



USDA Forest Service Update

March 2010

SUBJECT: Strategic Framework for Water

SUMMARY: Adequate supplies of clean, freshwater will be one of the most critical and contentious natural resource issues facing this agency, the nation, and the world in the 21st century. The need to focus on water resources in all aspects of NFS management will increase as climate change and other influences continue to affect water resources and demand. The Forest Service's Strategic Framework for Water (Framework) will provide programmatic direction for water resource management; and will incorporate strong coordination with other federal, state, tribal, municipal water resource authorities and interested partners. The Framework identifies the following goals:

1. Conserve, maintain, and restore watersheds to sustain the ecosystems they support and the services they provide.
2. Secure water of sufficient quantity and quality to sustain aquatic and terrestrial life.
3. Develop and advance knowledge and shared learning central to managing forest and grassland water resources and watershed conditions expected in the future.
4. Facilitate watershed-based partnerships to foster conservation and citizen stewardship.

KEY POINTS:

- Water flowing from national forests & grasslands provides nearly one-fifth of the nation's water supply and drinking water to more than 66 million people in 3,300 communities.
- The Forest Service has developed and maintains partnerships with States, landowners, communities and others to manage 556 million acres of non-federal forested watersheds that provide drinking water to over 138 million people.
- The Framework is in development and is expected to be released this fiscal year.
- Issues that need to be addressed to complete the Framework include identifying the compelling issues affecting NFS water resources, identifying the actions the agency can take to meet this crisis head-on, and developing materials to share with the public and our partners.
- Potential actions include:
 1. Address the level of risk across NFS land of future changes in water availability;
 2. Identify management actions that could be taken to modify, mitigate, or forestall water-related risks (i.e., changing peak, low flows, and etc.);
 3. Identify other Forest resources that are most at risk from changing water supplies;
 4. Identify where water changes on NFS lands are likely to lead to significant downstream effects to communities, ecosystems, and other water users.

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