

**Forest Service Handbook  
National Headquarters (WO)  
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 – National Environmental Policy Act Handbook**

**Amendment:** 1909.15-2010-1

**Effective date:** September 30, 2010

**Duration:** This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

**Superseded Directive:** Entire Handbook; 1909.15 contents, Amendment 1909.15-2008-1, July 24, 2008; 1909.15\_zero\_code, Amendment 1909.15-2008-1, July 24, 2008; 1909.15\_10, Amendment 1909.15-2008-1, July 24, 2008; 1909.15\_20, Amendment 1909.15-2008-1, July 24, 2008; 1909.15\_30, Amendment 1909.15-2009-1, April 17, 2009; 1909.15\_40, Amendment 1909.15-2008-1, July 24, 2008; 1909.15\_50, Amendment 1909.15-2008-1, July 24, 2008; 1909.15\_60, Amendment 1909.15-2008-1, July 24, 2008

**Approved by:** Gloria Manning, Associate Deputy Chief, NFS

**Date approved:** September 21, 2010

**Responsible Staff:**

**Explanation of changes:** Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

**Posting Instructions:** Amendments are numbered consecutively by handbook number and calendar year. Post by document; remove the entire document and replace it with this amendment. Retain this transmittal as the first page(s) of this document. The last amendment to this handbook was 1909.15-2009-1 to chapter 30.

**1909.15:** Adds and updates hyperlinks throughout this chapter.

**01:** Adds guidance concerning when a Forest Service action is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

**10:** Adds a Forest Service planning model at beginning of chapter. It also adds and updates hyperlinks throughout the chapter.

**11.2:** Changes caption from “Identify Characteristics of the Proposed Action and Decision Framework” to “Proposed Action, Purpose and Need, and Decision Framework”. Adds

guidance for describing purpose and need for action. Previous section on Decision Framework is renumbered to 11.22.

**11.21:** Changes caption from “Decision Framework” to “Purpose and Need” and sets forth direction.

**11.23:** Establishes new code, caption, and direction for Review of Existing Decisions.

**11.52:** Adds language recommended for use when soliciting public comments.

**11.6 - Exhibit 01:** Renames "NEPA Process Overview" to "NEPA Documentation Overview" and revises the diagram for clarity. No substantive changes are made.

**12.24:** Adds missing quote from Council on Environmental Quality regulations concerning agency responsibility for environmental assessments when applicants are involved.

**12.41:** Establishes new code, caption, and direction for Considering Issues in Preparation of Environmental Impact Statements.

**12.42:** Establishes new code, caption, and direction for Considering Issues in Preparation of Environmental Assessments.

**12.5:** Changes caption from “Issue Measures” to “Measures” and updates direction.

**15.1:** Corrects quoted text from 36 CFR 220.4(f) concerning cumulative effects of past actions.

**16:** Corrects quote from 40 CFR 1502.14 concerning environmental impacts of a proposal and alternatives.

**20:** Recodes entire chapter to conform to directives structure and coding standards.

**22.1:** Adds recommended language for inclusion in a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement, indicating that comments will be part of the public record.

**23.3:** Adds guidance concerning comment period closing date in draft EIS cover sheet.

**23.3 - Exhibit 01:** Changes this exhibit to pertain only to a draft EIS cover sheet.

**25.1 paragraph 3:** Adds explanation that including comments from Federal, State, and local agencies in an appendix will satisfy section 102 (c) of NEPA.

**26.21:** Adds new requirement for statement concerning practical means of avoiding or minimizing environmental harm at paragraph 7. Subsequent paragraphs have been renumbered accordingly.

**27:** Changes caption from “Notice and Distribution of the Record of Decision” to “Notice of the Record of Decision” and revises to be consistent with regulation requiring notice of availability of a record of decision.

**30:** Recodes entire chapter to conform to directives structure and coding standards. Adds and updates hyperlinks throughout the chapter.

**31.2:** Revises guidance concerning consideration of extraordinary circumstances.

**31.3:** Adds guidance for scoping to determine extraordinary circumstances.

**42.1:** Adds guidance concerning tiering an environmental assessment (EA) to an EA of broader scope.

**44:** Revises the caption to be consistent with regulation that requires notification of the availability of an EA, finding of no significant impact, and decision notice.

**50:** Adds and updates hyperlinks throughout the chapter.

**51:** Adds new guidance concerning the timing of issuance of a record of decision in light of the Forest Service appeal procedures.

**52:** Clarifies language concerning public review of a finding of no significant impact for proposals that are similar to those requiring preparation of an environmental impact statement.

**60:** Updates hyperlinks throughout the chapter.

**65.15:** Establishes code and caption for reference to the Council on Environmental Quality's publication titled *Considering Cumulative Effect Under the National Environmental Policy Act*.