

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# Proposed Purpose, Goals, and Principles for Inclusion in the Federal Regulations

---

Past regulations implementing the National Forest Management Act have begun with a statement of purpose. We felt it would be useful to the Secretary to summarize our recommendations in a similar statement of purpose. We offer such a statement below in terms of a purpose, goals, and principles for consideration and use in the development of the next planning regulations.

## 36 Code of Federal Regulations § 219.1

### Purpose, Goals, and Principles

(a) Purpose. The National Forest System constitutes an extraordinary national legacy created by people of vision and preserved for future generations by diligent and far-sighted public servants and citizens. They are the people's lands, emblems of our democratic traditions.

The national forests and grasslands can provide many and diverse benefits to the American people. These include clean air and water, productive soils, biological diversity, goods and services, employment opportunities, community benefits, recreation, and naturalness. They also give us intangible qualities, such as beauty, inspiration, and wonder.

To assure the continuation of this array of benefits, sustainability should be the guiding star for stewardship of the national forests and grasslands. Like other overarching national objectives, sustainability is broadly aspirational and can be difficult to define in concrete terms. Yet, especially considering the increased human pressures on the national forests and grasslands, it becomes ever more essential that planning and management begin with this central tenet.

Sustainability is broadly recognized to be composed of interdependent elements, ecological, economic, and social. It operates on several levels. As a collective vision, sustainability means meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. As an approach to decision making, it calls for integrating the management of biological and ecological systems with their social and economic context while acknowledging that management should not compromise the basic functioning of these systems. As a measure of progress, it provides a set of criteria and indicators to guide action. Building on this foundation of sustainability, the national forests and grasslands can provide a wide variety of uses, values, products, and services that are important to so many people, including outdoor recreation, forage, timber, wildlife and fish, water use, and minerals.

The objective of planning for the National Forest System is to guide stewardship to fulfill the purposes of the national forests and

grasslands and to honor their unique place in American life. The regulations in this subpart set forth a process for developing, adopting, implementing, and revising land- and resource-management plans for the National Forest System as required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (hereafter, “NFMA”), the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Act of 1974, the Organic Act of 1897, the Multiple-Use, Sustained-Yield Act of 1960, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Clean Water Act of 1977, and other applicable statutes.

(b) Major Goals and Principles. Land- and resource-management planning shall strive to achieve the following major goals and embody the following principles.

**Goal One.** Planning strives to assure the ecological sustainability of our watersheds, forests, and rangelands.

The benefits we seek from the national forests and grasslands depend upon the long-term ecological sustainability of the watersheds, forests, and rangelands. Considering the increased human pressures on them, it becomes ever more essential that planners focus on the heart of the idea of sustainability, that our use today does not impair the functioning of ecological processes and the ability of these natural resources to contribute economically and socially in the future. Accordingly, the first priority for stewardship in the national forests and grasslands must be to maintain and restore the ecological sustainability of watersheds, forests, and rangelands for present and future generations.

While one function of the pursuit of sustainability is to chart a broad and idealistic objective, important aspects of sustainability can also be defined and measured with some precision in the planning process. First, species viability, which is essential to ecological sustainability, is a powerful metric. Second, useful measurements can be made of ecological productivity through such indicators as

water purity, air quality, soil fertility, fire and flow regimes, plant growth, and the variety and distribution of forests and rangelands. By seeking to sustain biological diversity and ecological productivity by first emphasizing what we leave before we consider what we take, forest planning can play a crucial role in laying the necessary foundation for the economic and social components of sustainability: making contributions to strong, productive economies and creating opportunities for enduring human communities. At the same time, planning recognizes that ecological, economic, and social sustainability are inextricably linked; impairing the sustainability of any one aspect affects the entirety.

## Principles

(a) *Planning first provides for the diversity of plant and animal communities and the productive capacity of ecological systems, the core elements of ecological sustainability.* Biological diversity and ecological productivity, in turn, depend on the viability of individual species. Diversity is sustained only when species persist. In addition, biological diversity and ecological productivity depend on maintaining the characteristic composition, structure, and processes of ecosystems in the presence of human and natural disturbances, on maintaining the ecological integrity of these systems.

