



United States Department of Agriculture



# Plan Revision Public Engagement Strategy

Bridger-Teton National Forest, Wyoming  
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USDA Forest Service



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## Contents

Public Engagement and Inclusion Strategy.....	2
<b>Introduction</b> .....	2
<b>Purpose</b> .....	3
<b>Roles and Responsibilities for Engagement</b> .....	3
Responsible Official .....	3
Engagement Specialist .....	3
Plan Revision Team .....	4
<b>The Bridger-Teton National Forest</b> .....	4
<b>Overview of the Plan Revision Process</b> .....	5
<b>What a Forest Plan is and is not (Scope)</b> .....	8
<b>Participations Goals and Objectives</b> .....	10
<b>Guiding Principles and Spectrum of Participation</b> .....	12
<b>Tracking Public Engagement and Determining Effectiveness</b> .....	14
Participation Assessment.....	16
<b>Internal and External Situation Assessment</b> .....	16
<b>Interested Parties Analysis</b> .....	19
<b>Engagement Tools</b> .....	23
<b>Figures</b>	
Figure 1 Map of the Bridger-Teton National Forest .....	4
Figure 2 The Three Phases of Forest Planning .....	5
Figure 3 Nine Steps in the Forest Planning Process.....	6
Figure 4 Graphic Highlighting Three Key Components of Forest Planning .....	7
Figure 5 Graphic Stating Why Forest Planning is Important.....	8
Figure 6 IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (Adapted from the IAP2 International Association for Public Participation) .....	13
<b>Tables</b>	
Table 1 Principles and Commitments for Engagement and Participation .....	12

## Public Engagement and Inclusion Strategy

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### Introduction

This public engagement and inclusion strategy describes the overall direction for how and when those that are connected to the Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF) will be involved in helping revise the Forest Land Management Plan, from the early phases of planning through finalization of the plan and subsequent monitoring. The Bridger-Teton National Forest is committed to engaging interested citizens and groups in an inclusive and open process under the new 2012 Planning Rule, one which considers the broad range of resources and uses in the Forest, honors the history of the Forest and the values the Forest contributes within the broader region, and is transparent about how management decisions may affect adjacent communities. This strategy provides the roadmap for implementing the 2012 Forest Service Planning Rule's commitment to engaging interested parties throughout the planning process.

The term “inclusion” refers to the practices that provide equitable opportunity and access to the land management plan revision process. The term “external engagement” and “interested parties” used in this document is a broad term that includes private citizens, local, state, regional, and national government entities; collaborative groups, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples, and others that use, live adjacent to, or are influenced by actions and activities that occur on the Bridger-Teton National Forest. Internal employee and line officer (i.e. forest supervisor, district rangers) engagement is also a critical component of a comprehensive strategy as, like many external parties, employees possess intimate knowledge of the land and water and hold important relationships within communities. For this reason, goals and actions related to internal engagement are included in this strategy. Federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes are sovereign nations, and as such have a government-to-government relationship with the Federal Government. An overview of the strategy for consultation, coordination, and participation with federally recognized American Indian Tribes is included within this document, but specific plans are documented separately.

Engaging all interested parties in the Bridger-Teton National Forest Land Management Plan Revision is important to develop management direction that represents broad values and a shared vision for the future of these lands. To support this strategy, participation plans will be developed for the three primary phases for land management plan revision: assessment, plan development, and monitoring. Additionally, the pre-assessment phase is important to help prepare interested parties to effectively participate, so a participation plan is included for this phase. These participation plans will be reviewed on a quarterly basis and updated as needed based on changed conditions, feedback from previous efforts, internal input, external suggestions, and identified opportunities. The strategy and participation plans will be posted on the plan revision website. Documentation on engagement activities and how participation contributed to the development of the plan (FSH 1909.12, sec.21.43) will be included within the planning record.

## **Purpose**

This strategy is a living document that provides a framework for communication and engagement with all interested entities, including public, partners, and governments. It is a guide to identify opportunities and engagement goals and methods that can serve the collective needs of the Forest Service and interested parties during the plan revision process. It is intended to evolve based on input and feedback throughout the plan revision process. The purpose of this strategy is to:

- Clarify opportunities and expectations for engagement and inclusion, including individuals and groups who should be involved in the process of plan revision.
- Identify specific activities and methods that will be used to inform interested parties and seek input and advice, incorporating specific actions that promote credibility and trust.
- Clarify opportunities and methods for coordination with local, state, and federal governments in the process of revising and updating the land management plan.
- Identify opportunities to build and maintain working relationships, trust, capacity, and commitment to the plan revision process and the plan, including focus on populations that have not felt included in past planning efforts.
- Identify opportunities for shared learning and understanding between and among the Forest Service and interested parties.

## **Roles and Responsibilities for Engagement**

### **Responsible Official**

The responsible official for the planning process is Forest Supervisor Chad Hudson. The forest supervisor has the responsibility as the plan decisionmaker, but also the responsibility in determining the scope and scale of opportunities for engagement, balancing available resources and schedule constraints with stakeholder engagement needs (FSH 1909.12\_42). The Forest Service retains decision-making authority and responsibility for all decisions throughout the plan revision process (36 CFR 219.4(a)).

