

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT UNDER THE 2005 PLANNING RULE

CIMARRON-COMANCHE GRASSLANDS

http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/psicc/projects/forest_revision/index.shtml

Public involvement and collaboration was initiated through mailings to interested publics including tribal, agencies and interested parties (see attached list) in 2004 and 2005. Two newsletters have been mailed to approximately 1100 persons or organizations. Four public collaboration meetings were held in Elkhart, Kansas; Springfield, La Junta and Pueblo, Colorado on June 27, 28, 29, and 30, 2005 respectively and were attended by over 80 people. The collaborative structure of each meeting was modified to meet the needs of the public. A series of round table discussions with key stakeholders is being arranged; these discussions will be open to the public. On-going field trips are taking place.

We have established our Forest Planning web site. The web site includes an overall view of the 2005 Planning Rule, planning process, facts about the Grasslands, pre-work assessments, evaluation reports, newsletters, and a place to contact us by email. This web site will also contain the draft and final Revised Plan and Plan set of documents when completed.

The Cimarron and Comanche District Rangers have been involved in collaboration with their respective local and state governments, county commissioners, livestock grazing association boards, local interested citizens, in addition to Forest Guardians and The Nature Conservancy.

We continue to collaborate and work closely with our interested publics and various local, state, and federal agencies such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Department of Wildlife, and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

Through our public collaboration, we have identified seven topics of interest. These are: 1.) Fragmentation of land ownership; 2.) Use of fire and livestock grazing to manage Mountain plover and lesser prairie chicken; 3.) Tamarisk infestation; 4.) Threat of new invasive species; 5.) Sustainable elk populations; 6.) Recreation, tourism: potential for increased resource damage and 7.) Plant species diversity: many plant communities near monocultures; areas lack native bunchgrass.

GRAND MESA, UNCOMPAHGRE, AND GUNNISON NATIONAL FOREST

www.fs.fed.us/r2/gmug/policy/plan_rev/collab/public_involv.shtml

Phase 1

The public involvement goal is to engage and sustain involvement by a diversity of individuals and groups who are interested in the GMUG stewardship and in working in a collaborative manner to provide focus to the planning efforts.

The GMUG planning team initiated a comprehensive public involvement effort in 2002 with several different approaches to help provide a number of opportunities for stakeholders to participate, based on their time and interest. These approaches include:

Identifying stakeholder goals, objectives and issues for the GMUG Plan Revision - The collaborative-objective based planning process was designed to gather information from the public regarding their goals and objectives for the use, management and conservation of the public lands, particularly national forest lands. Focus groups and one-on-one interviews with interest groups, government officials, Forest Service employees and concerned citizens were conducted.

Phase 2

The Planning Team will be conducting a variety of collaborative activities to assist in developing the missing components for the draft forest plan. These components include management objectives, guidelines for projects, monitoring plan, and draft environmental management system. We will likely be using topic (i.e., resource area) working groups as the primary tool for collaborative input. We will also be issuing newsletters and taking comments via the planning website. As previously stated, this is an open planning process, so members of the public can comment or stop by for an update at any time.

The draft forest plan is scheduled for release in 2006. There will be a 90-day formal public comment period at that time. Please check the links mentioned above for updates to the geographic area evaluations and the status of the draft forest plan.

BITTERROOT, FLATHEAD, AND LOLO NATIONAL FORESTS

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/wmpz/public-involv/>

Background

The purpose of public involvement is to meaningfully engage all interested individuals, groups, agencies and Native American Tribes in our Forest Plan revision process. We have set the following two goals to help us do this:

1. To meaningfully and efficiently incorporate the “public voice” in arriving at revised Forest Plans that are useful, implementable, and widely supported.
2. To build a constructive and lasting two-way dialogue between the three forests and the people they serve.

Our [Proposed Action](#), released in January 2004, presented our preliminary thoughts as to how we might respond to major issues or needs for change. It became the focal point for public discussions through open houses, invited presentations, community-based collaborative groups, and many written comments. Our [Content Analysis Report](#) summarizes what we learned from people that responded to our proposed action during the 90-day comment period.

