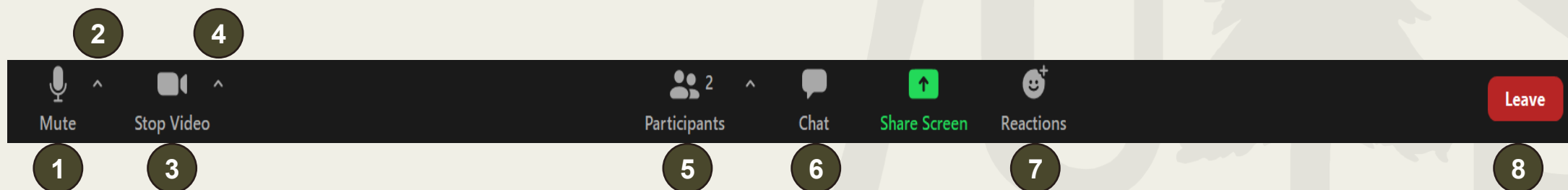


# Tribal Forum – Directive Modernization Rulemaking and Revision of Directives on Tribal Relations, Land Management Planning

Thank you for joining us today. We will begin momentarily.

## Zoom Adjustment Controls Help

Contact [SM.FS.otrtribalcon@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FS.otrtribalcon@usda.gov) if you need further assistance



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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. <b>Mute/Unmute:</b> Mute and unmute mic                                     | 5. <b>Participants:</b> See who is in the meeting, invite others, or change screen name |
| 2. <b>Audio Controls ^:</b> Change mic/speaker; select computer or phone audio | 6. <b>Chat:</b> Access window to chat with hosts/co-hosts                               |
| 3. <b>Start/Stop Video:</b> Turn camera on/off                                 | 7. <b>Reactions:</b> Non-verbal feedback                                                |
| 4. <b>Video Controls ^:</b> Switch camera; select/change background            | 8. <b>Leave:</b> Leave the meeting                                                      |



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# **Tribal Forum**

## **Proposed Policies:**

**Directive Modernization Rulemaking, Revisions to Directives on  
Tribal Relations and Land Management Planning**

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**April 30, 2026**

# Agenda

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## Opening Remarks & Why We're Here

- Reed Robinson, Director, Office of Tribal Relations

## Summary of Directive Modernization Rulemaking

- Erin Swiader, Director, Policy Office

## Summary of Changes to Tribal Relations Directives

- Reed Robinson, Director, Office of Tribal Relations

## Summary of Changes to Land Management Planning Directives

- Brad Kinder, Deputy Director, Ecosystem Management Coordination

## Next Steps



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# National-level Consultation and Collaboration

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Reed Robinson, Director, Office of Tribal Relations

# National-level Collaboration & Consultation

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The Forest Service is striving to increase opportunities for engagement and collaboration between agency decisionmakers and Indian Country.

## Collaborative Tribal Forums

- Forest Service Staff present and share information on proposed policy
- Tribal participants can ask questions and share feedback on potential Tribal impacts of the proposed policy
- Tribal forums are not consultation

## Consultation

- *A notification of the opportunity to consult* was distributed to Tribal leaders and Alaska Native Corporations via email on April 7th, 2026.
- Tribes can request consultation at anytime



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# **Directive Modernization Rulemaking Changes to 36 CFR Parts 200.4 and 216**

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Erin Swiader, Director, Policy Office

# Need for this Rulemaking

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- The Forest Service Directive System is overly voluminous, complex, and outdated.
  - We currently have 900+ national directives in addition to 3,000+ region, research station, and unit-level directive supplements.
  - More than half of our national directives are over 20 years old.
  - This system is difficult to navigate, onerous to understand and follow.
- Public notice and comment requirements have constrained the agency's ability to maintain up-to-date directives.
  - Current FS policies apply this requirement more broadly than the law requires.

# Proposed Changes to 36 CFR 200.4(b)(1)

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- Establish a clearer distinction between Manual and Handbook content
  - **Manuals** would be defined as the sole source of *mandatory direction* that all FS employees are generally expected to follow
  - **Handbooks** would be defined as *advisory guidance* only—all FS employees would be empowered to deviate from the Handbooks
- Intent is to promote a baseline level of consistency while allowing field staff to more freely innovate and adapt to meet the local needs of each landscape and community

# Proposed Changes to 36 CFR 216

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- Adjust policies regarding notice and comment on Directives to align more closely with the agency's statutory obligations
  - **Manuals** would continue to require public notice and comment (those on internal administrative matters would remain exempt)
  - **Handbooks** would be excluded from public notice and comment since they would only contain how-to advice rather than mandatory direction
- Removal of directives from the Manual *or* Handbooks would not require notice and comment

# Proposed Changes to 36 CFR 216 (con't)

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- Increased reliance on electronic means to notify the public of proposed directive changes and solicit comments
  - Notification on the Forest Service website and solicitation of electronic comments would remain required
  - Federal Register Notices and a mailing address for submission of hard copy comments would be at the agency's discretion