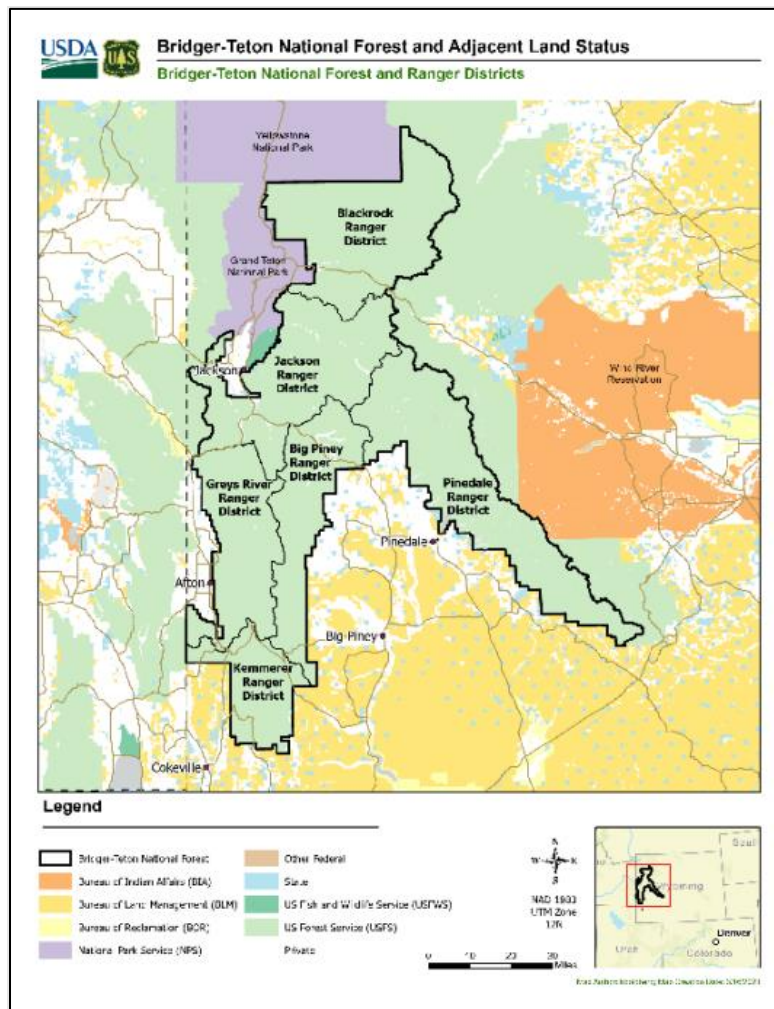
### **Engagement Specialist**

Engagement for forest plan revision is led by C.J. Adams (with assistance from Linda Merigliano during the assessment phase). The engagement specialist has the responsibility to build relationships to support the development of this strategy and the revised land management plan. The engagement specialist is responsible to create opportunities for employee, external public, and government involvement in the development of this strategy; and to plan, develop, and implement participation opportunities at key points in the plan revision process. The engagement specialist will work with the Bridger-Teton Forest planner and public affairs staff to ensure that all interested parties are identified, and the strategy is implemented consistently and will consult with specialists within the Mountain Planning Service Group to ensure learning from other forest planning efforts.

### **Plan Revision Team**

The forest plan revision process is being completed by a dedicated plan revision team consisting of specialists from the Bridger-Teton National Forest, the Mountain Planning Service Group, and regional staff. Bridger-Teton Forest leadership and staff involved with the plan revision will inform the engagement strategy and support revision processes with local knowledge, contribute to maintaining and building relationships with interested parties, and participate in place-based engagements.

## **The Bridger-Teton National Forest**



**Figure 1. Map of the Bridger-Teton National Forest**

The Bridger-Teton National Forest spans 3.4 million acres within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). It is the largest federal land unit within the GYE, the largest National Forest within Wyoming, and contains a portion of the first National Forest established in 1891. The lands of the Bridger-Teton primarily fall within Lincoln, Sublette, and Teton counties, with smaller areas within Fremont and Park counties. With an estimated 2.2 million visitors, the

Forest contributes substantially to the local and regional economy and the character of adjacent communities. Overall, the Bridger-Teton Forest is characterized by distinctive mountain ranges and major river corridors. Although it is a contiguous area, the Forest is divided into three very different landscapes (Teton/Gros Ventre, Wyoming/Salt, and Wind River), each of which have different histories of human resource use. The Forest is highly valued by many people and is particularly known for its wildlife, water, abundant snow, dispersed recreation, undeveloped wildlands, scenery, and cultural heritage/community connection. It is the ancestral homeland of numerous Tribes, some of whom continue to exercise their traditional practices and treaty rights.

## Overview of the Plan Revision Process

The National Forest Management Act requires the Forest Service to revise land management plans periodically to remain current with new regulations and policies; respond to changing ecological, social, and economic conditions; and incorporate the most recent scientific information relevant to the management of resources and uses on public lands. The Forest Service must evaluate the plan for revision approximately every 15 years. The Bridger-Teton Forest Plan was approved in 1990 and, while there have been some amendments, updating and revising the plan is overdue. The [2012 Planning Rule](#) provides the framework and specific requirements for revising forest plans.



Figure 2. The three phases of forest planning

Forest planning occurs in three phases:

- **Assess** the current economic, social, cultural, and ecological conditions on the national forest.
- **Plan/Revise** current management based on the assessment of conditions and identified need to change current management. Gather input from the public, other agencies and governmental entities, tribal governments, and organizations to identify desired conditions and other plan components to achieve those conditions.
- **Monitor** the conditions of the national forest during plan implementation to see if the land management plan is achieving intended outcomes or if changes are needed.

From the start of the assessment phase through completion of a revised land management plan, the planning process takes approximately four to six years. The process includes coordination and consultation to comply with laws such as, but not limited to, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). An illustration of the various steps showing how documents build upon one another is shown in Figure 3.

