

§219.3

chooses to act as the Responsible Official. Requirements for project or activity planning are established in the Forest Service Directive System. Except as specifically provided, none of the requirements of this subpart applies to projects or activities.

(d) *Developing, amending, and revising plans.* (1) *Plan development.* If a new national forest, grassland, prairie, or other administrative unit of the National Forest System is established, the Regional Forester, or a forest, grassland, prairie, or other comparable unit Supervisor identified by the Regional Forester must either develop a plan for the unit or amend or revise an existing plan to apply to the lands within the new unit.

(2) *Plan amendment.* The Responsible Official may amend a plan at any time.

(3) *Plan revision.* The Responsible Official must revise the plan if the Responsible Official concludes that conditions within the plan area have significantly changed. Unless otherwise provided by law, a plan must be revised at least every 15 years.

§219.3 Nature of land management planning.

(a) *Principles of land management planning.* Land management planning is an adaptive management process that includes social, economic, and ecological evaluation; plan development, plan amendment, and plan revision; and monitoring. The overall aim of planning is to produce responsible land management for the National Forest System based on useful and current information and guidance. Land management planning guides the Forest Service in fulfilling its responsibilities for stewardship of the National Forest System to best meet the needs of the American people.

(b) *Force and effect of plans.* Plans developed in accordance with this subpart generally contain desired conditions, objectives, and guidance for project and activity decisionmaking in the plan area. Plans do not grant, withhold, or modify any contract, permit, or other legal instrument, subject anyone to civil or criminal liability, or create any legal rights. Plans typically do not approve or execute projects and activities. Decisions with effects that

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can be meaningfully evaluated (40 CFR 1508.23) typically are made when projects and activities are approved.

§219.4 National Environmental Policy Act compliance.

(a) In accordance with 16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(1) this subpart clarifies how the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4346) (hereinafter referred to as NEPA) applies to National Forest System land management planning.

(b) Approval of a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision, under the authority of this subpart, will be done in accordance with the Forest Service NEPA procedures and may be categorically excluded from NEPA documentation under an appropriate category provided in such procedures.

(c) Nothing in this subpart alters the application of NEPA to proposed projects and activities.

(d) Monitoring and evaluations, including those required by §219.6, may be used or incorporated by reference, as appropriate, in applicable NEPA documents.

§219.5 Environmental management systems.

The Responsible Official must establish an environmental management system (EMS) for each unit of the National Forest System. The scope of an EMS will include, at the minimum, the land management planning process defined by this subpart. An EMS for any unit may include environmental aspects unrelated to the land management planning process under this subpart.

(a) Plan development, plan amendment, or plan revision must be completed in accordance with the EMS and §219.14. An EMS may be established independently of the planning process.

(b) The EMS must conform to the consensus standard developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and adopted by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) as "ISO 14001: Environmental Management Systems—Specification With Guidance For Use" (ISO 14001). The ISO 14001 describes EMSs and outlines the elements of an EMS. The ISO 14001 is available from the ANSI

website at <http://webstore.ansi.org/ansidocstore/default.asp>.

(c) Pursuant to §219.1(c), the Chief of the Forest Service shall establish procedures in the Forest Service Directive System to ensure that appropriate EMSs are in place. The Responsible Official may determine whether and how to change and improve an EMS for the plan area, consistent with applicable Forest Service Directive System procedures.

§219.6 Evaluations and monitoring.

(a) *Evaluations.* The Responsible Official shall keep the Plan Set of Documents up to date with evaluation reports, which will reflect changing conditions, science, and other relevant information. The following three types of evaluations are required for land management planning: comprehensive evaluations for plan development and revision, evaluations for plan amendment, and annual evaluations of monitoring information. The Responsible Official shall document evaluations in evaluation reports, make these reports available to the public as required in §219.9, and include these reports in the Plan Set of Documents (§219.7(a)(1)). Evaluations under this section should be commensurate to the level of risk or benefit associated with the nature and level of expected management activities in the plan area.

(1) *Comprehensive evaluations.* These evaluate current social, economic, and ecological conditions and trends that contribute to sustainability, as described in §219.10. Comprehensive evaluations and comprehensive evaluation reports must be updated at least every five years to reflect any substantial changes in conditions and trends since the last comprehensive evaluation. The Responsible Official must ensure that comprehensive evaluations, including any updates necessary, include the following elements:

(i) *Area of analysis.* The area(s) of analysis must be clearly identified.

(ii) *Conditions and trends.* The current social, economic, and ecological conditions and trends and substantial changes from previously identified conditions and trends must be described based on available information, including monitoring information, surveys,

assessments, analyses, and other studies as appropriate. Evaluations may build upon existing studies and evaluations.

(2) *Evaluation for a plan amendment.* An evaluation for a plan amendment must analyze the issues relevant to the purposes of the amendment and may use the information in comprehensive evaluations relevant to the plan amendment. When a plan amendment is made contemporaneously with, and only applies to, a project or activity decision, the analysis prepared for the project or activity satisfies the requirements for an evaluation for an amendment.

(3) *Annual evaluation of the monitoring information.* Monitoring results must be evaluated annually and in accordance with paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(b) *Monitoring.* The plan must describe the monitoring program for the plan area. Monitoring information in the Plan Document or Set of Documents may be changed and updated as appropriate, at any time. Such changes and updates are administrative corrections (§219.7(b)) and do not require a plan amendment or revision.

(1) The plan-monitoring program shall be developed with public participation and take into account:

(i) Financial and technical capabilities;

(ii) Key social, economic, and ecological performance measures relevant to the plan area; and

(iii) The best available science.

(2) The plan-monitoring program shall provide for:

(i) Monitoring to determine whether plan implementation is achieving multiple use objectives;

(ii) Monitoring to determine the effects of the various resource management activities within the plan area on the productivity of the land;

(iii) Monitoring of the degree to which on-the-ground management is maintaining or making progress toward the desired conditions and objectives for the plan; and

(iv) Adjustment of the monitoring program as appropriate to account for unanticipated changes in conditions.

(3) The Responsible Official may conduct monitoring jointly with others, including but not limited to, Forest