

INTRODUCTION

I. UNDERSTANDING THE FOREST PLAN

PURPOSE OF THE FOREST PLAN

This is the *Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland Land and Resource Management Plan*, usually called the *Forest Plan*. It has been prepared in accordance with the 1976 National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), other laws, and associated regulations. This *Plan* revises and replaces a *Forest Plan* first released in 1984.

The *Revised Forest Plan*, henceforth called simply the *Forest Plan*, provides guidance for all resource management activities on the Forest. It establishes:

- forestwide multiple-use management goals and objectives
- forestwide management requirements (also known as standards and guidelines)
- direction applicable to specific management areas and geographic areas
- designation of lands suited for timber production and other resource management activities
- monitoring and evaluation requirements
- recommendations to Congress for the establishment of wilderness, wild and scenic rivers
- recommendations to the Regional Forester for Research Natural Areas.

The *Forest Plan* embodies the provisions of the NFMA, its implementing regulations, and other guiding documents. Land-use determinations, management area prescriptions, and standards and guidelines constitute a statement of the management direction. Projected outputs, services, and rates of implementation depend on the annual budgeting process and on changes in laws and regulations.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE *FOREST PLAN* TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

The planning process and the analysis procedures used to develop this *Forest Plan* are described

or referred to in the accompanying *Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)*. Several alternatives were developed as the *Forest Plan* was revised, in accordance with the NFMA and NEPA. An extensive analysis of the alternatives is described in the *FEIS*. Environmental analysis of projects to implement the *Forest Plan* will reference the *FEIS*.

The actual decisions that were made in creating this *Forest Plan* are described in the accompanying Record of Decision (ROD).

Specific activities and projects will be planned and implemented annually, based on *Forest Plan* direction. Forest Service staff will perform environmental analyses on these projects and activities. The environmental analysis documents will incorporate the data and evaluations in the *Forest Plan* and will be tiered to the *Final Environmental Impact Statement*.

The management goals, guidelines and standards stated in the *Forest Plan* for the Pawnee National Grassland may, in the near future, be in need of updating or amendment in order to come in line with later assessments or analyses such as the “Northern Great Plains Management Plans Revisions”. These adjustments or refinements would most likely be in the areas of threatened and endangered species management, grassland grazing systems and utilization standards or grassland ecosystems management.

A READER’S GUIDE TO THE *FOREST PLAN*

The reader will find the following in this document:

Chapter One, Section One-Forestwide Goals and Objectives: A description of goals that will be emphasized and objectives that will help insure measurable progress toward those goals.

Goals describe desired end-results and are normally expressed in broad general terms. *Forest Plan* goals link broad agency goals as set forth by law, executive order, regulation, agency directives and the Resource Planning Act (RPA) program. These goals also closely reflect the regional goals described in the *Rocky Mountain Regional Guide* (1992).

Objectives are concise statements of measurable results intended to promote achievement of *Forest Plan* goals. Objectives describe (1) desired resource conditions in the area covered by the plan, either in the next decade or longer and (2) desired levels of goods and services that the plan is capable of producing in the next decade.

Chapter One, Section Two-Forestwide Operational Goals, Standards and Guidelines: A specification of goals, standards and guidelines that apply generally to the daily work of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland. Each item is identified as a goal, a standard or a guideline.

Chapter Two-Geographic Area Direction: Management direction by geographic area is new for forest plans. This chapter contains a brief description, map, statement of desired condition, and standards and guidelines for each geographically discrete area. This is the most detailed level of *Forest Plan* direction, and applies *in addition* to forestwide and management area direction.

Chapter Three-Management Area Direction: This chapter contains "templates" for managing areas in particular ways called management area prescriptions. Each one describes the area's desired condition and the governing standards and guidelines. These standards and guidelines apply *in addition* to the forestwide direction specified in Chapter One.

Chapter Four-Monitoring and Evaluation Process: This chapter describes how the Forest Service will ensure that the *Forest Plan* remains current and yields the intended results.

Supplemental Table: Located at the back of this volume, the table shows the level and amount of Forests and Grassland activities and outputs for three different budget levels. Readers can use this information to determine what can be accomplished and what further accomplishments will be possible if additional funding is received in different areas.

A separate volume appended to this *Forest Plan* contains:

Appendix A- National Strategic Goals: National goals relevant to land and resource management contained in the *Forest Service Manual* (FSM).

Appendix B- Key Policies and Directives System: Key national policies related to land and resource management contained in the *Forest Service Manual* and *Forest Service Handbook* (FSH).

Appendix C- Relevant Federal and State Statutes and Other Regulations: Key statutes, regulations, and executive orders related to land and resource management.