## Forest Plan Revision Timeline

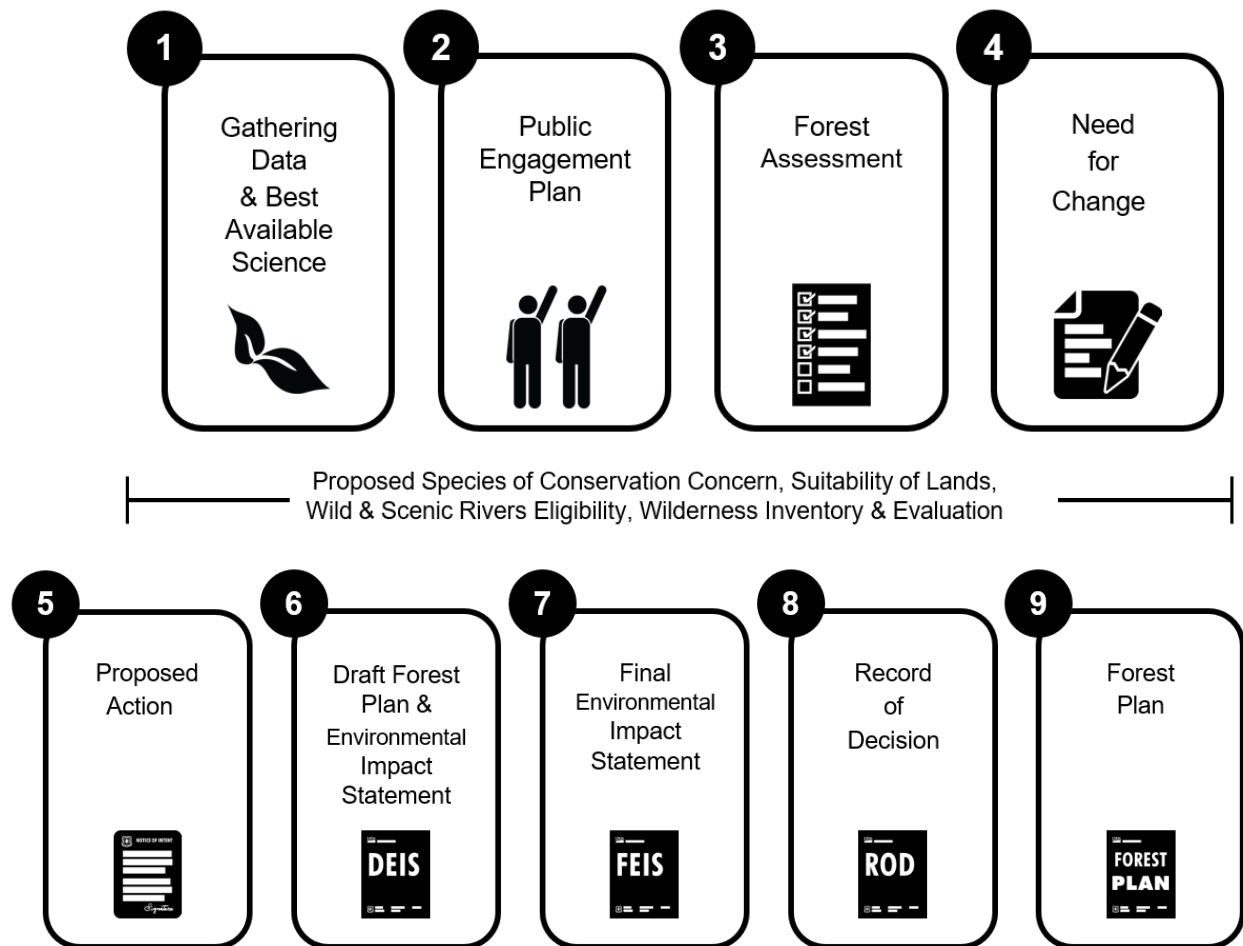


Figure 3. Nine steps in the forest planning process

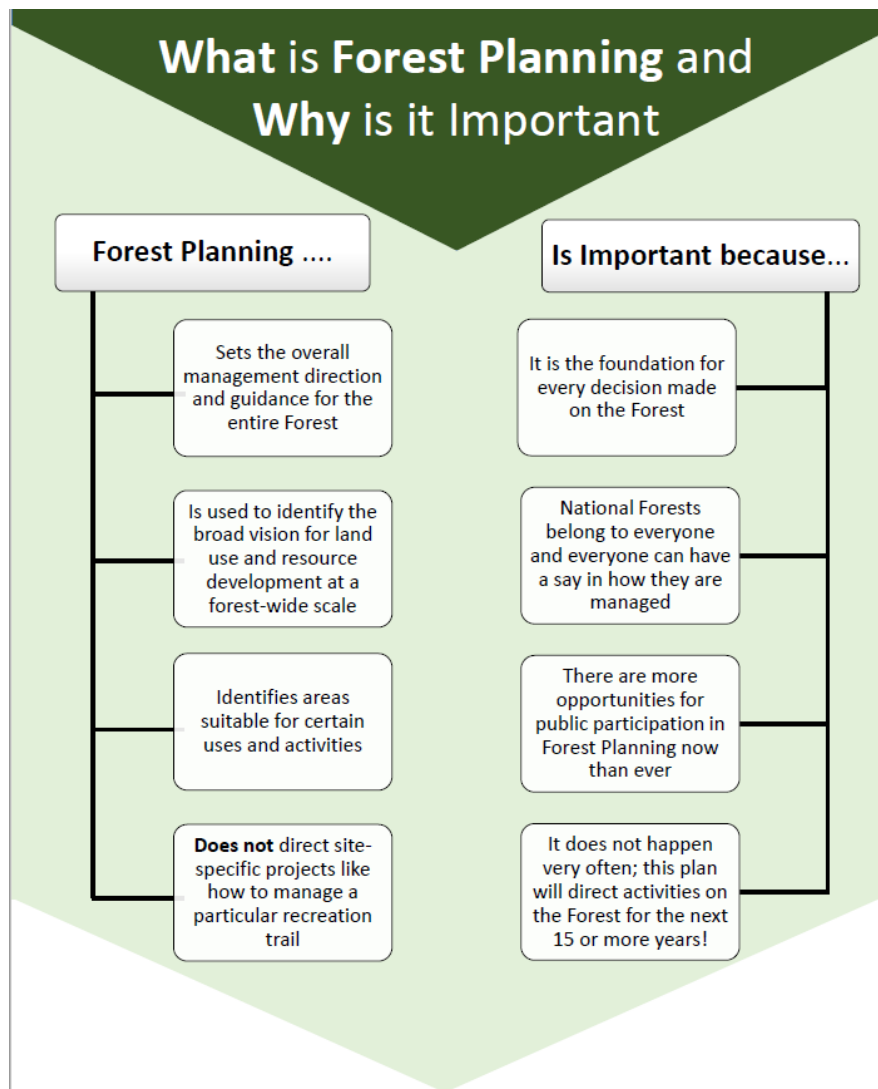


**Figure 4. Graphic highlighting three key components of forest planning**

The 2012 Planning Rule specifically requires formal engagement and inclusion in the planning process 1) when the draft plan is scoped; 2) the draft plan, Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and accompanying National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents; and 3) at the beginning of the objection period and when approving the final revised plan. In addition, there are informal opportunities for engagement including:

- During preparation for the assessment (pre-assessment phase)
- During the assessment phase
- Identification of species of conservation concern;
- On the preliminary need to change;
- Each step of the wilderness recommendation process;
- Evaluation of potential wild and scenic river eligibility;
- Draft plan development (including suitability of lands, plan components, plan monitoring program);
- Best available scientific information; and
- Geographical extent of social and economic contributions.

## What a Forest Plan is and is not (Scope)



**Figure 5. Graphic stating why forest planning is important**

An essential aspect of engagement is clarifying sideboards and what decisions are made in a forest plan so the public can make meaningful contributions. Forest planning can seem abstract for many people who are more familiar with project-level planning and want to know what will happen on the ground.

A forest plan is the foundational document that provides strategic direction to “care for the land and serve people,” guides decisions that are made for all Forest resources and uses and establishes the vision of the Bridger-Teton National Forest into the future. The forest plan is a comprehensive document that helps the Forest Service balance the management of multiple uses and resources, while considering the history, culture, and spiritual importance of the land for all people. Everyone who wants to influence the decisions managers make should care about the Forest Plan. Along with Congressional laws, the forest plan is the document decision-makers

must reference to ensure proposed projects are consistent with the long-term Forest vision.

The forest plan identifies management and/or geographic areas where activities can be considered, the suitability of lands in the plan area for multiple uses and resources, and plan components to guide where – and under what conditions – future site-specific activities and projects can take place. Required components of the forest plan include desired future conditions (i.e. the zoning that describes management emphasis for an area), objectives, standards, guidelines, and the suitability of lands for various multiple uses, along with a monitoring program. In addition to this direction for all resources, forest plans contain other key decisions.

