



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Pacific Northwest Region | Pacific Southwest Region | Pacific Planning Service Group

What is a Land Management Plan?

Understanding the Northwest Forest Plan and why it matters

Forest plans (or land management plans) set the overall management direction and guidance for each of our national forests.

A land management plan is similar to a city or county comprehensive plan that helps guide land use and development. In the same way that your town, county, or city is planned to designate where particular uses (such as industrial and residential uses) may occur, national forests' plans identify areas intended for specific uses such as timber harvest, recreation, or ecological protections. Just as a county's comprehensive plan might prohibit the construction of a commercial facility in an area that has been identified for residential use, a forest plan could identify an area as not suitable for timber production due to legal reasons (e.g., congressionally designated wilderness) or resource concerns (e.g. riparian areas, cultural resources or geologic instability).

Many of us are more familiar with site-specific Forest Service projects that occur in a single ranger district or in a particular watershed. In contrast, forest plans do not provide site-specific direction, such as where to put a recreation trail or what timber will be harvested. Instead, these plans guide management activities at a forest wide scale, providing direction of uses within each national forest. The Northwest Forest Plan provides landscape scale direction for over 24 million acres, across 17 national forests, 1 national scenic area, and other federal land in California, Oregon, and Washington.

Planning Rule 101

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 requires every national forest or grassland managed by the Forest Service to develop and maintain a Land Management Plan (also known as a Forest Plan). The process for the development, amendment and revision of plans, along with the required content of plans, is outlined in planning regulations, often referred to as the planning rule (the 2012 Planning Rule is the current rule). Forest managers follow the direction of the planning rule to develop land management plans specific to the cultural, ecological, economic, and social needs of their geographic areas.

Each forest plan developed or revised under the 2012 Planning Rule contain the following plan components:

- Desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, guidelines and identification of the suitability of lands in the plan area for multiple uses and resources (such as vegetation management, timber, wilderness, fish and wildlife habitat, grazing, recreation, mineral exploration and development, water and soils, cultural and historic resources, research natural areas, and diversity of plant and animal communities).
- Management areas and geographic areas designated as places where particular activities or goals can be considered (for example areas suitable for timber harvest, motorized recreation, grazing, and wilderness designation).

For more information on the 2012 Planning rule visit <https://shorturl.at/QnUxv>

For more information about the proposed amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan, including how to comment, scan the QR code or visit: www.fs.usda.gov/goto/r6/nwfp

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