(b) *Planning must be based on science and other knowledge of the world, including the use of scientifically based strategies for sustainability.* The best available ecological, economic, and social information and analysis must be the foundation of land- and resource-management planning. Planning should consider information from a wide range of sources, including scientists in public and private organizations as well as other knowledgeable people in tribes and local communities.

(c) *Planning requires independent scientific review of assessments and plans before their publication.* Regional assessments should

suggest methods and strategies for providing for species viability and ecological integrity. With that information, planning should construct conservation strategies and have them reviewed for accuracy and sufficiency by Forest Service and other scientists before a plan becomes final.

(d) *Plans include measures for evaluating whether stewardship goals have been achieved.* Because one of the core functions of planning is to foster informed management decisions through ongoing assessment and evaluation, effective monitoring is a crucial aspect of planning and management. Additionally, independent field review by Forest Service and outside technical and scientific experts plays an important role in monitoring the contribution of plans to the sustainability of our forests, streams, and watersheds.

**Goal Two.** Planning promotes economic and social sustainability by providing for a wide variety of uses, values, products, and services and by enhancing society's capability to make sustainable choices.

The national forests and grasslands have been a grand experiment in providing for the multiple uses (outdoor recreation, forage, timber, wildlife and fish, water use, and minerals) of these lands on a permanent basis, following Gifford Pinchot's dictates that the lands be devoted to "their most productive use for the permanent good of the whole people ... always bearing in mind that the conservative use of these resources in no way conflicts with their permanent value." The planning and management of these lands should be for the entire world a shining example of stewardship that provides a wide variety of uses, values, products, and services in ways that are compatible with long-term ecological, economic, and social sustainability.

## Principles

(a) *Planning needs to recognize the interdependence of forests, rangelands, and watersheds with economies and communities.* Many communities depend on the national forests and grasslands for much of their economic, social, and cultural sustenance. Although the Forest Service cannot and should not be expected to single-handedly sustain existing economies and communities, the national forests and grasslands nonetheless contribute many values, services, outputs, and uses that allow economies and communities to persist, prosper, and evolve according to their own wills. This charge, contributing to the well-being of people today and tomorrow, is at the heart of the Forest Service's role in economic and social sustainability. Within a context of sustaining ecological systems, planning must take generous account of compelling local circumstances. This approach includes the needs of ranching, farming, timber, and mining communities as well as Indian communities relying upon treaty obligations and Hispanic communities depending on the resources in former Spanish and Mexican land grants.

(b) *Planning fosters a broad-based understanding of the vital interrelationship between communities and sustainably managed forests and grasslands.* It provides mechanisms through which communities can organize their energies and enterprises in a manner that promotes economic and social sustainability and develop realistic expectations about long-term uses, values, outputs, and services contributed by the national forests and grasslands.

(c) *Planning searches for strategies and actions that provide for human use in ways that contribute to long-term sustainability.* Finding strategies and actions that contribute to long-term sustainability, rather than work against it, is the surest way to increase the predictability of these uses.

(d) *Planning recognizes the rights of American Indian Tribes.* Indian tribes possess

unique and important rights recognized by federal treaties, statutes, and executive orders. The agency has a general trust responsibility to federally recognized tribes and a duty to acknowledge them as sovereign governments and to work with them on a government-to-government basis. Depending on the circumstances of particular tribes and national forests, such lands also may provide for tribal hunting, fishing, and gathering rights; access to sacred sites; protection of graves and other archaeological sites; watershed protection for downstream Indian reservations; and fishing sites.

**Goal Three.** Planning recognizes and is efficiently integrated into the broader geographic, legal, political, and social landscape within which national forests and grasslands exist.

In every sector of the country, the Forest Service and the national forests and grasslands are just one important agency and one important land system among many important governmental and private entities and land ownerships. Some of these agencies have statutory authority over the national forests. Other agencies, governments, corporations, and citizens manage land in and around the national forests. Still others have a keen interest in the national forests and can affect the way the political process views Forest Service action.