- ✓ Identification of watersheds that are a priority for maintenance or restoration,
- ✓ Description of the area's distinctive roles and contributions within the broader landscape
- ✓ The maximum amount of timber that can be removed from the Forest,
- ✓ Recommendation of lands for potential inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System,
- ✓ Eligibility of rivers for potential inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System,
- ✓ Identification of special administrative designations (e.g. Research Natural Areas),
- ✓ Identification of species of conservation concern.

Just as important as knowing what a forest plan is and the decisions it makes, is knowing what it doesn't do. The forest plan does not make site-specific decisions or authorize specific projects. Examples of site-specific project decisions that require additional environmental analyses and disclosure when the forest plan is implemented include:

- ✓ Timber harvest methods and related activities,
- ✓ Allotment management plans,
- ✓ Fish or wildlife improvement projects, and watershed improvement projects,
- ✓ Decisions for ski area improvements, outfitter-guide proposals, and other recreation or land special use permits,
- ✓ Development of summer and winter travel plans that identify motor vehicles routes, seasons of use, and allowed types of vehicles,
- ✓ Construction and reconstruction of trails, roads and staging areas, buildings, dams, bridges, recreation sites, utilities, potable water systems and road closures,
- ✓ Notice of intent to operate, plan of operation, surface use plan of operation, mineral sales contracts, mining plans, and lease readjustments and renewals.

In addition, oil and gas leasing decisions require a highly specific analysis that is difficult to combine with a forest plan revision. The forest plan also does not establish new regulations on public use. The 2012 Planning Rule provides no authority to change boundaries of Inventoried Roadless Areas. The forest plan also does not designate Wilderness or Wild and Scenic Rivers as these decisions must be made by Congress, but it does make recommendations.

## Participations Goals and Objectives

The following broad goals and corresponding objectives will guide engagement throughout the plan revision process. The goals and objectives are built around three pillars: *Inform/learn, Involve/consult, and Collaborate.*

**Goal 1. *Design a fair, inclusive, and open process*** with a variety of opportunities for diverse interests to participate. Build trust and credibility by demonstrating that the process is fair, transparent, and reasonable, offering multiple opportunities for listening and honest dialogue, and ensuring clear communication and follow through.

### Objectives

1. Identify, build, and maintain relationships with interested constituents to support the plan revision process and development of plan content. Meet with interested parties early in the process, providing ongoing opportunities to check-in throughout the process.
2. Use existing partners and community relationships to engage sectors of the public who typically are not represented in planning efforts (e.g. youth, Latinx population).
3. Design and chart out opportunities for public involvement (both formal and informal) throughout the process. Set clear expectations regarding helpful input, when formal comment periods exist, and how the input will be used at each step of the process. Offer a variety of opportunities so interested parties can engage at the level they are interested.
4. Design and plan for timely rollout of information, status updates, and feedback to demonstrate how input was used. Adjust for timeline changes and the evolving needs of interested parties as the process unfolds.
5. Incorporate the use of electronic communication and social media methods to facilitate a variety of avenues for sharing information and providing feedback. Provide an interactive one-stop webpage for all interested parties to find information.

**Goal 2. *Encourage and facilitate shared learning*** to build a common understanding of data and information with focus on what is within the scope of the forest plan revision and clearly identifying what is not within the scope and why.

### Objectives

1. Design engagement for shared learning throughout the plan revision process regarding the scope of a forest plan, why the forest plan is important for future decision-making, the requirements of the planning process under the 2012 Planning Rule, what plan components are, and what the accompanying environmental analysis process entails.
2. Develop concise, simple messages and stories that avoid jargon and government language to make forest planning understandable and tangible.
3. Develop consistent facts and figures through a variety of written methods that are reflected in talking points, key messages, and briefings.
4. Co-host or develop partner/third party hosted meetings with key organizations in communities to foster learning among interested and potentially interested parties. Encourage sharing of accurate information through informal networks.

**Goal 3. Facilitate opportunities for “cross-pollination”** among diverse perspectives throughout the plan revision process to explore areas of agreement as well as differences.

1. Actively seek to understand the underlying values, interests, fears, and hopes associated with various interests and use this information to foster dialogue around potential areas of agreement. Anticipate fears and concerns and address these topics upfront, exploring options for bridge-building.
2. Use cooperating agencies and other organized groups to develop recommendations for input into the plan, enhance meaningful dialogue, and share a common understanding of the plan revision process with their constituents and communities.
3. Acknowledge, address, and clarify issues, conflicts, and expectations within the scope of plan revision as they arise.

**Goal 4., Construct a strong foundation to work with local, state, and federal government entities, and tribal nations** for consultation and coordination throughout the entire plan revision process.

Objectives

1. Meet with and clearly outline plan revision timeline and opportunities for coordination or consultation with local, state, federal, and tribal government officials. Provide regular and reoccurring updates.
2. Clearly articulate what is within the scope of plan revision and the expectations for involvement as a local, state, or federal government entity. Enter into cooperative agreements with officials who express interest, possess legal jurisdiction within the plan area, and can offer special expertise.
3. Develop clear communication methods and feedback loops with local, state, and federal governments to quickly disseminate information, remain nimble in gathering input, and provide for the ability to adjust and meet on an as-needed basis regarding plan revision needs.

**Goal 5: Inform and engage employees** in all aspects of forest plan revision, particularly at key milestones in the process.

Objectives

1. Use Forest meetings, staff and line officer communication, and electronic media to share forest plan messages, updates, and progress.
2. Build shared ownership and knowledge among the forest leadership team and employees and develop consistent messaging and sources of information of the plan revision process so that it can help support daily interactions between the Forest Service and their communities and in other engagement opportunities.
3. Actively consult with and seek information from employees to identify community leaders, understand informal communication channels, dispel rumors, and anticipate concerns.

## Guiding Principles and Spectrum of Participation

Given the goals and objectives (i.e. the *what*) of public engagement, the following principles will guide *how* public engagement will occur during the plan revision process. This strategy is designed to make the process as accessible as possible to a wide audience of interested parties. Forest Service staff will provide opportunities for input through a series of tasks (refer to Participation Plans). This strategy also focuses on technology to deliver informational content and facilitate in-person engagements for place-based topics designed to consult, involve, and collaborate with interested parties.

