

**Forest Service Manual  
National Headquarters - Washington Office  
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Manual 2000 – National Forest Resource Management  
Chapter 2030 - Large Scale Event Recovery (Laser)**

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**Approved by:** Joel D. Holtrop, Deputy Chief, NFS

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**Superseded Document(s):**

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

**2030:** Establishes new chapter and sets forth policy for identifying needed recovery actions after an event that causes major substantial damage to natural and cultural resources or infrastructure.

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## **2030.1 - Authority**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service has the authority to manage National Forest System (NFS) lands in accordance with multiple laws and regulations. General authority for the management of NFS lands are found in:

1. The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1600-1612) (as amended by National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 472a). States that the development and administration of the renewable resources of the National Forest System are to be in full accord with the concepts for multiple use and sustained yield of products and services as set forth in the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960. It sets forth the requirements for land and resource management plans for units of the National Forest System, including requiring guidelines to provide for the diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area.
2. FSH 1909.15, chapter 30. The Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations provide for categorical exclusions (CEs) to implement the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the purpose of reducing delay and paperwork. CEQ regulations allow Federal agencies to exclude from documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) categories of actions that DO NOT INDIVIDUALLY OR CUMULATIVELY HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT on the human environment. Based on the agency's experience and knowledge, the responsible official can conclude that if the action fits within an identified category and analysis shows there are no extraordinary circumstances, then the action would not have significant effects. The following guidance on appropriate use of CE must be read in conjunction with applicable sections of this handbook, specifically chapter 10.
3. The Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003 (P.L. 108-148). Provides processes for developing and implementing hazardous fuel reduction projects on certain types of "at-risk" National Forest System and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, and also provides other authorities and direction to help reduce hazardous fuel and restore healthy forest and rangeland conditions on lands of all ownerships.
4. The Multiple-Use, Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (P.L. 86-517, 74 Stst.# 215; 16 U.S.C.528-531). States that the National Forests are to be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes, and that establishment and maintenance of wilderness areas are consistent with this Act. This Act directs the Secretary to manage these resources in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people; providing for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions; and harmonious and coordinated management of the resources without impairment of the productivity of the land. Sustained yield means achieving and maintaining in perpetuity a high-level annual or regular periodic output of renewable resources without impairment of the productivity of the land.

5. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (16 U.S.C. 4321). Declares it is the policy of the Federal Government to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans. The Act requires agencies proposing major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, to prepare a detailed statement on the environmental impacts of the proposed action, unavoidable adverse environmental impacts, alternatives to the action proposed, the relationship between local short-term uses of the environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity, and any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources which would be involved if the proposed action is implemented. The Act also provides that for any proposal which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources, an agency must study, develop, and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action

6. The Organic Administration Act of 1897, as amended (16 U.S.C. 473-478, 479-482, 551), Section 24). States the purpose of the national forests, and directs their control and administration to be in accord with such purpose, that is, “[n]o national forest shall be established, except to improve and protect the forest within the boundaries, or for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States.” Authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to “make such rules and regulations . . . to preserve the forests [of such reservations] from destruction.”

7. Wyden Authority (Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Agreement Authority, P.L. 109-54, section 434). Authorizes the Forest Service to enter into cooperative agreements to benefit resources within watersheds on National Forest System lands. Agreements may be with willing Federal, tribal, State, and local governments, private and nonprofit entities, and landowners to conduct activities on public or private lands for the following purposes: protection, restoration, and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and other resources; reduction of risk for natural disaster where public safety is threatened; or a combination of both. This authority was initially provided in FY 1998 and has been extended through the end of FY 2011.

Authorities related to specific aspects of NFS management may be found in the zero codes of FSM 2000 sections.

## **2030.2 - Objective**

The objective of the Large Scale Event Recovery program (or LaSER) is to swiftly identify needed recovery actions through a rapid assessment after an event that causes major substantial damage to natural or cultural resources or infrastructure. The assessment will lead to a program of work for the affected field unit, identifying skill needs, funding sources, accomplishment timelines, and partners to facilitate recovery efforts.