Sustainability of watersheds and other natural areas in which national forests and grasslands are located will inevitably depend upon activities on nearby federal lands, tribal and state lands, and private lands and on the actions and attitudes of a wide variety of agencies, governments, and citizens. These landowners will vary in their abilities as well as their interest in providing the mix of uses, products, values, and services that people seek from forests and rangelands. Planning, therefore, must be outward-looking. It must have the goal of understanding the broader land-

scape in which the national forests and grasslands lie. And it must achieve the highest values in managing these lands within the context of how people, businesses, and governments will conserve, regulate, and use the lands within and around the national forests and grasslands.

## Principles

(a) *Assessment and planning require a coordinated approach by all affected federal agencies.* Cooperation from the beginning with all federal agencies with statutory authority over the national forests and grasslands is essential. Obtaining early participation of, and joint planning with, all federal land-management agencies in the area is another key to successful planning. While the Forest Service cannot require participation and joint planning with other federal agencies, the agency should seek and actively encourage it.

(b) *Planning proceeds from start to finish in close cooperation with state, tribal, and local governments.* Success in achieving goals for the national forests and grasslands may depend upon decisions made by other jurisdictions. Similarly, the Forest Service often can help other jurisdictions achieve their objectives through cooperation.

(c) *Planning is interdisciplinary.* Planning must respond to a broad range of scientific, economic, and social concerns. Therefore, planning teams must represent diverse disciplines and work together collectively and collegially to develop information and alternatives. Consultants can be employed to tap other relevant sources of knowledge.

(d) *Planning must be based on the spatial and temporal scales necessary to assure sustainability and provide for multiple use.* Ecological boundaries that also have social meaning, such as river basins and mountain ranges, will be useful for planning in the future. These planning boundaries often do not follow the boundaries of the national forests

and grasslands. To achieve long-term sustainability, planning must often take account of cumulative effects on resources within and beyond the boundaries of the national forests and grasslands and well beyond the life of a plan.

(e) *Planning recognizes the regional, national, and global implications of management.* Assessment and planning should acknowledge how management of the national forests and grasslands can contribute to ecological, economic, and social sustainability on regional, national, and international scales. Often, federal lands will need to anchor regional and national conservation strategies for species and ecosystems so other landowners can continue production of goods and services without undue restriction. In addition, the wood, water, and recreation they provide are often important to regional economies. With the global concern over climate change, the national forests and grasslands should consider the effect that their management will have on carbon sequestration.

(f) *Planning acknowledges the limits and variability of likely budgets.* Plans should be realistic in budget estimates and resilient in the face of erratic budgets. The public should become aware of the degree to which plan implementation is dependent on annual budgets. In addition, the Forest Service should consider the development of more self-funding activities to reduce its dependence on appropriated funds.

**Goal Four.** Planning meaningfully engages the American people in the stewardship of their national forests and grasslands and builds stewardship capacity.

The national forests and grasslands belong to the American people. For these truly to be the “people’s lands,” the people must understand the land’s condition, potential, limitations, and niche in resource conservation in this country. Just as the Forest Service can

help the American people learn about the limits and capabilities of the national forests and grasslands, so too must the managers be educated by the unique knowledge, advice, and values of the American people. Citizens can provide a wide array of services, ranging from volunteer work on trail crews to participating in collaborative efforts aimed at resolving disputes over specific projects. The Forest Service should draw on this knowledge, wisdom, and energy by building relationships, dialogues, and partnerships with the groups and individuals who wish to have a role in setting the future course for the national forests and in implementing these decisions.

## Principles

(a) *Planning encourages extensive collaborative citizen participation.* Land- and resource-management planning must provide mechanisms for broad-based, vigorous, and ongoing opportunities for open public dialogue. These dialogues must be open to any person at any time, conducted in nontechnical terms readily understandable to the general public, and structured in a manner that recognizes and accommodates differing schedules, capabilities, and interests. The participation of citizens should be encouraged from the beginning and be maintained throughout the planning process. The public should have a role in assessments, issue-identification, implementation, and monitoring.