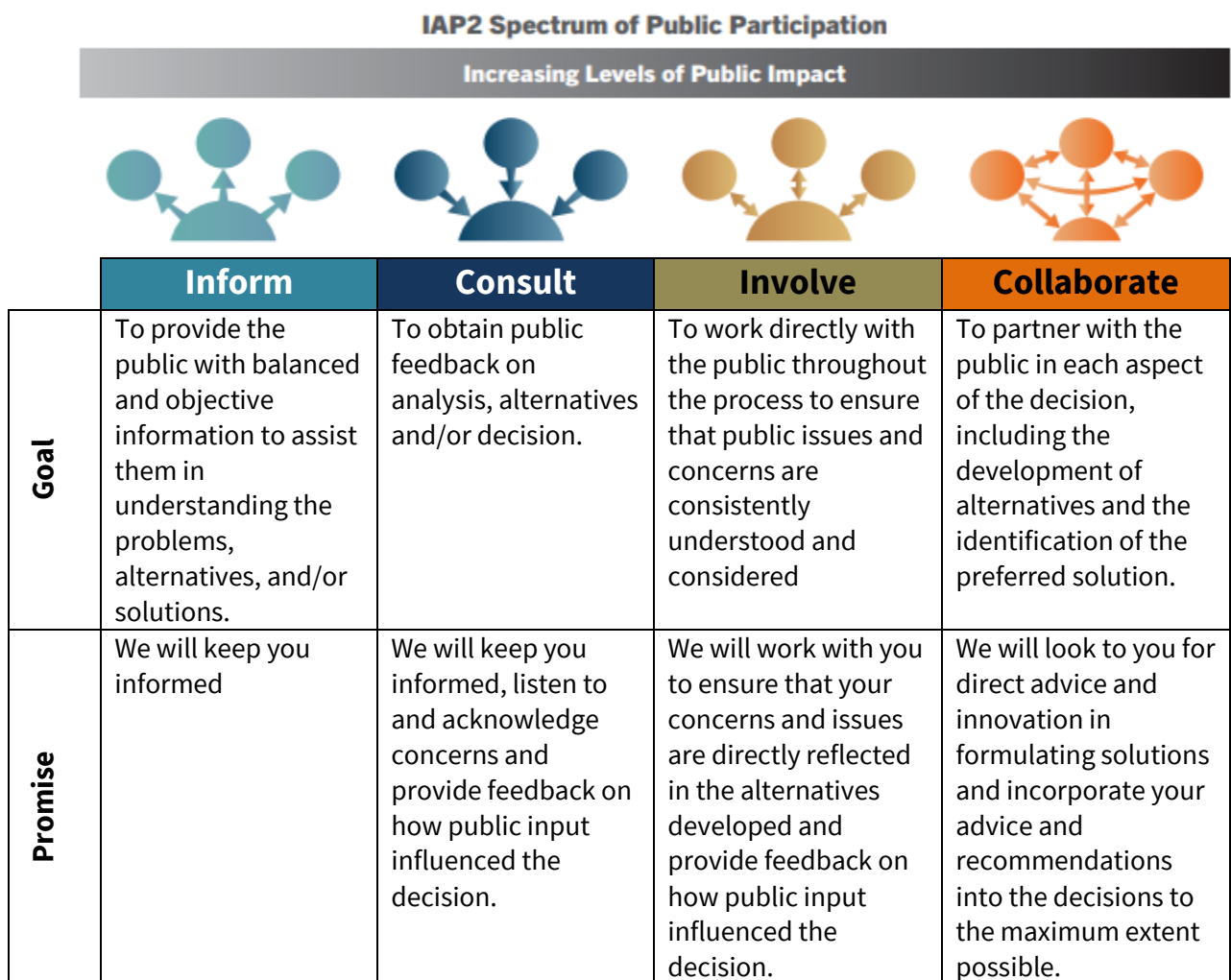
**Table 1—Principles and Commitments for engagement and participation**

<b>Principles and Purpose</b>	<b>Commitments</b>
<b>Transparent and Inclusive:</b> Increase the integrity of the revision process and decision	Listen and respect different views. Share knowledge and information. Be open and honest. Ask questions to uncover full understanding of interests, values, concerns.
<b>No surprises:</b> Reduce the potential for rumors and false assumptions	Check assumptions through direct communication. Anticipate concerns and address them upfront.
<b>Accountable:</b> Increase credibility and trust	Follow through on commitments.
<b>Flexible:</b> Respond to emerging needs, opportunities, and concerns	Be flexible and adaptive; think openly, innovatively, and creatively
<b>Respectful:</b> Acknowledge the diversity in landscapes and communities across the Forest	Don't apply a one size fits all mentality
<b>Proactive:</b> Provide opportunities early and throughout the process	Value each other's time; provide timely feedback and keep the process moving forward
<b>Accessible:</b> Provide a range of options to reflect the diversity of skills, interests, and availability	Be inclusive of all participants
<b>Solution and Future Oriented:</b> Facilitate creative problem solving by supporting constructive dialogue and debate	Strive to find and lead with areas of agreement. Design processes that foster solutions and focus on the future of the Forest

The Bridger-Teton National Forest will foster fair, inclusive, and open engagement. The responsible official ultimately retains the authority to make decisions considering the totality and substance of public input, existing law, and environmental analysis findings. Input into the plan revision process does not constitute a vote, and consensus on controversial issues is likely not possible. Throughout the process, the Bridger-Teton National Forest will strive to clearly communicate sideboards and where the public can have meaningful influence.

External engagement includes four levels of participation as defined by the International Association of Public Participation's public engagement spectrum (see graphic on pages 13-14). Using the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum.

- Select the level that is most appropriate for each planning phase.
- The level identified for each planning phase will be the highest level of potential influence or impact. Many interested parties will choose to engage at lower levels or not consistently throughout the process. Plan accordingly.
- Consider the decision space and level of public interest for each planning phase or issue. Work with the plan revision team to identify where the public input will have the most meaningful impact and the importance of the issue to the public. Be clear on what the public can influence and select the corresponding level. For example, if there is limited decision space around a specific planning phase or issue, the collaborate level would not be appropriate.



	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Examples of Activities	Provide sufficient objective information to interested parties to convey an understanding of intended actions, processes, and preliminary issues.	Provide information to interested parties and seek suggestions as well as feedback on potential issues and concerns.	Work closely with interested parties to clarify concerns and seek feedback on how to meet challenges presented by the planning process.	Directly engage interested parties to exchange information with each other and work together on one or more issues during the planning process. Identify where there is agreement and disagreement.
Potential Tools	Fact sheet, newsletter, mailing, news release, and website digital and/or electronic platforms email blasts, social media platforms, field trips	Open house, public meeting, notice and comment, news release, and website, Listening sessions, field trips, coffee chats	Workshops, partnerships, and public meetings, and attending meetings (as invited) of local groups (community-based organizations, interest groups and associations) and field trips.	Facilitated or mediated discussion among stakeholder participants, cooperating agencies, and other interested parties, collaborative planning teams, citizen-led collaborative groups.

