

1. Introduction

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN The Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) defines the long-term direction for managing the Cibola National Forest and the Kiowa, Rita Blanca, McClellan Creek and Black Kettle National Grasslands. The purpose of the Forest Plan is to provide for multiple use and sustained yield of goods and services from the Forest in a way that maximizes long term net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner [36 CFR 219.1a]. To accomplish this, the Forest Plan:

 Briefly describes the major public issues and management concerns pertinent to the Forest and how each one is addressed in the Forest Plan.

 Briefly summarizes the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) including the existing management situation, projected future use and supply conditions.

 Establishes long-range policies, goals, and objectives, and contains the specific management prescriptions planned to meet the policies and to achieve the multiple-use goals and objectives.

 Specifies the vicinity, timing, and standards and guidelines for proposed management practices.

 Establishes monitoring and evaluation requirements needed so that direction is carried out to determine how well outputs and effects were predicted.

 Contains references to information used and lists interdisciplinary (ID) team members participating in developing the Forest Plan.

 Will ordinarily be revised on a 10 year cycle or at least every 15 years.

Preparation of the Forest Plan is required by the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA), as amended by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA). Assessment of its environmental impacts is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the implementing regulations of NFMA [36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 219]. The Forest Plan replaces all previous resource management plans prepared for the Forest and Grasslands. Upon approval of the Forest Plan, all subsequent activities affecting these lands, including budget proposals, must be based on the Forest Plan [36 CFR 219.10(e)]. In addition, all permits, contracts, and other instruments for the use and occupancy of these National Forest System lands must be consistent with the Forest Plan [36 CFR 219.10(e)].

Land management prescriptions and standards and guidelines are a statement of the Plan's management direction. Projected outputs, services and rates of implementation are, however, dependent on the annual budget process. Implementation schedules can be changed to reflect annual budget proposals and the Plan amended accordingly after appropriate public notification.

RELATIONSHIP TO Development of a Forest Plan occurs within the framework of Forest Service OTHER PLANNING regional and national planning. The RPA Program sets the national direction LEVELS AND STUDIES and output levels for National Forest System lands based on suitability and capability information from each Forest Service Region. Each Region disaggregates its share of the national production levels among the Forests of the Region. This distribution is based on the detailed site-specific information gathered at the Forest level.

Each Forest Plan, in turn, either validates or provides a basis for changing production levels assigned by the Region. Activities and projects are planned and implemented by the Forest to carry out direction developed in the Forest Plan. Information from all Forest Plans in the Region is used in developing and revising the Regional Guide. Upon completion of the Regional Guide, a review is made to determine if amendments to Forest Plans are necessary.

Analysis that supports the Forest Plan is contained in the accompanying Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Therefore, the Forest Plan and the EIS are companion documents. The EIS describes alternatives considered in arriving at the proposed Forest Plan and assesses environmental effects of implementing the Plan and its alternatives. Supporting documentation of the planning process is contained in the planning records on file at the Cibola National Forest Supervisor's Office in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The planning records are available for public review.

The Forest Plan either supersedes or replaces all previous resource or land use management plans prepared for the Forest and Grasslands--specifically the 1975 Sandia Land Use Plan and the Forest and District Multiple-Use Plans. Following approval of the Plan, all future permits, contracts, and other instruments for the use and occupancy of the National Forest Systems lands must be consistent with this Plan. In addition, all subsequent administrative activities affecting the Forest and Grasslands, including budget proposals, will be based on the Plan [36 CFR 219.10(e)].

The final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be used for tiering [40 CFR 1502.20 and 1508.28]. Tiering means that, if needed, future environmental documents for projects based on the Plan will only summarize or incorporate by reference issues discussed in the EIS. Environmental documents for those projects will focus on site specific issues, concerns, and opportunities unique to the project. Environmental assessments will not be prepared for projects that have been found to have limited context and intensity [40 CFR 1508.27(a) and (b)] and produce little or no environmental effects, individually or cumulatively to either the biological or physical components of the human environment [40 CFR 1508.14] (FSM 1951.2) or have been adequately addressed in other environmental documents, including the EIS associated with the Forest Plan.

