets the framework for future travel management planning.
- Recommends 7,100 acres of additions to Escudilla and Bear Wallow Wilderness.
- Recommends 7,800 acres of new research natural areas.
- Emphasizes fuels treatments around high-risk communities and continues work with counties to achieve goals outlined in the community wildfire protection plans.
- Protects traditional cultural properties and sacred sites known to be used by Tribes.

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Apache-Sitgreaves Proposed Plan and DEIS Questions and Answers

Q: What is a land management plan?

A: All national forests have a land management plan that provides broad guidance for planning specific projects and activities. Plans are based on science, law, and input from citizens. They establish desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, and suitability of uses for a national forest. The plan itself does not compel any action or authorize any use. However, all projects and activities must be consistent with the plan or the plan must be amended.

Q: What is plan revision?

A: The National Forest Management Act requires all land management plans be revised every 10 to 15 years. The Apache-Sitgreaves NFs original plan was approved in 1987. It is outdated and does not address current issues. The 1987 plan is being revised to incorporate changed social and resource conditions, new information, and current science. The Apache-Sitgreaves NFs is at a major milestone in the plan revision process: the release of a proposed plan and DEIS for public review and comment. Public comments received during the 90-day comment period will be used to help finalize the land management plan and environmental impact statement.

Q: Where can I find the Proposed Plan and DEIS?

A: These documents are on the forests website: http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/asnf/plan_deis. They are also available for viewing at the Ranger Districts offices in Springerville, Alpine, Duncan (Clifton RD), Heber-Overgaard (Black Mesa RD), and Lakeside. Limited numbers of compact discs (CDs) and hardcopies are available and may be obtained by contacting one of the plan revision team members listed below.

Q: When are my comments due?

A: It is anticipated that the Notice of Availability (NOA) for the DEIS will be published in the Federal Register on Friday, February 15, 2013. The publication date of the NOA in the Federal Register starts the 90-day comment period.

Q: Is this the same thing as TMR (travel management planning)?

A: No. TMR is a separate process with a goal of identifying specific roads, trails, and areas that are open to motorized vehicle travel. Due to the Wallow Fire and other priorities, TMR is on hold. The proposed plan makes no decisions to open or close National Forest System roads, trails, or areas. The plan would provide direction for the future planning of motor vehicle routes and areas. It identifies areas that are suitable or not suitable for future development of new roads, trails, and areas.

Q: Does the proposed plan account for multiple uses?

A: Yes. Consistent with the Multiple Use Sustained-Yield Act, the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs would continue to be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes.

Q: Where do the White Mountain Stewardship Project (WMSP) and the Four-Forest Restoration Initiative (4-FRI) fit?

A: The proposed plan sets the framework for continuing the WMSP and lays the foundation for supporting the landscape-scale restoration objectives of 4-FRI. These two projects will play a major role in meeting the ecosystem restoration objectives identified in the proposed plan.

Q: I have more questions, can someone help me?

A: Yes, below are a few options:

Check out the Reader's Guide for tips on reviewing and commenting.

The guide is located on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs' website at http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/asnf/plan_deis.

Attend a public open house in your area: Planning team members will be available to answer your questions.

Contact a planning team member:

- Michelle Davalos, Forest Planner, (928) 333-6334
- Mitchel White, Ecologist, (928) 333-6348
- Evelyn Treiman, Recreation Planner, (928) 333-6322
- Linda White-Trifaro, Wildlife Biologist, (928) 333-6335

We also have planning team members that specialize in other resource areas (air, water, archaeology, range, fisheries, etc.). Contact one of the folks above and we'll help you connect with the appropriate team member.

Contact the Forest Supervisor or Deputy Forest Supervisor:

Jim Zornes, Forest Supervisor and Tom Osen, Deputy Forest Supervisor can be reached at (928) 333-6338, (928) 333-4301, or TTY (928) 333-6292.

Plan Revision Open Houses		
Date/Time	AZ Town/City	Location
Tuesday, February 26, 2013 4:00—7:00 p.m.	Show Low	Show Low City Hall Deuce of Clubs Room 180 N. 9 th Street
Wednesday, February 27, 2013 4:00—7:00 p.m.	Springerville	Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Supervisor's Office Conference Room 30 S. Chiricahua Dr. (behind Subway)
Thursday, February 28, 2013 4:00—7:00 p.m.	Duncan	Clifton Ranger District Conference Room 397240 AZ 75 (near the Three Way Store)