

Highlights of the 2008 Planning Rule

The Forest Service is announcing its final 2008 Planning Rule and will now restart its forest planning process and encourages the public to join in this effort.

- The Forest Service will now begin revising land management plans using an even more open and collaborative dialogue with the public.

The 2008 Planning Rule increases public collaboration.

- The 2008 Planning Rule expands collaboration by requiring early and frequent public dialogues throughout the development, implementation and monitoring of plans. The goal is to create strong on-going conversations that address local needs that are balanced

The 2008 Planning Rule is more responsive to changing conditions.

- Adaptability is built-in the rule, allowing for quicker response to changing conditions such as those brought about by catastrophic events (wildfires, hurricanes, etc.) and 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.

The 2008 Planning Rule reinforces existing environmental protections for wildlife, water and other resources by placing limits on even-aged timber harvest methods and maximum size openings, and ensuring protections for soil and water.

The 2008 Planning Rule...

- Provides a framework to ensure that all forest plans fully comply with all resource protection laws including the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the National Forest Management Act.
- Requires compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) when developing forest plans.
- Requires an Environmental Management System to be in place prior to the implementation of approved projects.

The 2008 Planning Rule does not authorize logging or other on-the-ground activities. The 2008 Planning Rule...

- Establishes a *process* to dialogue with the public on what issues are of most importance to them on a unit of the National Forest system and to balance those desires and needs with sound science and resource protections.
- Directs what information needs to be included in a plan and how the plan should be prepared.
- Does not authorize any specific on-the-ground activities and does not dictate what types of projects may be approved. On-the-ground activities will be analyzed in subsequent National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes.

The 2008 Planning Rule was developed by Forest Service professional resource specialists, scientists and land managers after carefully considering 79,000 comments from other resource agencies and the public.