The Plan was analyzed in 10 year periods (Periods 1 through 5) for the first fifty years and in 50 year periods (Periods 6 through 8) for the following 150 years. Implementation of Period 1 is expected to begin in Fiscal Year 1986.

Budget proposals for Fiscal Year 1986 will have been submitted to Congress before Forest Plan can be implemented in Fiscal Year 1986. Included in these proposals are operation, maintenance, and investment project costs for the continued management of the Forest and Grasslands.

Investment projects, because of size and complexity, are phased in over a period of 3 to 5 years. For example, timber sales to be sold in 1985 are normally inventoried and examined in 1983, marked and cruised in 1984, and appraised and sold in 1985. Roads, campgrounds, wildlife habitat projects and grazing systems are phased in the same way. The number and type of disciplines needed in the organization are also tied directly to these projects--foresters, wildlife biologists, and engineers. In addition, there are many existing contracts or permits for timber sales, special uses, and grazing. Duration of these contracts is from several months to several years.

When the Forest Plan is implemented, the time needed to bring activities into compliance with the Forest Plan will vary depending on type of project. Most operation and maintenance activities, projects in the first year of development, new special use proposals and transfers of existing permits can be brought into compliance with the Forest Plan within the first year of implementation. Projects in the second to fifth year of implementation as well as many contractual obligations will continue as planned.

If a particular provision of this proposed Forest Plan, or the application thereof to any person or circumstances, is held invalid, the remainder of the proposed Forest Plan and the application of such provision to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Forest Plan was developed in compliance with the NFMA- regulations [36 CFR 219] and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations [40 CFR 1500] that were developed to implement NEPA of 1969.

The planning process specified in the NFMA regulations was followed in development of the proposed Forest Plan. The planning process utilized the interdisciplinary (ID) approach. An ID Team was established, composed of professionals of diverse backgrounds in the physical, biological, economic, and social sciences. Implementation of this Plan will require continued ID teamwork.

The planning process is a logical, rational, and trackable approach to natural resource decisionmaking. The planning actions as described in the NFMA regulations [36 CFR 219.12(b)-(k)] and used in this Forest planning effort are as follows:

- Identification of purpose and need.
- Development of planning criteria.
- Inventory data and information collection.
- Analysis of the management situation.
- Formulation of alternatives.
- Estimation of effects of alternatives.
- Evaluation of alternatives.
- Selection of an alternative (Forest Plan).
- Plan approval and implementation.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Planning was based on the following principles [36 CFR 219.1(b)] which were integrated throughout the process:

Establishment of goals and objectives for multiple-use sustained-yield management without impairment of the productivity of the land.

Goals, objectives, and the levels of sustained outputs are contained in Chapter 4.

Consideration of the relative values of all renewable resources, including the relationship of nonrenewable resources, such as mineral resources, to renewable resources.

Both quantifiable and nonquantifiable values were evaluated for alternatives and benchmarks. These values are displayed and discussed in detail in the EIS (Chapters 2 and 4, and Appendix B).

Recognition that the Forest is composed of ecosystems and management for goods and services requires an awareness of the interrelationships among plants, animals, soil, water, air, and other environmental factors within the ecosystems.

This principle was the foundation of the planning process. Planning models, prescriptions, benchmarks, and alternatives were formulated considering all components of the Forest. Some components were emphasized in some of the analyses but minimum standards for all other components were always met.

Protection and, where appropriate, improvement of the quality of renewable resources.

Preservation of important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage.

Protection and preservation of the inherent right of freedom of American Indians to believe, express, and exercise traditional religions.

The Forest Service respects the ancestral ties to land which is the heart of

the Native American traditional religions.

Furthermore, realizing that in the uniqueness of the Southwest, there also exist Land Grant communities who also have cultural and spiritual ties to land.

Provisions for the safe use and enjoyment of Forest resources by the public. Protection, through ecologically compatible means, of all forest and rangeland resources from depredations by insects and disease.