### **2030.3 - Policy**

Major events such as fires and hurricanes generate great strain on Forest Service resources and often require quick assessment of damages to natural and cultural resources and infrastructure. In order to help assess recovery needs and develop reports, the policy is to:

1. Conduct assessments to determine the scope and nature of damages and recovery needs.
2. Prepare a LaSER plan, if appropriate.

### **2030.4 - Responsibility**

#### **2030.41 - Chief**

The Chief has the responsibility to:

1. Ensure that each regional forester has the necessary tools required for conducting rapid assessments and preparing recovery plans.
2. Provide an annual national summary of recovery plans.
3. Coordinate with Forest Service State and Private Forestry, Research and Development and other Forest Service programs that are involved with recovery activities.
4. Coordinate with other Federal and State agencies that deal in post event recovery activities.
5. Request supplemental funding if needed to implement approved recovery plans.
6. Coordinate with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) on those actions that need alternative arrangements under NEPA.

#### **2030.42 - Regional Foresters**

Regional foresters have the responsibility to:

1. Review the Large Scale Event Recovery plan and determine if the region has adequate resources to respond to the recovery plan.
2. Negotiate with the forest supervisor on requested target or program of work adjustments.
3. Request supplemental funding within 30 days of receipt of the LaSER plan from the Washington Office, if needed.

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4. Identify a Rapid Assessment Team if the forests, grasslands, and Area supervisors are unable to provide the team from their staff.
5. Identify a regional coordinator for LaSER activities.

**2030.43 - Forests, Grasslands, and Area Supervisors**

Forests, grasslands, and Area supervisors have the responsibility to:

1. Conduct a rapid assessment to assess damages and determine if a LaSER plan is needed.
2. Brief the LaSER assessment team on expectations and local conditions.
3. Prepare a Large Scale Event Recovery plan, if needed.
4. Submit the LaSER plan to the regional forester within 30 days of the event if identified needs exceed local capacity.
5. Conduct appropriate NEPA analysis.
6. Coordinate with other National Forests, State and Private, Research and Development and other Federal, State, local agencies, and/or Tribal officials as appropriate.

**2030.44 - District Rangers**

District rangers have the responsibility to:

1. Notify the forest supervisor on the potential need for a LaSER assessment.
2. Provide necessary resources for rapid assessment.
3. Implement the recovery plan as funded.
4. Monitor projects to determine if recovery efforts meet the planned objectives.
5. Report accomplishment in the appropriate data bases of record.
6. Coordinate with appropriate other Federal, State, local and Tribal agencies officials.
7. Assure that safety requirements are met for all LaSER assessments and implementation activities.

## **2030.5 - Definitions**

For the purposes of Large Scale Event recovery the following definitions apply:

Large Scale Event. A natural- or human-caused incident resulting in damages to natural or cultural resources or infrastructure that require active management to enable recovery and for which the recovery response will have a significant impact on a unit's normal program of work.

Recovery. The process of achieving a desired condition or trajectory toward a desired condition as described in a Forest Plan. Recovery may occur naturally or may be achieved through stabilization, rehabilitation, or ecological restoration activities.

## **2030.6 - Large Scale Event Recovery Rapid Assessment Needs**

An immediate and rapid assessment of the affected area is conducted in order to identify post-event damage and prioritize recovery treatment needs. The purpose of this assessment is to identify damage and recovery needs and provide the basis for a post event recovery plan.

## **2030.7 - Rapid Assessment Guides**

The guides are provided to help identify those areas that need to be assessed during the rapid assessment process. The guides will prompt the preparer with questions addressing the most important areas that may have been affected by the event and help to focus the assessment. The guidance is included for the following assessment and resource areas:

1. Human Health and Safety.
2. Forestland.
3. Rangeland.
4. Soil and Water.
5. Invasive Species.
6. Forest Insect and Disease.
7. Infrastructure.
8. Wildlife, Fish and Rare Plant Habitat.
9. Heritage Resources.
10. Hazardous Fuels.