Figure 6. IAP2 [Spectrum of Public Participation](#). (Adapted from the IAP2 International Association for Public Participation)

## Tracking Public Engagement and Determining Effectiveness

Monitoring and evaluation of how this strategy is implemented is important to ensure engagement activities are as effective as possible and to learn from experiences so that adjustments can be made over time. Actions that will be taken to gather information on engagement opportunities include:

- Track information about each external engagement activity (such as meeting objective, attendance lists, meeting time and date, summary of meeting, etc.).
- Implement website analytics (including monitoring website hits) and monitor social media activities (people reached, responses and trends) particularly after sending out information at key milestones.
- Solicit feedback following virtual and in-person events on whether the venue was successful and what they would like to see in the future.
- Adjust the engagement strategy to incorporate feedback as needed.

Evaluation questions will also be used as part of the Bridger-Teton National Forest internal staff meetings to determine effectiveness from a revision team perspective and help ensure this strategy and the participation plans remain relevant. These questions include:

- Are we getting the feedback we anticipated? Did we accomplish the outcomes listed in

the Participation Plan? Are we getting helpful input?

- Are we hearing from all interested parties we believe should be engaged?
- What interested parties are we missing?
- Do our various audiences feel they are getting the information they need to actively participate?
- What feedback are we hearing solicited or unsolicited from external sources?
- Have any requests or ideas come in from external sources that are not considered in the current strategy?

## Participation Assessment

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### Internal and External Situation Assessment

This engagement plan is informed by three focused efforts that occurred between 2018 and 2024 to understand both employee and external public issues and concerns and people's desires for engagement in the forest planning process. On-going efforts to gain insights from specific public sectors and interests will continue to inform and strengthen participation plans.

A summary of the situation assessment to date finds that the commitment to forest planning and engagement is very high from current Forest leadership. Externally, there is high anxiety from those who pay attention to planning, about how to influence the plan and ensure their perspective is recognized. Fears include concern that the plan will be driven by higher administrative-level or environmental influences that result in more restrictive management (e.g. around range and vegetation management, motorized recreation access). Conversely, there is fear that the plan will be weakened by the greater intensity and diversity of human pressures and development that exist in the region today compared with 1990 (e.g. around wildlife, water, wilderness or backcountry protections). However, most people do recognize that the current forest plan is outdated and could be improved. Additionally, for most people, including many employees, forest planning is abstract. The four to six years required to complete the forest planning process adds to the sense of abstraction. This situation suggests that engagement efforts will need to be high touch with many opportunities for face-to-face interaction, will need to provide tangible information to explain forest planning, and will need to present a clear path forward with defined public interaction opportunities.

**Feedback from Public Comment Form. 2024:** The Bridger-Teton National Forest released a story map along with a public comment form on February 22, 2024 to introduce the Forest and the forest planning process. The public comment form specifically asked for response to this question: "What do you think the Forest should do to engage the full diversity of interests and promote collaboration within the goal of achieving ecological, social, and economic sustainability?" The Forest received 127 online responses to the story map and comment form. The emerging top five topics that were most important to respondents included: Recreation (89), Roads & Trails (83), Fire Management (76), Water & Watersheds (73), and Wildlife (69).

### **Bridger-Teton National Forest: Management, Planning and Outreach, Situation**

**Assessment. 2019:** To help inform the forest planning process, a situation assessment of employees and external publics was prepared by the University of Utah Environmental Dispute Resolution Center and the University of Wyoming Ruckelshaus Institute. The Assessment included in-depth interviews with 37 individuals representing a diversity of perspectives across the Forest. The full report is available on the Bridger-Teton National Forest webpage for the Forest Plan Revision (click [here](#)). A summary of input follows:

Interviewees widely shared a passionate appreciation for the Forest, which was often reflective of their deep ties to the Forest, notably around the diverse opportunities the Forest provides, particularly related to recreation and appreciation of the wildlife the Forest supports.

Interviewees conveyed mixed perspectives on recreation management, wildlife habitat management, vegetation and wildland fire management, grazing, and minerals, oil, and gas with the following key concerns expressed:

- Concerns about limited Forest Service funding and personnel;
- Concerns about agency staff turnover;
- Concerns about regional population growth and rising visitation;
- Concerns about motorized recreation;
- Concerns about road and trail maintenance; and
- Concerns about elk feedgrounds.

Interviewees generally saw significant value in engagement and education around the Forest's management and planning activities. They recommended the following strategies for enhancing stakeholder and public education and engagement:

- Increase face-to-face interaction with agency staff by sending agency staff to community events, empowering partners to be ambassadors for the Forest, and establishing a Forest "ride along" program.
- Improve valued public meetings by scheduling events at times that are most convenient for the target audience, sending agency staff who have the right types of knowledge and the authority to answer basic participant questions and respond to comments, and potentially having trained facilitators run meetings and/or planning processes.
- Augment emails, phone calls, and face-to-face interactions, which are effective means of getting the word out, by sharing information via radio, sending press releases and stories to local papers, updating the BTNF website so that information is easier to access, leveraging Facebook to reach small communities or specific interest groups, sharing information via podcasts, and sending mailings and post cards;
- Partner with other agencies, organizations, and businesses to produce outreach materials that are complete and concise; and

Interviewees also shared ideas for engaging Native American Tribes, Teton County's Latino communities, and youth. These ideas are detailed in the full report.

In light of these findings, the Assessment Team recommends the Forest Service consider:

- Building agency staff capacity for acting collaboratively and effectively engaging with stakeholders and the public;
- Fostering a collaborative presence throughout the Forest, especially outside the Jackson District;
- Bringing the public, Tribes, and stakeholders "along for the ride" on decision making;
- Engaging stakeholders and the public the way they want to be engaged;
- Hosting community learning forums on key issues;
- Providing regular updates via newspaper, radio and podcast interviews, Facebook, and public meetings;
- Investing in a collaborative recreation planning effort; and
- Leveraging partners, including Friends of the Bridger-Teton, to secure resources and enhance management capacity.

**Feedback from Bridger-Teton National Forest Collaboration Presentations. 2018 and 2021:** In 2018, Colleen O'Brien, regional office engagement specialist, presented an overview of collaboration in relation to forest planning to the Bridger-Teton Forest Leadership Team. That presentation was followed by a collaboration training presented by Jessica Western and available to all employees in 2021. Based on their knowledge of the Forest and communities as well as discussions throughout the presentations, they provided recommendations to the Forest which are summarized below.