Coordination with the land and resource planning efforts of other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and Indian tribes. Extensive coordination was done throughout the planning process. These efforts are described in Chapter I of the EIS.

Use of a systematic, interdisciplinary approach to ensure coordination and integration of planning activities for multiple-use management.

The Interdisciplinary Team that developed the proposed Forest Plan is listed in Chapter 6 of the EIS.

Early and frequent public participation.

The public has been involved throughout the process. A description of public involvement is found in the EIS (Chapter 6 and Appendix A).

Establishment of quantitative and qualitative standards and guidelines for land and resource planning and management.

These principles were integrated into the standards and guidelines for management prescriptions found in Chapter 4 of this Plan. Impacts and effects of the proposed management prescriptions are described in the EIS (Chapter 4). The management situation for all resources and uses is described in the AMS on file at Forest offices and summarized in Chapter 3 of both the Plan and EIS.

Management of the National Forest System lands in a manner that is sensitive to economic efficiency.

Economic efficiency of the alternatives and Forest Plan was evaluated throughout the process. Chapters 2 and 4, and Appendix B of the EIS describe the economic efficiency analysis.

Responsiveness to changing conditions of land and other resources and to changing social and economic demands of the American people.

Demand considerations and social and economic effects of the alternatives and proposed Forest Plan are found in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of the EIS and in the AMS.

The Region 3 Regional Forester's decision to approve the July 1985 Cibola National Forest Plan was appealed by the Sandoval Environmental Action Community, New Mexico Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, Las Huertas/La Jara Ditch Association, American Indian Environmental Council, Inc., Southwest Research and Information Center, Inc., and Tonantzin Land Institute ("Appellants"). The State of New Mexico ("State") intervened in the appeal.

The Forest Service, the Appellants, and the State met for approximately six months and resolved many of their differences. They were not able to resolve four issues, and the Appellants' and the State's positions are stated below followed by the Forest Service's position.

The first issue is whether or not the Plan provides the protection for American Indian religious beliefs and practices which is required by the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, the American

Indian Religious Freedom Act, and 36 CFR section 219.1(b) (6) of the National Forest Management Act regulations.

Issue 1 - Appellants' and State's Position

The Appellants' and the State's position is that the Plan does not provide the required protection, because it does not make a commitment that activities which will interfere with Indians' religious beliefs and practices cannot proceed unless there is a compelling need for them which cannot be served by other means which interfere less with those beliefs and practices.

Issue 1 - Forest Service Position

The Forest Service's position is that the Plan does make a commitment for the protection of Indian religious beliefs and practices after it has been established on an activity by activity basis that the proposed project will interfere with Indian religious beliefs and practices.

The remaining three issues concern the timber program proposed by the Plan.

Issue 2 - Appellants' Position

The Appellants contend that the Plan must protect all or some of the semi-primitive non-motorized areas from timber activities to provide needed non-roaded recreational use, visual quality resources, watershed protection, and wildlife habitat. Semi-primitive lands have not been specifically identified and protected in the Plan and are not needed in the suitable land base to maintain the historic level of timber harvest on the Cibola.

Issue 2 - Forest Service Position

It is the Forest Service's position that the Plan provides management direction to manage semi-primitive non-motorized areas in a manner which will provide for needed non-roaded recreational use, visual quality resources, watershed protection, and wildlife habitat.

Issue 3 - Appellants' Position

It is Appellants' position that a minimum bid for timber sales must cover all costs of timber-related activities. The Forest should reduce timber sale areas and increase timber sale prices to ensure that the cost of timber harvesting activities fully covers all long-term public costs and benefits.

Issue 3 - Forest Service Position

It is the Forest Service's position that individual timber sales will be evaluated based on expected costs and revenues and achievement of other multiple-use objectives and that efforts will be made to reduce timber program costs; however, some sales may be sold where projected costs exceed projected revenues when necessary to meet these multiple-use objectives as provided for in National Forest Management Act and Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act. In any case total public benefits priced and non-priced will exceed costs on individual timber sales.

