

Title: Forest Products Modernization – Batch 3 Timber Management Policy Reforms

Staff Team: Forest and Rangeland Management and Vegetation Ecology

Directive/Regulation: Forest Service Manual (FSM) and Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 2400 Series on Timber Management

Secretary's Memorandum: Increase the productivity of National Forests and Grasslands; Expediting environmental reviews to support active management

U.S. Forest Service Strategic Goal: Sustain our Nation's Forests and Grasslands

OMB Significant/Non-Significant: TBD

Why Do We Need to Change This? Silviculture and timber management policy reform is needed to address authorities granted by Congress over the past several years, changing forest conditions and markets, and new technology to continue to meet the agency mission. Updates to policies pertaining to timber sale preparation, scaling and Permanent and Trust Fund accounting are needed to help improve efficiencies in how the agency manages forests, implements timber sales and delivers forest products to increase acres treated and timber volume produced. The changes align agency culture, policies, and procedures to current and future forest improvement goals, while caring for the health and safety of employees, the public and the communities served.

What We Are Changing: In 2017, the Forest Service initiated a comprehensive review of all Timber Management directives and identified 59 chapters within 14 handbooks and manuals that needed updating. In order to spread out the time necessary for the public and Tribes to review documents, updates were split into three batches and released on a rolling basis. Tribal consultation on Batch 1 and Batch 2 concluded in November 2019 and May 2020, respectively. The agency is now inviting Tribes to consult on Batch 3 of the directive's updates beginning January 15, 2021. Batch 3 updates include:

- FS Manual 2400 Chapter 70 and FS Handbook 2409.17 on Silvicultural Practices. Changes provide direction on the new, streamlined silviculture certification process, greater clarity on the use of assisted migration and new direction on the use of genetically modified trees.
- FS Handbooks on Cubic Scaling, Stacked Wood and Piles (FSH 2409.11a), Timber Cruising (FSH 2409.12), Timber Sale Preparation (FSH 2409.18) and Renewable Resources (FSH 2409.19). These updates focus primarily on implementing new Congressional authorities and incorporating technological advances into our processes.

Anticipated Results/Change:

- Increased efficiencies in delivering forest products from National Forest lands through better use of collaboration, technology and policy reform.
- Reduced threats to ecosystem health, invasive species, insects and disease through use of genetically modified trees and human-assisted movement of species, populations or genotypes in response to climate change.
- Reduced wildfire risk as a result of greater ability to prepare and administer timber sales and dispose of low-value forest products.
- Increased rural economic development, market use, technology innovation, and job creation through reform in timber harvest, contracting and forest product delivery.

Timeframe: The tribal consultation period for Batch 3 is planned after January 15, 2021. The Federal Register Notice for public comment on Batch 3 is planned after March 17, 2021.

Key External Stakeholders: Congressional leaders, state governments, timber industry, recognized Tribes, rural communities, and business market innovation leaders.

