



USDA Forest Service National Forest System Briefing Paper

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Topic: Revised FS Manual 2550 – Soil Management

Issue: National soil management direction had not kept up with shifts in national forest and grasslands land management direction. Additionally numerous advances in science and technical guidance have been developed and are in place since the soil management direction was last revised in 1990.

Background: Along with changes in land management planning direction, court rulings (Iron Honey Restoration EIS and Lolo Post-Burn EIS) have heightened the need to refine national soil management direction. The 2008 en banc decision by the ninth Circuit Court associated with the Lands Council v. McNair case reversed the court's decision concerning site specific on-the-ground validation of soil conditions, but did not reverse compliance with associated Forest Service manual and land management plan direction.

In light of the revised land management planning direction, the revised FSM 2550 addresses soil resource definitions, e.g., desired soil condition, substantial soil impairment, soil productivity, and soil quality that were previously not addressed. The revised manual clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of line officers. Additionally, the revised manual also removes technical direction which will be addressed in the revised FSH 2509.18 – Soil Management Handbook.

Key Points:

The revised FSM 2550 Soil Management provides:

- Clear direction to decision makers on their roles and responsibilities
- Establishes definitions for protecting the soil resource.
- Provides direction on the conductance of soil and terrestrial ecological unit inventories.
- Provides direction on data storage for soil and terrestrial ecological unit inventories.

Summary:

The revision of the FSM 2550 enables land managers to have clear concise policy and direction on sustainable soil management. The revised manual establishes definitions relevant to the soil resource to assist land management planning revision. Additionally the revised manual provides a solid framework for regional supplemental direction.

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