Appendix D- Oil and Gas Leasing Supplemental Stipulations: An explanation of each stipulation shown on the Oil and Gas Map; includes a general discussion of Forest Service leasing policy.

Appendix E- Suitable Lands: Explanations of the categories of lands suitable for timber harvest, as shown on the *timber suitability map*.

Appendix F- Research Natural Areas: Description of the process used to identify, establish, and manage Research Natural Areas.

Appendix G- Glossary: Although efforts have been made to eliminate Forest Service jargon, many terms found throughout the *Forest Plan* and its accompanying *Final Environmental Impact Statement* are not familiar to most people. The glossary defines many of these words.

Maps: Two maps are included with this *Forest Plan*: a map of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests (ARNF) and a map of the Pawnee National Grassland (PNG). The ARNF map includes sections showing the decisions of Timber Suitability, Management Areas, Summer Travel Strategy, Fire Strategy, Grazing, Visual Quality Objectives (VQO), Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS), Winter Travel Strategy, and Habitat Effectiveness. The PNG map includes sections showing the decisions of Oil and Gas Leasing, Management Areas, Visual Quality Objectives (VQO), and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS).

The *Forest Plan* incorporates the goals outlined in the *Amended Rocky Mountain Regional Guide*. Direction and reference material from other publications may be incorporated by reference, as well. "Incorporating by reference" means that the referenced direction or information is a part of the document without actually being reproduced.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE *FOREST PLAN*

The *Forest Plan* provides the framework to guide the day-to-day resource management operations of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland (ARNF-PNG) and land and resource management decisions made during project planning. The Forest Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 requires that resource plans and permits, contracts and other instruments issued for the use and occupancy of National Forest System land be consistent with the *Forest Plan*. Site-specific project decisions should also be consistent with the *Forest Plan*, unless the *Forest Plan* is modified by amendment.

LANDSCAPE LEVEL ASSESSMENT

The *Forest Plan* provides guidance for all resource management activities at a broad scale. However, linking the general direction in the *Forest Plan* to site-specific areas on the Forests and Grassland can sometimes be difficult. Landscape level assessments can provide this linkage and are used to refine understanding of existing conditions, ecosystem processes, and forest management issues. Landscape assessments will generally include a discussion of specific discrepancies between existing and desired conditions, and recommendation on the direction and magnitude of change needed to move toward desired conditions. Assessments allow information from many sources and different resources to be integrated so that projects can be tailored to best meet the needs of the area. Information gained during landscape assessment can also be used later as the basis for analysis of cumulative effects during project-level planning, thus streamlining some project-level analysis. The Forests and Grassland has scheduled landscape assessments on three to 10 geographic areas annually during this planning period.

PROJECT LEVEL ANALYSIS

The objectives of project planning are twofold. In the case of agency-initiated actions, the objective is to achieve or move toward the integrated direction in the *Forest Plan*. For example, if improvement of fisheries habitat is a forestwide goal, and a landscape-level assessment has identified elevated stream temperatures caused by removal of riparian vegetation as a problem, projects to achieve or move toward that goal might include creating streamside exclosures to promote recovery of streamside vegetation.

In the case of proposals made by others, the objective of project planning is to determine if the proposal is or could be made consistent with forestwide and management area standards, and if the project is in the public's interest in terms of forestwide goals and objectives. Information from landscape-level assessment can be used to provide early insight into land use issues related to proposals made by others. An example of an external proposal might be the proposed construction of a road or utility line across National Forest System lands to serve private land.

Forest Plan goals and management area maps guide the identification and selection of potential agency projects. The determination of whether an individual project is consistent with the *Forest Plan* is based on meeting forestwide management area direction.

BUDGET FORMULATION AND EXECUTION

Annual budget proposals for the National Forest System are based on activities to achieve the goals and direction of each forest plan. Monitoring the results and recording the actual costs of implementation provide data for the year-to-year budget proposals. Costs to implement a forest plan are not complete without provision for adequate monitoring and evaluation of projects.

Implementation of the annual budget must be in compliance with the *Forest Plan* and any specific direction provided in the annual Congressional Appropriation Act (FSM 1930). Because actual allocations often do not provide for full funding of *Forest Plan* implementation, the scheduled actions for any particular year must be adjusted to conform to the intent of Congress. Forests and Grassland managers must determine what mix of activities is most appropriate in any given year and use every opportunity to move toward the overall intent of the *Forest Plan*.