# Next Steps

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- Review all Directive Supplements
  - Retain only those Supplements that are necessary to comply with law or regulation, address unique safety or financial risks
  - Other supplements may be reorganized into national Directives
- Revise *all* national directives per new definitions of Manual and Handbooks
  - Initial revisions will be subject to public notice & comment
  - Changes to Tribal Relations and Land Management Planning directives are pilot projects
- Account for pending Department-wide reorganization
  - Adjust descriptions of the agency's organizational structure, chains of command, and delegations of authority



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# **Summary of Proposed Modifications to Tribal Relations Directives**

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Reed Robinson, Director, Office of Tribal Relations

# Tribal Relations Directives Update: Why

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- The Forest Service Tribal Relations Directive System is complex and outdated, especially in relation to Federal Indian Law
- Additionally, updates are required to:
  - Place all *mandatory direction* for FS employees within the FS **Manual**
  - Place *advisory guidance* within the FS **Handbook**
  - Place *best practices* within **Desk/Technical Guides**

# Tribal Relations Directives Update: Purpose

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- Improves clarity and alignment across Tribal Relations policy
  - More usable direction
  - Clarify federal Indian law and apply requirements consistently
  - Aligns responsibilities with legal requirements
- Strengthens relationships and agency commitments to Indian Country
  - Emphasizing self-determination
  - Reinforces Tribal sovereignty

# Tribal Relations Directives Proposed Modifications

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- Clarify and strengthen agency responsibilities
  - Provide clearer roles, responsibilities and accountability across the agency
- Establishes Tribal Relations training standards for agency employees
  - Tribal sovereignty, treaty obligation, trust responsibility and consultation requirements
- Enhance the use of Indigenous Knowledge in the work we do
  - Create stronger guidance for integrating IK into planning and decision making

# Tribal Relations Directives Proposed Modifications

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- Improve program accountability
  - Expands monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements
- Modernize collaboration & shared stewardship
  - Add shared stewardship section (e.g., EXPLORE Act and GNA) in alignment with self-determination
  - Strengthens consultation, coordination and collaboration by clarifying process & timelines
  - Add capacity building section including workforce development



# Tribal Relations Directives Next Steps

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- Draft proposed updates available by May
- Publish final directives in November
- Tribes can request more information or consultation regarding these proposed updates
- Local Tribal Liaison officials will be contacting you directly for feedback
- Once finalized, these directives will guide Tribal Relations and engagement for the agency



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# Summary of Proposed Modifications to Land Management Planning Directives

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Brad Kinder, Deputy Director, Ecosystem Management Coordination

# Land Management Planning Directives: Purpose & Need

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- Capitalize on over ten years of experience implementing the 2012 Planning Rule and Planning Directives
- Allow the agency more flexibility to address emerging issues and priorities
- Increase efficiency of land management planning by reducing process and redundancies
- Align with the National Directives Modernization effort

# Proposed Changes to FSM 1900 and FSH 1909.12

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- Remove the FS Planning Handbook
- Revise the FS Planning Manual to include minimum statutory requirements and key direction from FS Planning Handbook into one consolidated planning chapter

# Proposed Changes to FSM 1900

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- Incorporates the minimum requirements of the National Forest Management Act and the 2012 Rule to establish-
  - **Planning procedures** for this part in the Forest Service Directive System
  - Requirements for **national best management practices for water quality**
  - Procedures for **obtaining inventory data on various renewable resources and soil and water**
  - Procedures for **estimating the quantity of timber** that can be removed annually in perpetuity on a sustained-yield basis
- Maintains content beyond NFMA and the Rule to maintain planning stability and consistency across the National Forest System

# Proposed Changes to FSM 1900

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- Includes key tribal engagement, consultation, and public engagement requirements
- Outlines process for identifying potential species of conservation concern
- Provides process for recommended wilderness and evaluation of wild and scenic rivers

# Next Steps

| Task                                                          | Planned Date |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Tribal Forum and Initiation of Tribal Consultation            | April        |
| Publication of NOA in Federal Register- 30 Day Comment Period | Summer 2026  |
| Publish Final                                                 | Early 2027   |

# Opportunity to Consult

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- *A notification of the opportunity to consult* on the proposed policy was emailed to Tribal and Corporation leaders on *April 7th, 2026*.
- Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations may request consultation at the national, regional or local level.
- Tribal leaders, staff and subject matter experts may also identify and communicate opportunities for collaboration and request consultation with the Forest Service via email at [SM.FS.otrtribalcon@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FS.otrtribalcon@usda.gov).

# Directive Modernization Rulemaking & Revision of Tribal Relations, Land Management Planning Directives

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**We appreciate your time today and look forward to your continued engagement on these policy changes**

For more information or to ask questions following this Tribal Forum,  
contact the Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations.

[SM.FS.otrtribalcon@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FS.otrtribalcon@usda.gov)

