

# USDA Forest Service Update

## March 2010



### **SUBJECT: Ecological Restoration and Resilience – Restoration Policy (FSM 2020)**

**SUMMARY:** The Forest Service recently reissued an interim directive to Forest Service Manual 2000 regarding ecological restoration and resilience of National Forest System lands. The directive will soon be proposed as permanent policy and the public will have an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed directive.

**BACKGROUND:** The need for ecological restoration of National Forest System (NFS) lands is widely recognized, and the Forest Service has conducted restoration-related activities across many programs for decades. “Restoration” is a common way of describing much of the agency’s work and the concept is threaded throughout existing authorities, program directives, and collaborative efforts such as the National Fire Plan *10-Year Comprehensive Strategy and Implementation Plan* and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. However, the agency did not have a definition of restoration established in policy. That was identified as a barrier to collaborating with the public and partners to plan and accomplish restoration work.

On September 22, 2008, the Forest Service amended the Forest Service Manual (FSM) by issuing an interim directive to add a new title: FSM 2020 *Ecological Restoration and Resilience*. The interim directive was reissued on March 3, 2010 and it now needs to become permanent.

Known internally as the “Restoration policy,” the directive articulates foundational policy for restoration of National Forest System lands and associated resources. This comprehensive policy guides achievement of sustainable management to provide a broad range of ecosystem services. Healthy, resilient landscapes will have greater capacity to survive natural disturbances and large scale threats to sustainability, especially under changing and uncertain future environmental conditions, such as those driven by climate change and increasing human uses.

Examples of national efforts that benefit from availability of this broad policy include: 1) policy that assists recovery and restoration efforts after large-scale events such as Hurricane Katrina; 2) implementation of new authorities, such as the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program; and 3) climate change adaptation and mitigation.

**KEY POINTS:** The proposed directive will include objectives, policy statements, definitions, and principles that support planning and accomplishment of ecological restoration and is anticipated to be essentially identical to the interim directive.

The directive will guide achievement of sustainable management to provide a broad range of ecosystem services, especially under changing and uncertain future environmental conditions, such as those driven by climate change and increasing human uses.

The directive applies to National Forest System lands only.

The interim directive has been implemented by National Forest System field units for over 1-1/2 years without known issues or conflicts. Tribal consultation has been completed and those Tribes who commented support the proposed policy.

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