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characteristics of ecosystem diversity in the plan area.

(2) *Species diversity.* If the Responsible Official determines that provisions in plan components, in addition to those required by paragraph (b)(1) of this section, are needed to provide appropriate ecological conditions for specific threatened and endangered species, species-of-concern, and species-of-interest, then the plan must include additional provisions for these species, consistent with the limits of agency authorities, the capability of the plan area, and overall multiple use objectives.

§219.11 Role of science in planning.

(a) The Responsible Official must take into account the best available science. For purposes of this subpart, taking into account the best available science means the Responsible Official must:

(1) Document how the best available science was taken into account in the planning process within the context of the issues being considered;

(2) Evaluate and disclose substantial uncertainties in that science;

(3) Evaluate and disclose substantial risks associated with plan components based on that science; and

(4) Document that the science was appropriately interpreted and applied.

(b) To meet the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section, the Responsible Official may use independent peer review, a science advisory board, or other review methods to evaluate the consideration of science in the planning process.

§219.12 Suitable uses and provisions required by NFMA.

(a) *Suitable uses.* (1) *Identification of suitable land uses.* National Forest System lands are generally suitable for a variety of multiple uses, such as outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes. The Responsible Official, as appropriate, shall identify areas within a National Forest System unit as generally suitable for uses that are compatible with desired conditions and objectives for that area. Such identification is guidance for project and activity decisionmaking, is not a permanent land

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designation, and is subject to change through plan amendment or plan revision. Uses of specific areas are approved through project and activity decisionmaking.

(2) *Identification of lands not suitable for timber production.* (i) The Responsible Official must identify lands within the plan area as not suitable for timber production (§219.16) if:

(A) Statute, Executive order, or regulation prohibits timber production on the land; or

(B) The Secretary of Agriculture or the Chief of the Forest Service has withdrawn the land from timber production; or

(C) The land is not forest land (as defined at §219.16); or

(D) Timber production would not be compatible with the achievement of desired conditions and objectives established by the plan for those lands.

(ii) This identification is not a final decision compelling, approving, or prohibiting projects and activities. A final determination of suitability for timber production is made through project and activity decisionmaking. Salvage sales or other harvest necessary for multiple-use objectives other than timber production may take place on areas that are not suitable for timber production.

(b) *NFMA requirements.* (1) The Chief of the Forest Service must include in the Forest Service Directive System procedures for estimating the quantity of timber that can be removed annually in perpetuity on a sustained-yield basis in accordance with 16 U.S.C. 1611.

(2) The Chief of the Forest Service must include in the Forest Service Directive System procedures to ensure that plans include the resource management guidelines required by 16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3).

(3) Forest Service Directive System procedures adopted to fulfill the requirements of this paragraph shall provide public involvement as described in 36 CFR part 216.

§219.13 Objections to plans, plan amendments, or plan revisions.

(a) *Opportunities to object.* Before approving a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision, the Responsible Official must provide the public 30 calendar

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days for pre-decisional review and the opportunity to object. Federal agencies may not object under this subpart. During the 30-day review period, any person or organization, other than a Federal agency, who participated in the planning process through the submission of written comments, may object to a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision according to the procedures in this section, except in the following circumstances:

(1) When a plan amendment is approved contemporaneously with a project or activity decision and the plan amendment applies only to the project or activity, in which case the administrative review process of 36 CFR part 215 or part 218, subpart A, applies instead of the objection process established in this section; or

(2) When the Responsible Official is an official in the Department of Agriculture at a level higher than the Chief of the Forest Service, in which case there is no opportunity for administrative review.

(b) *Submitting objections.* The objection must be in writing and must be filed with the Reviewing Officer within 30 days following the publication date of the legal notice in the newspaper of record of the availability of the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision. Specific details will be included in the Forest Service Directive System. An objection must contain:

(1) The name, mailing address, and telephone number of the person or entity filing the objection. Where a single objection is filed by more than one person, the objection must indicate the lead objector to contact. The Reviewing Officer may appoint the first name listed as the lead objector to act on behalf of all parties to the single objection when the single objection does not specify a lead objector. The Reviewing Officer may communicate directly with the lead objector and is not required to notify the other listed objectors of the objection response or any other written correspondence related to the single objection;

(2) A statement of the issues, the parts of the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision to which the objection applies, and how the objecting party would be adversely affected; and

(3) A concise statement explaining how the objector believes that the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision is inconsistent with law, regulation, or policy or how the objector disagrees with the decision and providing any recommendations for change.

(c) *Responding to objections.* (1) The Reviewing Officer (§219.16) has the authority to make all procedural determinations related to the objection not specifically explained in this subpart, including those procedures necessary to ensure compatibility, to the extent practicable, with the administrative review processes of other Federal agencies. The Reviewing Officer must promptly render a written response to the objection. The response must be sent to the objecting party by certified mail, return receipt requested.

(2) The response of the Reviewing Officer shall be the final decision of the Department of Agriculture on the objection.

(d) *Use of other administrative review processes.* Where the Forest Service is a participant in a multi-Federal agency effort that would otherwise be subject to objection under this subpart, the Reviewing Officer may waive the objection procedures of this subpart and instead adopt the administrative review procedure of another participating Federal agency. As a condition of such a waiver, the Responsible Official for the Forest Service must have agreement with the Responsible Official of the other agency or agencies that a joint agency response will be provided to those who file for administrative review of the multi-agency effort.

(e) *Compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act.* The information collection requirements associated with submitting an objection have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget and assigned control number 0596-0158.

§219.14 Effective dates and transition.

(a) *Effective dates.* A plan, plan amendment, or plan revision is effective 30 days after publication of notice of its approval (§219.9(b)), except when a plan amendment is approved contemporaneously with a project or activity