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT AND REVISION

Forest Plan Amendment

The amendment process changes a discrete component of management direction in a forest plan. Unless circumstances warrant a revision, the amendment process should generally be initiated whenever the Forest Supervisor determines through monitoring and evaluation that achievement of a Forestwide objective is unduly constrained by conflicting *Forest Plan* direction or that

adequate progress toward achieving the desired future condition is not being made.

Other needs for amendments may arise from agency-initiated projects or external proposals. Suggested amendments are analyzed and the decisions are documented in a decision notice or record of decision at the time approval is given. An environmental assessment or environmental impact statement prepared for the project or proposal evaluates the consequences of the proposed amendment and alternatives to it.

Significant and non-significant amendments are defined in 36 CFR 219.10(f). Generally speaking, significant amendments are those that affect the long-term balance of goods and services produced on the forest. The Forest Supervisor determines the significance of proposed amendments and is the responsible official for non-significant amendments; the Regional Forester is the responsible official for significant amendments.

Forest Plan Revision

The *Forest Plan* will normally be revised on a 10-year cycle. Exceptions to this general rule may occur for many reasons. For example, some catastrophic event might require earlier revision. Scheduled inventories, anticipated staffing changes or other circumstances that could improve planning efficiency might warrant a delay in the normal revision schedule. A comprehensive review of the *Forest Plan* should be conducted prior to initiating any *Plan* revision. Such a review is conducted by a Forest Service interdisciplinary team and includes the following:

- a. results of recent monitoring and evaluation along with pertinent research findings and recommendations
- b. a review of new laws, regulations or policies that may indicate a need to change the *Forest Plan*
- c. a determination of how well the Forest is progressing toward the stated desired future condition
- d. identification of emerging issues and opportunities
- e. analysis of projected demand for selected outputs
- f. evaluation of predicted and actual ecosystem responses
- g. assessment of predicted and actual costs, outputs, responses, etc.
- h. review of the national strategic (RPA) program

INTEGRATION WITH FOREST SERVICE DIRECTIVES SYSTEM

Management direction in the Forest Service Directives System, including the *Forest Service Manual* and the *Forest Service Handbook*, is part of *Forest Plan* management direction. Applicable laws, regulations and policies are part of the management direction even though they may not be restated in the *Forest Plan*.

Appendices A and B reference the minimum resource management direction described in the Directives System. Nothing precludes the development of additional minimum resource management direction whenever appropriate.

II. UNDERSTANDING THE ARAPAHO AND ROOSEVELT NATIONAL FORESTS AND PAWNEE NATIONAL GRASSLAND

The Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland are located in northern Colorado and include over 1.5 million acres of federally managed land. The Continental Divide and the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains form the "backbone" of the Forests. From this winding, high crest, with some peaks over 14,000 feet, foothills slope down to meet mesas and high prairie at 5,000 to 6,000 feet elevation on the east and to broad, often open, mountain valleys at 7,000 to 8,000 feet elevation to on the west. The glacially carved peaks, snowfields, lakes, alpine tundra, and towering canyon walls carved by rivers through the foothills, together with dramatic changes in vegetation over an altitude span of 9,000 feet, create breathtaking vistas for sightseers. Between the Forest and the Grassland, along the western edge of the Great Plains, lies the heavily populated urban corridor stretching from Colorado Springs to Fort Collins, home to three million residents but interspersed with agricultural lands that since early settlement have benefitted from irrigation waters flowing from the mountains.

The Pawnee National Grassland is primarily Great Plains shortgrass prairie and is backed by a panorama of beige and coral rock ledges. The Pawnee Buttes are a well-known landmark on the Grassland. The prairie is home to over 200 bird species, pronghorn antelope, coyote, prairie dog, and many other mammals.

Counties containing lands covered by the *Forest Plan* include Boulder, Clear Creek, Gilpin, Grand, Jefferson, Larimer, Park and Weld Counties, all in Colorado.

THE FORESTS AND GRASSLAND: DISTINCTIVE ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

People who live, work, study and play in the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland appreciate the area's many special opportunities and benefits. On a global and national scale, the Forests and Grassland:

- rank among the top National Forests for year-round recreational use
- offer some of the most popular downhill skiing in the country
- include the Arapaho National Recreation Area and Colorado's first nationally designated Wild and Scenic River, the Cache la Poudre
- have over 300 miles of National Scenic Byways, including the Mount Evans highway, the highest paved road in North America

- are the setting for part of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and several National Recreation Trails
- include nationally designated historic sites: Homestead Meadows, Arrowhead Lodge, Denver Northwestern & Pacific Railway Historic District, the Boulder & Western Railway Historic District, and the West Stoneham Archaeological District
- encompass eight nationally designated wilderness areas, in 295,512 acres of National Forest System land
- surround Rocky Mountain National Park, one of the treasures of the National Park system
- provide internationally acclaimed birding opportunities on the Grassland

