

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a directive?

Simply put, Forest Service directives are comprised of the Forest Service Manual and Handbooks. They provide the policy, objectives, responsibilities, and instructions that guide employees in how they will accomplish the agency mission.

Q: Why is the Forest Service updating its Timber Management directives?

Over the past 15 years, Congress has granted the Forest Service several new authorities pertaining to the sale and disposal of forest products designed to improved efficiencies, increase the pace of forest restoration and reduce hazardous fuels. While these authorities are in use to varying degrees across the National Forest System through interim direction, updates to Forest Management policy have not kept pace. By updating our policies, procedures and business practices to better reflect current landscape conditions, we will increase the pace and scale of forest landscape restoration and more effectively deliver forest products.

Q: Why are the Timber Management directives updates being split into separate batches rather than published all at once?

The Forest Service identified 55 chapters within 14 handbooks and manuals in need of updating. This amounts to an extremely large volume- hundreds of pages of documents- for Tribes, partners and the public to review. By splitting the updates into batches and releasing them on a rolling basis, we can allow more time for stakeholders to review these important changes.

Q: How were the proposed changes identified and developed?

The proposed updates are the result of expert input provided by agency professionals and external partners since the launch of the Forest Products Modernization effort in June 2017. Over 1,100 comments and recommendations on how we can improve our forest products program were collected through email, solution team reports, an online suggestion box and discussion portal for employees, and a series of regional and national partner feedback sessions. Many of those comments are reflected in the proposed updates.

The proposed changes also reflect input from subject matter experts through a series of internal policy review workshops and consultation with the Office of the General Counsel, and the Office of Regulatory and Management Services.

Q: How was Tribal input on the proposed updates gathered?

There is a unique relationship between federal government and native tribes including additional legal requirements for consultation and communication. The Forest Service takes these responsibilities seriously and engaged in consultations on the first batch of directives updates and is consulting with Tribes on subsequent batches of directives updates.

Q: What are the major changes in the proposed updates?

Significant changes in Batch 1 include:

- Added policy on use of Stewardship and Good Neighbor Authorities.
- Increases volume/value of timber line officers can dispose of through Stewardship and Good Neighbor Authority.
- Adds Healthy Forests Restoration Act authority for certain stewardship contracts to be up to 20 years in length.
- Adds Healthy Forests Restoration Act direction prohibiting collection of K-V under stewardship contracts.
- Establishes new (lower) minimum rates for timber and clarifies minimum rates for stewardship sales.
- Formalizes policies and direction pertaining to Designation by Prescription.
- Revises minimum requirements for certifying sale administration personnel.
- Increases amount of free use material that can be granted to an individual in a year.
- Adds authority for free use of forest products to Federally Recognized Tribes.

Important changes in the second set of directives updates include:

- Added clarification on procedures for redetermination of stumpage value (the price paid by timber purchasers for trees on the stump) to ensure fair market value on contracts greater than 7 years as well as shorter term contracts.
- Updated agency policy to give Regional Foresters authority to establish minimum rates (prices) for timber that are higher than national minimum rates if market conditions are justified.
- Consolidated FSH 2409.19 Chapters 10 and 30 pertaining to use of Knutson-Vandenberg (KV) trust funds¹ by moving all content into Chapter 10.
- Revised direction for how KV funds are collected and used for restoration activities. Expanded legislative authority in the 2018 Farm Bill now allows KV funds to be used for restoration activities outside the timber sale area boundaries but within the Region where they are collected.
- Revised direction on collection of K-V and Salvage Sale Funds on Stewardship projects to be consistent with direction in the 2018 Omnibus bill prohibiting such activities.
- Updated stewardship authorities to reflect provisions in the 2018 Omnibus and 2018 Farm Bill, namely authority to enter into agreements with federally-recognized tribes to carry out demonstration projects for management of National Forest System lands and to promote biomass energy production on tribal lands with woody biomass from federal lands.
- A new chapter in FS Handbook 2409.19 on Good Neighbor Authority (GNA), providing direction on working with states, counties and tribes for restoration projects on National Forest lands. The GNA handbook also includes direction on states preparing and administering timber sales through GNA on National Forest System lands. States are now allowed through legislative authority to collect and retain revenues generated from timber sale projects for use on service work or other projects on National Forest lands.

Q: What are the major changes we can expect to see in subsequent batches of updates?

- Handbook chapters pertaining to Timber Sale Preparation;
- Handbook chapters pertaining to Timber Cruising;
- Manual and Handbook chapters pertaining to Silvicultural Examinations, Prescriptions, and Evaluations;
- Manual chapters pertaining to Genetic Resource Management.

A summary of all directives updates can be found on the [Forest Products Modernization website](#).

Q: How were comments from the public considered in the final directives?

After the 30-day public comment period, the agency reviewed and considered all comments received and incorporated necessary changes as appropriate. The final directives, all comments received and the agency's response are available at <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/ReadingRoom?project=ORMS-2688>.

Q: When will additional directives updates be published?

Additional directives updates are in progress and are tentatively slated for public comment in early 2022. The latest information and status of directives updates is posted on the [FPM website](#).