



USDA Forest Service National Forest System Briefing Paper

Date August 11, 2008

Topic: National Soil Information Network (SoilNet) Charter

Issue: NFS regional and field soil scientists do not have a formalized mechanism to interact with R&D soil scientists to address land resource management questions.

Background: The field has been seeking a stronger relationship to R&D to assist them in resolving land management issues. R-1 lawsuits in which two projects were overturned, i.e., Iron Honey EIS and the Lolo Post-Burn EIS, were the impetus of this effort. At least part of the reason for these judgments was the inadequacy of the soil input into the respective NEPA analysis.

Additionally, the soil management program lacks the formalized R&D support afforded water, wildlife and fisheries programs. This situation has resulted in haphazard coordination between NFS and R&D in to effort to respond to land management questions.

Key Points:

- ❖ R&D soil scientists and their respective colleagues and research stations develop research and technology transfer to address land management questions.
- ❖ A technical team and steering team composed of NFS soil scientists and R&D soil scientists assists land managers in addressing land management questions associated with soil and natural resource management.
- ❖ The steering team reviews a list of projects and makes a recommendation for an annual program of work.
- ❖ The Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air and Rare Plants Director works with both the regional directors and R&D leadership and together with the Environmental Sciences Research Director to approve the projects for SoilNet.

Summary:

The SoilNet Charter provides better integration of NFS and R&D to address land management issues.

The SoilNet Charter commits the Forest Service to:

- 1.) Establishing a technical team and a steering team to meet annually to develop a list of recommended projects;
- 2.) The Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air and Rare Plants Director and the Environmental Sciences Research Director will approve SoilNet projects;
- 3.) Coordinate with the Regions and R&D to accomplish approved projects.

Contact: Randy Davis, National Soil Program Leader, Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air, and Rare Plant Staff, 202-205-1082.