During most of 2004, we used information in our Content Analysis Report to develop issues, and from those, we developed a set of preliminary alternatives to be analyzed in an Environmental Impact Statement. But, in January of 2005, the Forest Service released the [2005 Final NFMA Planning Rule](#) (link opens a new window), which changed the planning process requirements. Now that we are [Working Under the New Planning Rule](#), we plan to work collaboratively with the public to help us refine one Preferred Option, which will eventually become a draft forest plan.

In late spring of 2005, we began public discussion of our Preferred Option, with each Forest using some combination of the following methods: (1) posting draft desired conditions and supporting maps on our website, (2) open houses, (3) invited presentations, (4) newsletters, and (5) on-going collaborative dialogue in community-based working groups. The major focal points of the collaborative process were: (1) desired future conditions, and (2) suitability of land areas for various purposes. The last community group meeting in this phase was held on September 1. Contact information for community group leaders and notes from all the meetings are listed below.

BLUE MOUNTAINS FOREST PLAN REVISION

MALHEUR, UMATILLA, AND WALLOWA-WHITMAN NATIONAL FORESTS

www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/blue_mtn_planrevision/

Background

The Blue Mountains national forests total approximately 5.3 million acres of national forest land in northeastern Oregon, southwestern Washington and a small portion in west-central Idaho. The planning area encompasses all or portions of 18 counties in Oregon (11), Washington (4), and Idaho (3), and about 160 communities. Nine American Indian tribes reside on lands within the planning area, have reserved treaty rights, or have previously expressed interest in the management of national forest lands in the planning area.

Overview of Collaborative Process

In January 2004, the Forest Plan Revision Team contacted county governments, tribes, and resource advisory councils to explore their interest in being co-conveners for the collaborative process. These groups were contacted because they have broad networks of contacts, expertise in land management planning, and have demonstrated that they can build partnerships, resolve conflicts, and solve problems.

Currently eight counties and one resource advisory council have committed to be co-conveners. Their role includes: helping develop the strategy for how to work with various interest groups and with the public, attending meetings with the Forest Service and others at key steps in the process, and helping assimilate the information collected at collaborative events. They also provide specific expertise such as knowledge about state and local laws and existing county plans, and expert knowledge of land management planning.

The team has hired a neutral third-party facilitation team through the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution to assist with the collaborative efforts and help design and facilitate the collaborative activities.

In addition to the Blue Mountains Community Collaborative Workshops described below, the team uses several collaborative tools to engage people in the public participation process:

- **Mailing list** - includes 2,500 individuals and organizations, 600 of which also receive periodic **email** updates.
- **Newsletter “Ready, Set, Revision!”** - published bi-annually (four issues to date) and sent to all employees on the three Forests, the mailing list, and distributed to unit offices and others on request.
- **Website** (http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/blue_mtn_planrevision/) - to contribute to the transparency of our collaborative process, notes and materials from all collaborative forums are posted on the website, as well as collaborative event schedules, analysis documents, maps, newsletters, and information about the revision team, timeline, and planning process. The website also includes links to other forest plan revision efforts and the Washington Office.
- **Media** - over 90 media outlets in the planning area are used to provide public notification through news releases and personal contacts.
- **Individual meetings** with elected officials, special interest groups, state and federal agencies, and American Indian tribes.
- **Focus groups, technical working groups, and one-on-one discussions** are also being used to collaborate on specific topics.

Blue Mountains Community Collaborative Workshops

Since June 2004 the Revision Team has been working collaboratively with local communities to develop a vision for the future management of the Blue Mountains. Two draft vision documents have been released for comment.

The team has held three rounds of workshops and three field trips. Each round of workshops is held in eight communities across the Blue Mountains as well as two additional communities outside the planning area (Portland, Oregon and Pasco, Washington). Over 500 people have attended workshops, and over 150 attended the field trips.

In addition to the 33 collaborative events held to date, two to three more rounds of workshops in the ten communities are anticipated. Each round of workshops builds on the products that were created at previous

workshops and will culminate in draft Proposed Revised Forest Plans in January 2007. People also provide responses using email and by letters and phone calls

Internal Collaboration

Forest Service employees are strongly encouraged to participate in the workshops and field trips. The Revision Team has met with employees at each unit of the three forests on two occasions to share information and solicit comments.

