



# Monongahela National Forest

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Agriculture

Forest Service

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## Final Environmental Impact Statement for Forest Plan Revision



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**Final Environmental Impact Statement  
for the  
Monongahela National Forest  
Forest Plan Revision**

**September, 2006**

Barbour, Grant, Greebrier, Nicholas, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Randolph, Tucker, and  
Webster Counties in West Virginia

**Lead Agency:**           **USDA Forest Service  
Monongahela National Forest  
200 Sycamore Street  
Elkins, WV 26241  
(304) 636-1800**

**Responsible Official:**   **Randy Moore, Regional Forester  
Eastern Region  
USDA Forest Service  
626 East Wisconsin Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53203  
(414) 297-3600**

**For Further Information, Contact:**   **Clyde Thompson, Forest Supervisor  
Monongahela National Forest  
200 Sycamore Street  
Elkins, WV 26241  
(304) 636-1800**

## **Abstract**

In July 2005, the Forest Service released for public review and comment a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that described four alternatives for managing the Monongahela National Forest. Alternative 2 was the Preferred Alternative in the DEIS and was the foundation for the Proposed Revised Forest Plan. Alternative 2 was modified for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to address public comments and new information received since the release of the DEIS. A fifth alternative, Alternative 2 Modified (or Alternative 2M), was the result. Alternative 2M is the Preferred Alternative in the FEIS and the foundation for the 2006 Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Monongahela National Forest.

This FEIS documents the analysis of the five alternatives developed for the programmatic management of the Monongahela National Forest. The Selected Alternative in the Record of Decision that accompanies this FEIS will be the 2006 Forest Plan that guides all natural resource management activities on the Forest, addresses new information and concerns raised since the 1986 Forest Plan was released, and meets the intent of all applicable federal laws, regulations, and agency policies.

The Selected Alternative, and the rationale for its selection, are described in the Record of Decision for this FEIS.

## Preface

The Monongahela National Forest (MNF) was founded in 1920 to help recover lands ravaged by uncontrolled logging, fire, and floods. The U.S. government established a “proclamation boundary” within which parcels of land could be purchased to increase the size and benefits of the Forest. The MNF is now more than 919,000 acres of National Forest System lands located in east central West Virginia. The USDA Forest Service administers the MNF, aided by other agencies, cooperators, contractors, and concessionaires. Forest personnel practice multiple-use natural resource management, providing West Virginia and the surrounding region with wood products, natural gas, improving watersheds, a wide range of recreation opportunities, diverse habitat for wildlife, and protection of unique ecological and wilderness areas.

Under the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 and the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), National Forest System lands are managed for a variety of uses on a sustained yield basis to ensure a continued supply of goods and services. The NFMA specifies that forest plans will be developed for all national forests and should be revised at least every 15 years. The original Land and Resource Management Plan for the Monongahela National Forest was approved in 1986, and since then there have been changes in Forest conditions, laws and policies, public interests, science and technology, and in the way we implement and monitor activities on the Forest. These combined factors are the basis for revision of the Forest Plan.

Following direction from the National Environmental Policy Act, the Forest Service has prepared this FEIS for the revision of the 1986 Forest Plan. The FEIS provides the purpose and need for Plan revision, presents issues addressed, describes management alternatives considered to respond to those issues, and analyzes the potential environmental effects of the alternatives.

The MNF 2006 Land and Resource Management Plan (2006 Forest Plan) accompanies this FEIS and is based on the Preferred Alternative that is described in Chapter 2 of the FEIS. The 2006 Forest Plan describes desired conditions, assigns goals and objectives, and provides standards and guidelines related to achieving the desired conditions. The 2006 Plan also establishes Management Prescription areas that emphasize certain types of management activities and uses, and it outlines a program for monitoring and evaluating the results of plan implementation.

The FEIS is organized into the following chapters and appendices:

**Chapter 1 – Purpose and Need of the Proposed Action** describes the need for change, decisions made in the Forest Plan, and the issues associated with Plan revision.

**Chapter 2 – Alternatives Considered** describes the process used to develop alternatives, lists important elements common to all alternatives, depicts each alternative considered in

detail, explains why some alternatives were not considered in detail, provides a summary comparison of the potential environmental effects of the alternatives, and identifies a Preferred Alternative.

**Chapter 3 – Affected Environment and Environmental Effects** provides the existing condition of the physical, biological, social, and economic resources and discloses potential environmental effects of the five alternatives on those resources in a comparative format. The resources are closely tied to the issues discussed in Chapter 1.

**Chapter 4 – List of Preparers** lists those who participated in preparation of the DEIS or FEIS.

**Chapter 7 – Index** is an index of key terms used in the FEIS and where to find them.

**Appendix A – Public Involvement and Recipients of the DEIS** provides a description of the public involvement process associated with preparing the FEIS, and the list of agencies, organizations, and individuals who received the DEIS for review and comment.

**Appendix B – Analysis Processes** discusses the primary processes used in determining the outputs and effects associated with the timber and socio-economic resources.

**Appendix C – Roadless Area Inventory and Wilderness Evaluation** describes the process used for determining Inventoried Roadless Areas on the Forest and provides the information used to evaluate those areas for their wilderness potential.

**Appendix D - Terrestrial Species Viability Evaluation** lists the terrestrial species that were evaluated for viability concerns during the Plan revision process and shows the criteria that were used to evaluate them.

**Appendix E - Aquatic Species Viability Evaluation** lists the aquatic species that were evaluated for viability concerns during the Plan revision process and shows the criteria that were used to evaluate them.

**Appendix F – References** lists the literature cited in the preparation of the FEIS.

**Appendix G – Glossary** defines terms and acronyms used in the FEIS.

**Appendix H – Biological Assessment for Threatened and Endangered Species** provides the detailed evaluation of potential effects to federally threatened and endangered species, including a determination of effects for each species relative to the Preferred Alternative.

**Appendix I – Responses to Comments** summarizes the public comments received on the DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan, along with the Forest Service responses. The comments are presented in the form of public concern statements.

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