- ✓ Be mindful of differences between north and south districts. There is desire for more emphasis on grazing/forest products and recreation access in southern districts. We have work to do internally to ensure acceptance/agreement of the task ahead. Consider crafting different plan components for different geographic areas – Wyoming Range, Wind River Range, Teton Range.
- ✓ BTNF has many politically influential citizens and groups. For Teton County, there are Washington-level connections as well as prominent environmental groups. For Lincoln and Sublette Counties, water development boards, conservation districts, and county commissioners are influential.
- ✓ We need to reach the “silent middle” and visitors who have important connections to the Forest but are not politically influential. Look at diversity and equity components, how to engage groups not traditionally engaged with, including Tribes. Start with a “give,” not an “ask.”
- ✓ Don't go out to public using jargon (forest plan revision). Instead speak to fact that we are working on updating direction for caring for the land and serving people. Don't assume people know what current forest plan is about. Emphasize that the plan is about place and people with focus on sustainability.
- ✓ WORDS MATTER – understand your audience and their level of comprehensive in every message, story and communication you create. There is a broad spectrum of values and education levels.
- ✓ Speak directly to why forest planning was delayed to improve public transparency and trust. Communicate that we are not throwing out the entire current forest plan.
- ✓ We need to communicate that the Assessment will be a focused effort (tight timeline) while also conveying that we are committed to listening to people (we aren't rushing the process).
- ✓ Don't throw lots of complex issues at the public. Keep requests for input simple and straight-forward – use clearly worded questions. Provide updates to demonstrate how input was used.
- ✓ Don't lead with known contentious topics (Wilderness, SCC, WSR)
- ✓ Communicate that Forest Planning is future-focused (work on moving beyond current hot topics).
- ✓ Travel Management (OHV) will likely be raised, particularly for Wyoming Range. Range management is contentious both internally and externally. Be prepared to anticipate and address likely concerns/input.
- ✓ Ensure input from district folks is sought and frontliners are given good information
- ✓ Begin internally and stay there a while. Invest in communication needs and strategies up front and keep FS staff informed. If we aren't all on the same page, there will be mixed messages. Define “integrated resource analysis and management” up front.
- ✓ Focus on VALUES collection in the assessment phase.

- ✓ Seek clear leader's intent throughout the process. Start thinking about how to manage the cooperating agencies early. MANAGE EXPECTATIONS internal and external.
- ✓ "Beginning" the process is 90% thinking about how you will outreach and 10% reaching out. There are no 'do overs' in the court of public first impressions and first opinions (only recoveries). It takes far less of an investment of time, cost, labor, and political good will to plan and execute an adaptive participation strategy than to "mop up" the fields of unintended consequences.
- ✓ Be honest and transparent up front about how this process will differ from those in the past with the USFS, and how the process may change along the way as a part of being adaptive. Invest in creating that story and share it abundantly.
- ✓ Bring food to events, host an outside potluck.

## Interested Parties Analysis

All people and entities who are interested in the future of the Bridger-Teton National Forest are encouraged to participate in the plan revision process. This includes interested parties that directly live within the planning area, as well as from communities and constitutes that have a cultural, social, economic, and recreational connection to the planning area.

The Bridger-Teton National Forest also encourages engagement and participation from underserved and underrepresented community members that do not traditionally engage with the Forest Service, such as diverse communities, low-income populations, students, and youth (as identified in the planning rule). Additionally, the definitions of environmental justice populations and equity can be found within [Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#) (2021) and the [Forest Service Equity Action Plan](#) (2022). Although some outreach efforts will be tailored to reach these specific groups, the goal is that anyone interested will have access to the same information and have equitable opportunities to provide input.

The following is a summary of categories of interested parties and considerations to encourage engagement from these constituents. Describing outreach for these specific groups does not imply greater influence by any particular entity. The [Public Engagement Reference Guide](#) provides additional ideas for engagement with a variety of public sectors.

### County and State level Governments.

Five counties encompass the Bridger-Teton National Forest with Lincoln, Sublette, and Teton counties having the largest acreage. Fremont and Park counties encompass smaller portions of the eastern side of the Forest. Adjacent counties contain residents who have connections with the Forest, typically associated with recreation uses. This includes Sweetwater and Uinta counties, Wyoming and Teton and Bonneville counties, Idaho. Conservation districts within Lincoln, Sublette, and Teton counties have long-range plans that tie directly to the Forest and may differ from elected county commissioner perspectives. Additionally, the State of Wyoming through the Governor's Office and the various departments have direct ties to the Forest economically and socially and are actively involved with federal land management planning throughout the State.

The 2012 Planning Rule requires the Forest Service to work with local and state agencies,

including working toward shared objectives and consistent management across boundaries, during the plan revision process. This can be done as a cooperating agency. Cooperating agency status is made available under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to all governments that possess status under law and can provide special expertise. The Forest will assess interest in cooperating agency status early in the process and will respond to requests as they arise. Expectations for forest leaders and cooperating agencies will be documented in an agreement specific to the plan revision process. Beyond cooperating agency engagement during the NEPA phase, forest leaders and staff will meet with county commissioners, state representatives, and directors of conservation districts at the start of the plan revision process and prior to subsequent milestones (quarterly) to share information and seek input and advice. Key documents that inform County and State engagement include [Understanding your Opportunities for Participating in the Forest Service Planning Process: A Guide for State, Local, and Tribal Governments](#) and [County Governments and the USDA Forest Service: A Guidebook for Working Together by National Association of Counties \(NACO\) and the US Forest Service \(USFS\)](#).

### **Tribal Governments.**

Numerous Tribes have ancestral ties to the Bridger-Teton National Forest with three Tribes having particularly deep connections – Eastern Shoshone, Northern Arapaho, and Shoshone-Bannock. In accordance with federal treaty obligations, tribes are not considered “stakeholders” but rather hold special status for engagement through nation-to-nation consultation. In recognition of this status, a tribal liaison will develop and implement a separate engagement process. Key documents that inform tribal engagement include the document noted above as well as [Strengthening Tribal Relations](#).

### **Other Federal Agencies.**

The Bridger-Teton National Forest is an integral part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and coordination with other federal agencies within this ecosystem is essential. Federal lands immediately adjacent to the Bridger-Teton National Forest are particularly important. This includes Grand Teton National Park, the southern boundary of Yellowstone National Park, the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Shoshone National Forest, National Elk Refuge, and BLM lands managed by field offices within the Rock Springs District.