We are co-operating with local Bureau of Land Management units to complete a social assessment (i.e., sense of place maps) and an economic assessment. This will involve community meetings in several counties in the planning area.

COLVILLE, OKANOGAN, AND WENATCHEE NATIONAL FORESTS

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/colville/cow/>

Opportunities to collaborate with the forest plan revision team are offered to the public in a variety of ways in order to meet the diverse needs and desires of interested citizens. Personal contact (public meetings, presentations to interest groups, office visits), telephone, e-mail, U.S. Mail, web site postings, and news releases are all methods simultaneously used by the forest plan revision team to facilitate public collaboration. All are standard ways in which information or opportunities for public collaboration are presented to the public.

Through our public collaboration efforts, we have identified three major topics of interest. These are 1) Road Management, 2) Recreation Access, and 3) Vegetation Management.

Forest Plan Revision Web Site

To improve public understanding and to encourage public collaboration, regular update of the forest plan revision web site includes items such as “Frequently asked Questions” on topics such as “potential wilderness evaluation”. To promote public understanding, links to national roadless and ecosystem management web sites are also provided on the local forest plan revision website. Newsletters and news releases are posted as well to inform and encourage public input. Summaries of public comments are also posted to illustrate to the public that they have been heard. Opportunities to provide input and participate in ongoing forest plan revision activities are also easily accessible on the site.

Fall '04

A presentation on forest plan revision informed University of Puget Sound students of revision efforts, solicited their input, and enhanced the experience of a public policy class.

Fall/Winter 2004-2005

A major public collaboration effort between the Forest Service and the public resulted in the gain of information concerning national forest locations valued as sites for human uses or activities. 12 public meetings were held in cities and towns across the state of Washington on both sides of the Cascade Mountains. Simultaneous web site postings, electronic mailings, and mailings via U.S. Mail provided collaboration opportunities that were equal in content to that obtained by personally attending one of the public meetings.

Fall '04 - Winter '05 and July'05

Spanish language news releases were issued to Spanish language news media and Hispanic organizations across the state of Washington. This was an effort to inform and solicit collaboration from the Hispanic community in forest plan revision activities and public meetings.

Winter 2004-2005 and 2/05

The forest plan revision team offered to provide presentations to special interest groups/clubs to inform and solicit public input on issues related to revision of forest plans. A coalition of environmental groups accepted the offer and hosted the Forest Service at two meetings in Seattle, WA and Bellingham WA. The Back Country Horsemen of Tonasket, WA also accepted the Forest Service's offer and the Forest Service provided a presentation in 2/05 to explain the 2005 Planning Rule and to encourage collaboration in forest plan revision. Presentations have also been conducted to local snowmobile and motorized user clubs.

2004 and 2005

Periodically, line officers and members of the forest plan revision team have met with tribal governments to explain forest plan revision, the 2005 planning rule, and to solicit and encourage tribal input and collaboration on a government to government basis. These collaboration efforts have been focused on the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indians, the Spokane Tribe of Indians, and the Kalispel Tribe of Indians.

2004-2005

The staffs of U.S. Representatives Doc Hastings, George Nethercutt, and Kathy McMorris have been kept informed periodically on forest plan revision activities. In May, 2005, members of the forest plan revision team and regional office met with staff of Washington Governor Christine Gregoire.

March, '04 and April '05

An article in the annual forest newspaper *Cascade Lookout* (2004 and 2005 editions) encouraged and emphasized public collaboration in the on-going forest plan revision. The 2005 edition emphasized the mandate for public collaboration as a result of adoption of the 2005 Planning Rule.

3/29/05

A news release and newsletter was issued to announce local adoption of the 2005 planning rule and to emphasize that public collaboration opportunities will be offered in many different ways as outlined by the 2005 planning rule.

