

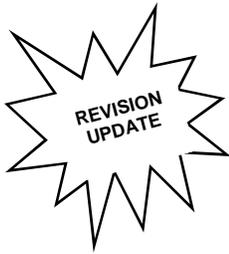


Newsletter No. 8  
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# Manti-La Sal National Forest



## Forest Plan Revision



### Release of Proposed Land Management Plan Delayed Again

If you are wondering what happened to your notification about the availability of the Proposed Land Management Plan, you are not alone. While the Forest had good intentions of releasing the Proposed Plan by the end of 2006, that projected timeframe was overly optimistic.

If you have been following the planning process, you know the Manti-La Sal National Forest transitioned to the new planning rule in May of 2005. It is taking the agency more time than expected to define how plans developed in accordance with this new rule should look and read. While the Forest is anxious to release the Proposed Plan for public comment, there is also a need to assure the proposal is consistent with evolving agency direction. At this time it is expected that the Proposed Land Management Plan for the Manti-La Sal National Forest will be available for public review and a 90-day comment period during the fall of 2007.

### Categorical Exclusion Approved for the 2005 Planning Rule

In December 2006, the Forest Service announced the completion of an environmental review of the new forest planning process (2005 Planning Rule). That process concluded that writing land management plans has no effect on the environment, qualifying plans for "categorical exclusion" from individual study in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

This was a crucial step in revising the overall planning process. It is important to note that this action did not eliminate environmental studies. *Under the 2005 planning rule, full environmental analysis will continue at the project level where public involvement and the best available science can inform on the ground decision-making.*

More information regarding the planning rule and categorical exclusion is posted at: [www.fs.fed.us/emc/plan\\_ce/index](http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/plan_ce/index).

### Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR)

October 11, 2006, the Honorable Judge Elizabeth D. LaPorte, U.S. Magistrate Judge, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, set aside the State Petitions Rule and reinstated the 2000 Roadless Rule (RACR). What this means to us is that we cannot take any action contrary to the Rule without completing a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis.

As you may recall, the RACR prohibits construction or reconstruction of roads and timber harvesting within the inventoried roadless areas identified in the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Rule. There are exceptions to these restrictions. For roads, exceptions include:

- A road is needed to protect public health and safety in cases of an imminent threat of flood, fire, or other catastrophic event, that without intervention would cause the loss of life or property.
- A road is needed to conduct a response action under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) or to conduct a natural restoration action under CERCLA, section 311 of the Clean Water Act, or Oil Pollution Act.
- A road is needed in conjunction with any mineral lease, license, permit, or approval issued for mineral leasing operations.
- Road access is needed pursuant to reserved or outstanding rights or as provided by statute or treaty.
- A road is needed for critical resource restoration and protection.
- Road realignment is needed to prevent resource damage by an existing road that is deemed essential for public or private access, management, or public health or safety, and where such damage cannot be corrected by maintenance.
- A road is needed to restore wildlife habitat.

For timber harvest, the following exceptions apply:

- The timber is generally small-diameter material and the removal of timber is needed for one of the following purposes:
  1. To improve habitat for listed or proposed threatened and endangered species, or for sensitive species (FSM 2670).
  2. To maintain or restore the desirable characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure, for example, to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire effects.
- The cutting, sale, or removal of timber is incidental to the implementation of a management activity and not otherwise prohibited under the land and resource management plan.
- The cutting, sale, or removal of timber is needed and appropriate for personal or administrative use (36 CFR part 223).
- The harvest is in a portion of an inventoried roadless area where construction of a classified road and subsequent timber harvest have previously taken place, and the roadless area characteristics have been substantially altered by those activities.

The implications for land management planning are that we have less decision space in determining suitable uses and activities within those inventoried roadless areas associated with the RACR. Land management decisions for uses and activities within those areas will need to be consistent with the current land and resource management plan and any revision to it.

For additional information go to: <http://roadless.fs.fed.us/>.

#### For more information contact:

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