Bi-annual Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee meetings offer the best venue for federal agency leaders to coordinate across boundaries. In addition to relationships held by the forest supervisor, district rangers play a central role in sharing information and coordinating with their counterparts on adjacent federal lands.

### **Existing Collaboratives and Non-Governmental Partners/Organizations**

Communities around the Bridger-Teton National Forest house immense expertise within non-governmental organizations that recruit talent from volunteers and professionals alike. Volunteers are often drawn from retirees who bring substantial life experience and talent to

organizations within their community. Many non-profit organizations have a direct tie with the Bridger-Teton National Forest to help “care for the land and serve people” with many others having at least an indirect connection. The non-profit sector covers the gamut from wildfire prevention, recreation, conservation, wildlife, fisheries, water, public safety, tourism, weed prevention, outdoor education/natural history, programming for at-risk youth, social services, and the arts. While many non-profits are focused in the Jackson area, four organizations stand out in having a broader forest-wide reach - Friends of the Bridger-Teton (which has the broadest mission supporting multiple resource and public needs across the entire forest), Grand Teton Association, the Bridger-Teton Avalanche Center Foundation, and Trout Unlimited.

No collaborative group representing the full diversity of public interests exists for forest plan revision. However, two collaborative groups have been working with the Bridger-Teton National Forest for multiple years – the Greys River Collaborative and the Sublette County Collaborative. These groups formed with interest centered around forest management projects. In addition, a Bridger-Teton Working Group formed in the aftermath of the Wyoming Public Land Initiative and represents a coalition of more than 20 non-profit organizations focused on developing recommendations for forest plan revision around conservation, wilderness, and non-motorized recreation interests. A new working group focused on motorized recreation interest in forest plan revision has also formed as a complement to the other existing groups.

While no non-profit organization or existing collaborative/working group can possibly reflect the full diversity of public interests and perspectives regarding the future of the forest, these groups can offer valuable assistance through their wide breath of relationships and outreach networks. As noted in this strategy’s participation goals and as outlined in the accompanying participation plans, there are multiple opportunities for “cross-pollination” among the various non-profits and collaboratives/working groups to share perspectives and determine areas of agreement. Timely information will be shared with these groups via email to plan revision subscribers as well as news releases and group leaders will be encouraged to reach out to the planning team with any questions.

### **Landowners and Permittees.**

The Bridger-Teton National Forest is a largely contiguous forest but still contains inholdings with private land development. Private land inholdings exist primarily in Buffalo Valley, the Gros Ventre corridor, Flat Creek, Granite Creek, Greys River corridor, and Dell Creek area. Landowners in these areas have direct connections to many aspects of forest management with most holding a special use permit associated with their property as well as depending on roads for access to their property.

With an estimated 434 lands-related permits, numerous grazing permits, and over 400 recreation-related permits, permittees are directly connected to the forest with many dependent on the forest for their livelihood.

A concerted effort to engage landowners who have private property within the forest and permittees who hold special use permits will include request for participation sent through media channels, information shared via the plan revision website, and importantly through communication between landowners and district rangers and between permit administrators and permittees.

### **Students and Youth.**

The participation plans accompanying this strategy includes activities tailored to engage students and youth. These activities include partnering with the University of Wyoming to engage students in collaborative events, internship opportunities, and working with schoolteachers and clubs to identify potential synergy between students and forest plan topics. Outreach activities also include building general awareness through kid-oriented, hands-on activities as part of on-going conservation, education programs.

### **Persons with Disabilities.**

All engagement opportunities should be developed to consider persons with disabilities within the area, including location accessibility and access, diverse options for participation, print size and use of color in documents, and the ability to access electronic materials in alternate formats. Demographic information suggests that 7-16% of residents in counties encompassing the Bridger-Teton National Forest report some form of disability which underlies the importance of planning engagement activities with accommodations that enable inclusivity.

### **Latinx and Diverse Communities.**

The resident population living in counties encompassing the Bridger-Teton National Forest or visiting is becoming more diverse. Within the counties encompassing the Forest, Teton County has the highest ethnic population. Hispanic or Latinx people comprise nearly 16% of the population and continue to increase with families become more connected to the outdoors with each generation. At 4% of the population, Teton County also has the highest percent of people who don't speak English well. As the Spanish-speaking population has increased, so have the number of non-profit organizations offering services. The Bridger-Teton National Forest hosted Learning Lab discussions in 2017 to start to connect with the Latinx population. Since that time, relationships have strengthened with Coombs Outdoors, Voices JH, and Comino Connmigo (through Friends of Bridger-Teton).

Pre-assessment engagement has helped build awareness of forest planning with Comino Connmigo and Coombs Outdoors. Participation plans include specific outreach to the Latinx community. Spanish translation services are available as are staff who can deliver presentations in Spanish. Numerous guides and examples of outreach to Latinx communities are available as part of Forest Service on-line public engagement resources.

## Engagement Tools

Engagement Method	Strategies
<b>In-Person Forums</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public meetings – presentations and listening sessions (Workshop, open house, panel discussion, world cafe, etc.)</li> <li>• Field trips</li> <li>• Partner-led gatherings and activities; presentations at NGO events</li> <li>• Individual stakeholder meetings</li> <li>• Cooperating agency meetings</li> <li>• Coffee chats</li> </ul>
<b>Digital Tools</b>	<p>Updated website with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links to further details and key documents</li> <li>• Videos (explaining what a forest plan is, history, and the planning process)</li> <li>• A link to sign up for updates, such as a newsletter</li> <li>• Fact sheets, story maps</li> <li>• Upcoming events</li> <li>• Recordings of past webinars and links to upcoming ones</li> <li>• Newsletter with monthly updates (GovDelivery e-newsletters)</li> </ul>
<b>Virtual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webinars – conducted (by revision planning team] in alignment with the major public actions</li> <li>• Targeted webinars for government partners and internal Forest Service employees</li> <li>• Live streams and chats (“office hours”)</li> </ul>
<b>Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media interviews</li> <li>• Press releases with key updates and milestones</li> <li>• Radio spots and PSAs</li> <li>• Podcasts</li> </ul>
<b>Social Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Forest Service Facebook and X (formerly Twitter)</li> <li>• Posts created for National Forests to use</li> <li>• Targeted social media for equity and environmental justice communities</li> <li>• Partner amplification</li> </ul>
<b>E-Communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly <i>Forest Futures Newsletter</i></li> <li>• GovDelivery</li> <li>• Targeted communications to notify interested parties of engagement opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Print Publications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factsheets</li> <li>• Brochures/rack cards</li> <li>• Flyers/posters</li> <li>• Mailers/postcards</li> </ul>
<b>Community Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential to participate in events, for example have a booth at fair, or present at a conference</li> </ul>