Spring '04

To increase dialogue and collaboration between user groups and the Forest Service, and to improve Forest Service credibility, the forest plan revision team made the content of all comments public. Comments addressed needed changes in national forest management and/or existing forest plans, as noted by members of the public at public meeting, in letters, or e-mail messages. This notification of the public was accomplished by summarizing public comments in electronic and hard copy newsletters, and by posting summaries of public comments on the forest plan revision web site.

May 2005

A meeting was held in Wenatchee, WA to inform regulatory federal and state agency personnel of the adoption and content of the 2005 planning rule. The continued need to collaborate was emphasized by the Forest Service. Forest plan revision interdisciplinary team members regularly work with counter parts within the state and federal on forest plan revision activities.

A May 2004 newsletter summarizes comments made by people attending public meetings, or by writing email and U.S. mail to forest plan revision team. The newsletter emphasizes the need for people to come together and collaborate due to divergent and opposing viewpoints held by members of the public on a variety of resource issues.

June, 2005

A poster and brochure were created and distributed to Forest Service offices and community businesses. The poster and brochure advertise the forest plan revision effort and informs how the public can collaborate in forest plan revision. A tear-off form/opportunity to sign up on the forest plan revision mailing list is also provided.

June- August 2005

Six separate county commissioner boards were contacted and informed of forest plan revision, efforts, the adoption of the 2005 planning rule, and the roadless area/potential wilderness evaluation exercise. Dissemination of information as well as the solicitation of county government input and collaboration was the goal of these meetings. Local line officers as well as forest plan revision team members conducted the presentations.

August 2005

Due to high public interest, requests from the public, and the commitment of the Forest Service to achieve a high level of public collaboration, the collaboration period for review of roadless boundaries was extended 45 days beyond the original review completion date. The forest plan revision team notified approximately 900 individuals on its e-mail mailing list and 900 on its U.S. Mail mailing list of the extension via issuance of a news release and a special "speed memo" newsletter. To improve effectiveness of collaboration and communication with constituents, the newsletter also clarified or corrected misconceptions held by some individuals and special interest groups.

August 23, 2005

A coalition of environmental groups hosted the Forest Service in a very productive working meeting in which the Forest Service and the coalition shared information related to setting boundaries for roadless areas or potential wilderness areas.

July - September 2005

A significant public collaboration effort was undertaken related to roadless areas/potential wilderness areas. The public was again able to choose the preferred method of collaborating with the Forest Service by either attending one of 5 public meetings held across the state of Washington, or by accessing roadless area maps/info and input forms posted on the forest plan revision web site, or by requesting hard copies mailed via the U.S. Mail. In this collaboration activity, the Forest Service proposed boundaries of potential wilderness areas/roadless areas to the public. The public was asked to review boundaries and to concur or provide alternate information. This was an effort to evaluate potential wilderness areas as required by the planning rule.

Future Public Collaboration Plans

A draft strategic communication plan has been prepared to facilitate the release of the “Starting Option” (first draft) of the revised forest plans. This communication plan is intended to 1) help yield a high level of public understanding of the “starting option”, 2) enable the public to recognize how their input was used and affected the content of the “starting option”, and 3) facilitate good collaboration in the public review of the “starting option”.

A partial list of the planned public collaboration activities include:

- A round of public open houses will be held across the state of Washington prior to release of the “starting option” in order to provide “transparency” to the plan revision process, and to provide the public another opportunity to collaborate and understand how their input is being used in forest plan revision;
- Another engagement of tribal and county governments as well as other federal and state agencies prior to “starting option” release to ensure their input is incorporated into the “starting option”;
- Presentations to Forest Service employees throughout the planning area prior to “starting option” release to inform employees, and to solicit employees’ support to facilitate public collaboration during release of the “starting option”;
- Implementation of live radio interviews on local radio talk shows with line officers and forest plan revision team members after release of the “starting option” to facilitate public understanding and to encourage public collaboration;
- Preparation of briefing papers on resource topics of a controversial or important nature, as well as distribution of newsletters, news releases, and posting of forest plan revision site with new information;
- A second round of public meetings after release of the “starting option” to explain the “starting option”, and to further explain how the public can continue to collaborate with the Forest Service.