

Forest Planning and Other Priorities in the Eastern Region

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National – What's Talked About Gets Done

- Great issues and great diversions
- Four threats
 - ◆ Loss of open areas
 - ◆ Fuels and fire
 - ◆ Invasive species
 - ◆ Unmanaged recreation

National – What’s Talked About Gets Done

- Process predicament – healthy forest initiatives
 - ◆ New categorical exclusions
 - ◆ Revised appeal rules
 - ◆ Legislative initiatives
 - ◆ “You can’t uncut a tree, but you also can’t unburn a forest.” – Mark Rey

Roadless Conservation Rule

- ◆ Proposed rule to exempt Alaska
- ◆ Rulemaking begins for states to petition for exemptions
- ◆ Still much uncertainty and pending litigation
- ◆ Currently enjoined

Proposed Revised Planning Rule

- 195,787 Comments Received
 - ◆ 189,022 Form letters
 - ◆ 6,765 individual comments
- Timeline – final this year

Proposed Revised Planning Rule

■ Issues

- ◆ Providing for ecological sustainability
 - ◆ Standards (RNV, viability?)
 - ◆ Species (all life, vertebrates, vascular plants?)
- ◆ NEPA compliance
 - ◆ The nature of plans
 - ◆ Analysis requirements

Programmatic Plans

- Plans are kept up to date
- Revision is based on need for change
- More emphasis on M&E – adaptive mgt.
- Public involvement is focused on desired conditions

Plan Analysis Focus

- On desired conditions rather than speculative and detailed examination of future project effects
- On baseline data and trends
- On reasonable choices for zoning the landscape

Nature of Plans

- Provide only the framework for future management
- Do not grant, withhold, or modify any contract, permit, authorization, or other legal instrument
- Normally does not authorize any ground-disturbing activities nor specifically commit funding or resources.

Analysis for Plan Decisions

- Therefore, the analysis associated with a plan should be proportional to the level of decisions made in a plan
- While a plan guides project implementation, extensive up-front effects disclosure is generally too speculative to be useful for project analysis

Analysis for Plan Decisions

- The forest service therefore intends to conduct most detailed analysis on the site-specific projects.

Regional – What's Talked About Gets Done

- Five priorities:

- ◆ Financial health
- ◆ Organizational effectiveness
- ◆ National fire plan
- ◆ Meeting commitments
- ◆ Forest plan revision

Plan Revision in the Eastern Region

- Finished:

- ◆ Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

- In draft:

- ◆ Chequamegon-Nicolet

- ◆ Chippewa

- ◆ Superior

Plan Revision in the Eastern Region

■ In Progress:

- ◆ White Mountain
- ◆ Green Mountain and Finger Lakes
- ◆ Hoosier
- ◆ Shawnee
- ◆ Wayne
- ◆ Monongahela

Plan Revision in the Eastern Region

- New Starts:
 - ◆ Ottawa
 - ◆ Hiawatha
 - ◆ Huron - Manistee
 - ◆ Allegheny

Expectations

- A 2-year timeline
- High quality plans
 - ◆ Resource sustainable
 - ◆ Scientifically credible
 - ◆ Legally defensible
- Commitment to adaptive management
 - ◆ Incremental improvements vs. The “perfect” plan

How Do We Get There?

- Think broad scale – strategic, programmatic
- Focus on 6 decisions
 - ◆ Desired conditions
 - ◆ Management requirements – forest-wide
 - ◆ Management area prescriptions
 - ◆ Suitability (timber, etc)
 - ◆ Special designations (wilderness, etc)
 - ◆ Monitoring

How Do We Get There?

- Current plan as the starting point
- Selected number of revision topics
 - ◆ White Mtn has 3
- Appropriate number alternatives
 - ◆ White Mtn has 4
- Agreement established for analysis
- Timeframes established and met