11. Landline, Special Uses & Geologic/Mine Hazards.
12. Research and Development.

### **2031 - Large Scale Event Recovery Plan**

A LaSER plan is required if the likely recovery response will exceed the capability of the local unit. Capability is evaluated by assessing the impact on the unit's current program of work and the need for additional staffing and funding or funding mix and target adjustments. The Large Scale Event Recovery Plan (form FS-2000-1) is used to document the event assessment and needed recovery actions. The Plan is designed to provide the following information:

Part 1. Executive Summary and Recommendations. Contains a description of the location and date of the event, a summary of the extent of damage to resources and infrastructure, and recommended actions and costs for the first year.

Part 2. Post Event Conditions. Contains detailed information on the extent and severity of damages which are to be addressed within the recovery plan prioritized by severity of damage and urgency of recovery action within each of the issue areas.

Part 3. Recovery Objectives. Describes the recovery objectives and identifies any emergency actions already taken, additional emergency mitigation to be performed, and the long term recovery effort that is needed.

Part 4. Description of Actions. Identifies each recovery activity or treatment and describes the specific purpose, objectives, and costs of the action.

Part 5. Monitoring Plan and Research Opportunities. Describes the objectives, design, and data collection techniques of any planned monitoring and identifies any opportunities for research or administrative studies.

Part 6. Partners and Funding Sources. Identifies potential partners and contributions in recovery efforts.

Part 7. Skills and Staffing Needs. Identifies skill or staffing needs beyond those that may be provided by the existing organization.

Part 8. Maps.

Part 9. Recovery Plan Team Members.

Part 10. Recovery Plan Approval.



## **2032 - Monitoring**

Monitoring is done to verify the implementation of recovery treatments and evaluate the site-specific effectiveness and impacts of treatments. Monitoring may determine if treatments have met desired objectives or had unanticipated impacts, or whether additional treatments are needed. Monitoring of recovery may also be done to evaluate if treatments are warranted in areas where damaged resources were identified, but no treatment measures were initially recommended or implemented, or to provide untreated control data for treatment evaluation. Depending on the intensity and objectives of post-fire monitoring, Forest Service Research and Development (R&D) may participate in design and implementation.

All LaSER plans that include an effectiveness monitoring component must include a monitoring plan that meets guidelines for administrative studies and identifies:

1. Questions monitoring is intended to address;
2. Measurable indicators;
3. Data collection techniques (consistent with appropriate protocols);
4. Analysis, evaluation, and reporting techniques; and
5. Monitoring report timeframes.

Forward the results of this monitoring to the forest supervisor and/or regional forester.

Large scale events often provide excellent research opportunities. Design and implementation of post-fire research studies should follow manual direction for R&D (FSM 4000). Such studies should be coordinated with the LaSER planning effort and briefly described in the recovery plan.

## **2033 - Other Federal Lands**

For multi-agency incidents, consider conducting joint large scale assessment, planning, and implementation actions in coordination with other affected agencies.

## **2034 - Non-Federal Lands**

In certain situations, it may be appropriate for the LaSER recovery plan to also include post-event conditions and recovery objectives or activities for non-Federal intermingled or adjacent lands impacted by the large scale event.

Under the Wyden Authority (Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Agreement Authority, P.L. 109-54, section 434), Forest Service funding may be used to accomplish work on other ownerships if the work is essential to protect natural resources on National Forest System. Use of National Forest System funds to implement recovery on non-Federal impacted lands may be appropriate if there is a clear benefit to National Forest System resources; if treatments

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conducted on National Forest System lands would otherwise not be effective; and when appropriate cost-sharing, protection/maintenance, and liability agreements with the landowners are initiated.

For all other situations, refer the non-Federal landowner or manager to known sources of assistance such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service, State agencies, County Conservation Districts or County Extension Programs.

**2035 - Reporting**

Recovery Plans will be aggregated and summarized annually by regional coordinators and submitted to the Washington Office who will develop a national report on LaSER activities for the year. Annual performance reporting must be done through the official Forest Service Activities Tracking System (FACTS) data base for each activity.