From a regional perspective, the Forests and Grassland:

- are a recharge area for numerous reservoirs that provide water for community, agricultural, and industrial uses
- include several 14,000 foot mountain peaks, Mount Evans and Grays and Torreys peaks
- are the setting for the scenic Pawnee Buttes
- provide diverse habitats to maintain population viability of native and introduced plant, fish, and animal species
- offer a landscape setting ranging from high plains to rugged mountain areas with alpine conditions
- contribute to local communities with economic returns-to-counties, employment, and wildfire protection

RESOURCE COMMODITIES AND SERVICES FROM THE FORESTS AND GRASSLAND

Following is a brief summary of how management responds to demand and supply conditions for resource commodities and services, production potential, and use and development opportunities within the Forests and Grassland (36 CFR 219.11(a)). This information was derived from the accompanying *Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)*.

Supply conditions, production potential, and use and development opportunities vary by alternative. Differences among alternatives are displayed in the *FEIS*. The supplemental tables show specific levels of outputs, activities, allocation and costs for all alternatives. The supplemental table in the *Forest Plan* displays the selected alternative.

Biological Diversity, Ecosystem Health and Sustainability: The *Forest Plan* is based on the premise that the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland are managed to provide multiple benefits to people in a manner that is sustainable over time, and that those benefits which people need and desire will only be sustained when the ecosystems from which they are derived are sustained.

National Forest-Residential Intermix: Increasing development of private lands within the Forest boundary has added complexity to management in areas of mixed ownership. The *FEIS* has recognized that these areas present special management challenges. To help guide management actions in these areas, an *intermix management area prescription* has been applied to 27,032 acres on the Forest.

Oil and Gas Leasing: Currently, there are 44 producing wells on National Forest System lands on the Pawnee National Grassland. Projections indicate 15 dryholes and 10 producing wells on the Grassland and three dryholes and seven producers on the mountain districts.

Recreation: The demand for recreational activities from a growing population has placed a great deal of pressure on the ARNF-PNG's lands and facilities. Conflicts among users and with other resources continue to increase. Categories of recreational use are:

Developed Recreation: Developed recreation includes all recreational activities that take place on a developed recreational site. Developed recreational use was 854,500 Recreation Visitor Days (RVDs) in 1995. Predicted demand during the next 10 years is 1,122,800. This is a 31.4 percent increase.

Dispersed Recreation: Dispersed recreation includes all recreational activities that take place on the Forests and Grassland outside developed recreational sites. Use was 1,745,200 RVDs in 1995, and is projected to rise to 2,484,900 RVDs in 2005--an increase of approximately 42.4 percent. Since 1984 dispersed recreation, both motorized and nonmotorized, has increased at an average annual rate of 7.9 percent; this rate is assumed to continue in the future.

Inventoried Roadless Areas: The 1984 *Forest Plan* contained direction for roadless areas. The public has shown a strong interest in the management of roadless areas, with opinions ranging from recommending them for wilderness designation, to opening them up for motorized recreation and timber production. The *FEIS* addressed management area allocations for these areas and evaluated them individually. Appendix C of the accompanying *FEIS* gives details.

Timber Management: There is a great deal of controversy concerning benefits of the timber program: How much land is suitable for timber production? How much timber will be produced? What kind of logging techniques will be used to produce it? Much of the vegetation treatment accomplished through timber harvest is to improve conditions for wildlife, reduce forest fuels in areas of high potential wildfire risk and restore the forests to healthier conditions, while retaining an aesthetically pleasing natural environment. The priority for timber production and the compatibility of scheduling timber harvest has been determined for each management area.

Travel Management: The Forest transportation system currently consists of 2,546 miles of forest development roads (FDRs) and 722 miles of forest development trails (FDTs). An additional 690 miles of inventoried nonsystem travel routes, termed “ways,” have been created by Forest users traveling off FDRs and FDTs. In the *FEIS*, travel management was analyzed on a landscape basis in order to achieve a travel system that will allow the best combination of uses that each designated geographic area can support, based on demand and on concerns related to resource protection. Eventually, and based on site-specific environmental decisions, all “ways” will either be reclassified as FDRs or FDTs or will be scheduled for obliteration.

Water Resources: The importance of water on the ARNF-PNG has not changed. Many cities along the Front Range are experiencing a doubling of their populations every 25 to 30 years, with a corresponding rise in demand for water. In addition to providing the traditional commodities of timber, grazing, and minerals, the Forests and Grassland are an important source of water for both municipal and agricultural use.

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