Issue 4 - Appellants' Position

The Appellants consider an annual allowable sale quantity of 8.3 million board feet inconsistent with the requirement that the Cibola Forest be managed in a balanced multiple use fashion that maximizes long term net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner. The Forest Service over-estimated timber yield and value tables resulting in excessive lands allocated to timber management and harvesting of more timber than is environmentally sound or cost effective.

Issue 4 - Forest Service Position

The Forest Service position is that the normal annual sale quantity of 8.3 million board feet is very conservative and reflects a balanced multiple-use program that maximizes long-term net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner.

Timber benefit values were tested to evaluate effects on allowable sawtimber sale quantity. The results of the sensitivity tests show that allowable sawtimber sale quantity increases throughout the range of lower timber benefit values tested.

Comparison of timber yield estimates used in developing the Plan indicates that timber yield was under estimated, not over estimated.

ORGANIZATION OF THE
FOREST PLAN
DOCUMENT

Chapter 2 of the Forest Plan describes the major issues and concerns and how the Plan responds to them. Chapter 3 summarizes the AMS and describes changes in management direction that have been incorporated into the Forest Plan. Chapter 4 details the mission, goals, objectives, proposed vicinity, and timing of management practices; projects the condition of the Forest in Period 5 from implementation of the Plan; and describes management direction and prescriptions and associated resource management standards and guidelines. Management area maps that are keyed to the prescriptions in Chapter 4 are included. Chapter 5 is the monitoring plan. The Glossary defines terms used in the Plan. Appendix A lists decision variables, Appendix B lists activity codes. Appendix C lists and describes analysis areas.

PLANNING AREA
DESCRIPTION

The Forest and Grasslands are comprised of 13 separate parcels scattered eastward from west central New Mexico into northeastern New Mexico, the Texas and Oklahoma Panhandles, and western Oklahoma. The Forest generally surrounds the Albuquerque metropolitan area, while two other metropolitan areas, Amarillo and Oklahoma City, are within 125 miles of portions of the Grasslands.

The Forest contains 1,618,459 acres while the Grasslands contain 263,954 acres. The Forest is divided into four Ranger Districts. These are the Magdalena Ranger District located in portions of Socorro, Sierra and Catron Counties; the Mountain-air Ranger District located in portions of Lincoln, Torrance, Bernalillo and Valencia Counties; the Mt. Taylor Ranger District located in portions of Cibola, Sandoval and McKinley counties; and the Sandia Ranger District located in portions of Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties, New Mexico. The Grasslands are administered by three Ranger Districts. These are the Kiowa Ranger District located in portions of Colfax, Harding, Union and More Counties; the Rite Blanca Ranger District located in portions of Dallam County, Texas and Cimarron County, Oklahoma; and the Black Kettle Ranger District located in portions of Gray and Hemphill Counties Texas and Roger Mills County, Oklahoma. The Black Kettle Ranger District Office administers the Black Kettle and McClellan Creek National Grasslands.

The Forest landscape is generally mountainous with numerous canyons, washes and mesas. Elevations range from about 5,660 feet in the lowland desert to the highest point, Mt. Taylor, at 11,301 feet. The lower elevations of the Forest are rolling, hilly terrain cut by sand washes and small canyons. Rock outcrops are prevalent. With an increase in elevation the terrain becomes mountainous with prominent canyons and exposed rock faces. There are numerous peaks in excess of 9,000 feet.

The Grasslands in New Mexico and Texas are characteristically flat with some rolling, low hills. The exception would be the Canadian River Canyon which bisects the Mills Unit of the Kiowa National Grassland. This canyon is approximately 800 feet deep and 1 to 2 miles in width. Rim rock is exposed at the upper elevations, while steep slopes fall away to the river below. The Black Kettle National Grassland in Oklahoma is characterized by medium to large rolling hills, some exposed rock and numerous washes or small canyons.

The maps preceding the Introduction indicate the location of the Forest and the four National Grasslands under discussion in the EIS and Plan.

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