

## **Facts about the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for 2008 Planning Rule**

Updated: March 20, 2008

The Forest Service published the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for the 2008 planning rule February 7, 2008. The Forest Service identified Alternative M as the preferred alternative for the 2008 planning rule. The FEIS is still under review at the Department of Agriculture. No final rule has been selected.

**The FEIS for the 2008 Planning Rule does not propose a “new logging rule.”** The FEIS displays six different alternatives for a **planning** rule that would guide the development of Land and Resource Management Plans (forest plans) for the National Forests and Grasslands.

- A planning rule establishes a *process* by which social, economic values and environmental protections are recognized and documented. A planning rule directs what information is included in a forest plan and how the plan is prepared. The planning rules considered in the FEIS do not dictate what kinds of projects may be approved or implemented, and do not authorize any specific activities.

**None of the alternatives in the FEIS weaken existing environmental protections for wildlife or other resources.** All six of the alternatives studied in the FEIS ensure the protection of wildlife and other resources by providing a forest planning framework to fully comply with all resource protection laws (such as the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the National Forest Management Act) and require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The preferred alternative continues existing timber policy and has specific provisions that include:

- Limits on even-aged harvest methods
- Limits on maximum size openings
- Protection of soil and water

**The court did not find that the 2005 Planning Rule weakened environmental protections.** The court did identify Forest Service procedural errors in developing the 2005 rule. All of these procedural errors have been addressed in the development of the FEIS for the 2008 Planning Rule.

**The FEIS is an important step toward getting back to business.**

Publishing the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the 2008 Planning Rule is the first procedural step towards re-starting our critically important planning process.

After a decision is made on which alternative will be the final rule, the Forest Service will be able begin revising land management plans using an even more open and collaborative dialogue with the public.

## **ALTERNATIVE M**

**The preferred alternative is Alternative ‘M’.** This preference is based on issues raised by the public during the development of the Final Environmental Impact Statement as well as the more than 79,000 public comments received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

### **Emphasis on Resource and Wildlife Protection**

The preferred alternative places strong emphasis on protection of wildlife with improved monitoring and sustainability standards.

An Environmental Management System is required to be in place prior to the implementation of approved projects.

The preferred alternative ensures protection of wildlife and other resources by providing a forest planning framework to fully comply with all resource protection laws (such as the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the National Forest Management Act) and require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

### **Public Collaboration**

The preferred alternative requires early and frequent public dialogue in all phases of development, implementation and monitoring of forest plans. The goal is to create strong on-going conversations that address local needs balanced with science.

### **More Responsive to Changing Conditions**

Adaptability is built into the preferred alternative, allowing for quicker response to changing conditions such as those brought about by climate change. Plans will also be able to adjust to the latest advancements in science and technology. This can be done on a local level to best meet the immediate needs of a forest and its surrounding community.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The FEIS was sent to the Department of Agriculture for a decision on which alternative will become the final rule. The Record of Decision and final rule will be published in the Federal Register after the Department completes its review and makes a decision on the final rule. There will be no additional comment period on either the FEIS or the proposed rule.