(b) *Planning builds upon the human resources in local communities.* Just as local communities depend on the national forests and grasslands, so too the health of many forests, rangelands, and watersheds depends on healthy communities. Many restoration actions are needed on these lands, including programs to improve riparian conditions, reduce fuel loads, and rebuild and decommission roads. These efforts will require entrepreneurs and a trained workforce. The surrounding communities, assuming that they continue

to exist and prosper, can help provide these services. Planning and management must realize the full potential of these human resources to further the stewardship of the national forests and grasslands.

(c) *Planning and plans are understandable to the American people.* A central purpose of planning is to speak directly to the public. The language of planning must be clear and straightforward. These are the people's lands, and planning must be welcoming to the public.

(d) *Planning actively seeks out and addresses key issues, especially the toughest ones.* Planning cannot avoid controversy by trying to bury it. The best guidelines will emerge from an open, candid, and collaborative process that tackles key issues.

(e) *Planning restores and maintains the trust of the American people in the management of the national forests and grasslands.* Planning is a principal setting in which the Forest Service relates to the public. It can be a valuable forum in which to reestablish the public's confidence. Planners need to work on the premise that effective planning and management cannot be achieved without the public's respect and trust. Therefore, planning should integrate the public into the process, give the public accurate and complete information in a way that can be understood, make extensive use of public input, and meet public expectations by adopting realistic plans and fulfilling their objectives until amended. The Forest Service should welcome independent field review of its plans and actions.

**Goal Five.** Planning, which must be at once visionary and pragmatic, guides stewardship.

Planning has long been viewed as a burdensome exercise with little connection to management. In fact, planning must be an organic part of stewardship of the national forests and grasslands: plans must be working guides that Forest Service employees find

useful and motivating. Given the frequency with which new issues arise, new information becomes available, and unforeseen events occur, planning should be viewed as an ongoing process, where guidance and directions are adapted, as necessary, to new understandings.

## Principles

(a) *Planning organizes around a collective vision of the desired future.* Developing a collective vision of future landscape conditions and the uses, products, values, and services that will be provided by these conditions is our best hope for a "coming together" of the people and groups that care about the national forests and grasslands. A plan document should begin with a short mission statement that captures this vision, a mission statement that is broad but vivid and evocative, a dream rooted in reality. The "desired future condition" and the outcomes associated with it should serve as the central reference points for planning and management of these lands. Performance measures, monitoring, and budgets should be directed toward achievement of the actions and conditions needed to move toward the desired future.

(b) *Planning should be efficient in achieving goals.* Strategies that simultaneously address multiple goals and find the least-cost method for achieving these goals are essential guides to efficient stewardship as is demonstration that the social benefits exceed the social cost.

(c) *Planning must be at once practical and innovative.* Planning is not an end in itself but rather must be a useful endeavor that furthers real-world objectives, including serving as a working guide for stewardship. At the same time, planning must encourage risk-taking and creativity. Valuable innovations have been developed during Forest Service planning, ranging from successful collaborative efforts to multiagency watershed and large-landscape assessments.

(d) *Planning must be done expeditiously.* Lengthy planning efforts frustrate public participants, strain Forest Service resources,

and can result in plans that are outdated when adopted. Planners should aim to complete the planning phases from assessment through formal adoption of small landscape plans within three years and preferably less than two. To accommodate this goal, analytical requirements should be kept to a minimum consistent with achieving the purposes of planning. In the future, when plans are regularly kept current through the amendment process, plan revisions should be completed in an even shorter time.

(e) *Plans should be dynamic and adaptable.* There is no such thing as a “final plan.” While a plan should strive to attain a reasonable degree of predictability in its implementation, everyone must recognize that unpredicted events, ranging from natural disturbances to changed market conditions, will occur. Forest Service officials must respond adaptively to new circumstances through plan amendments, small and large, so the plans will remain fully current. Plans must be living documents.

