

evaluations are required for land management planning; comprehensive evaluations for plan development and revision, evaluations for plan amendment, and annual evaluations of monitoring information. The Responsible Official shall document evaluations in evaluation reports, make these reports available to the public as required in §219.9, and include these reports in the Plan Set of Documents (§219.7(a)(1)). Evaluations under this section should be commensurate to the level of risk or benefit associated with the nature and level of expected management activities in the plan area.

(1) *Comprehensive evaluations.* These evaluate current social, economic, and ecological conditions and trends that contribute to sustainability, as described in §219.10. Comprehensive evaluations and comprehensive evaluation reports must be updated at least every five years to reflect any substantial changes in conditions and trends since the last comprehensive evaluation. The Responsible Official must ensure that comprehensive evaluations, including any updates necessary, include the following elements:

(i) *Area of analysis.* The area(s) of analysis must be clearly identified.

(ii) *Conditions and trends.* The current social, economic, and ecological conditions and trends and substantial changes from previously identified conditions and trends must be described based on available information, including monitoring information, surveys, assessments, analyses, and other studies as appropriate. Evaluations may build upon existing studies and evaluations.

(2) *Evaluation for a plan amendment.* An evaluation for a plan amendment must analyze the issues relevant to the purposes of the amendment and may use the information in comprehensive evaluations relevant to the plan amendment. When a plan amendment is made contemporaneously with, and only applies to, a project or activity decision, the analysis prepared for the project or activity satisfies the requirements for an evaluation for an amendment.

(3) *Annual evaluation of the monitoring information.* Monitoring results must be

evaluated annually and in accordance with paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(b) *Monitoring.* The plan must describe the monitoring program for the plan area. Monitoring information in the Plan Document or Set of Documents may be changed and updated as appropriate, at any time. Such changes and updates are administrative corrections (§219.7(b)) and do not require a plan amendment or revision.

(1) The plan-monitoring program shall be developed with public participation and take into account:

(i) Financial and technical capabilities;

(ii) Key social, economic, and ecological performance measures relevant to the plan area; and

(iii) The best available science.

(2) The plan-monitoring program shall provide for:

(i) Monitoring to determine whether plan implementation is achieving multiple use objectives;

(ii) Monitoring to determine the effects of the various resource management activities within the plan area on the productivity of the land;

(iii) Monitoring of the degree to which on-the-ground management is maintaining or making progress toward the desired conditions and objectives for the plan; and

(iv) Adjustment of the monitoring program as appropriate to account for unanticipated changes in conditions.

(3) The Responsible Official may conduct monitoring jointly with others, including but not limited to, Forest Service units, Federal, State or local government agencies, federally recognized Indian Tribes, and members of the public.

§219.7 Developing, amending, or revising a plan.

(a) *General planning requirements—(1) Plan Documents or Set of Documents.* The Responsible Official must maintain a Plan Document or Set of Documents for the plan. A Plan Document or Set of Documents includes, but is not limited to, evaluation reports; documentation of public involvement; the plan, including applicable maps; applicable plan approval documents; applicable NEPA documents, if any; the monitoring program for the plan area; and

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documents relating to the EMS established for the unit.

(2) *Plan components.* Plan components may apply to all or part of the plan area. A plan should include the following components:

(i) *Desired conditions.* Desired conditions are the social, economic, and ecological attributes toward which management of the land and resources of the plan area is to be directed. Desired conditions are aspirations and are not commitments or final decisions approving projects and activities, and may be achievable only over a long time period.

(ii) *Objectives.* Objectives are concise projections of measurable, time-specific intended outcomes. The objectives for a plan are the means of measuring progress toward achieving or maintaining desired conditions. Like desired conditions, objectives are aspirations and are not commitments or final decisions approving projects and activities.

(iii) *Guidelines.* Guidelines provide information and guidance for project and activity decisionmaking to help achieve desired conditions and objectives. Guidelines are not commitments or final decisions approving projects and activities.

(iv) *Suitability of areas.* Areas of each National Forest System unit are identified as generally suitable for various uses (§219.12). An area may be identified as generally suitable for uses that are compatible with desired conditions and objectives for that area. The identification of an area as generally suitable for a use is guidance for project and activity decisionmaking and is not a commitment or a final decision approving projects and activities. Uses of specific areas are approved through project and activity decisionmaking.

(v) *Special areas.* Special areas are areas within the National Forest System designated because of their unique or special characteristics. Special areas such as botanical areas or significant caves may be designated, by the Responsible Official in approving a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision. Such designations are not final decisions approving projects and activities. The plan may also recognize special areas designated by statute or through a separate administrative

process in accordance with NEPA requirements (§219.4) and other applicable laws.

(3) *Changing plan components.* Plan components may be changed through plan amendment or revision, or through an administrative correction in accordance with §219.7(b).

(4) *Planning authorities.* The Responsible Official has the discretion to determine whether and how to change the plan, subject to the requirement that the plan be revised at least every 15 years. A decision by a Responsible Official about whether or not to initiate the plan amendment or plan revision process and what issues to consider for plan development, plan amendment, or plan revision is not subject to objection under this subpart (§219.13).

(5) *Plan process.* (i) Required evaluation reports, plan, plan amendments, and plan revisions must be prepared by an interdisciplinary team; and

(ii) Unless otherwise provided by law, all National Forest System lands possessing wilderness characteristics must be considered for recommendation as potential wildlines areas during plan development or revision.

(6) *Developing plan options.* In the collaborative and participatory process of land management planning, the Responsible Official may use an iterative approach in development of a plan, plan amendment, and plan revision in which plan options are developed and narrowed successively. The key steps in this process shall be documented in the Plan Set of Documents.

(b) *Administrative corrections.* Administrative corrections may be made at any time and are not plan amendments or revisions. Administrative corrections include the following:

(1) Corrections and updates of data and maps;

(2) Corrections of typographical errors or other non-substantive changes;

(3) Changes in the monitoring program and monitoring information (§219.6(b));

(4) Changes in timber management projections; and

(5) Other changes in the Plan Document or Set of Documents, except for substantial changes in the plan components.

(c) *Approval document.* The Responsible Official must record approval of a new plan, plan amendment, or plan revision in a plan approval document, which must include:

(1) The rationale for the approval of the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision;

(2) Concurrence by the appropriate Station Director with any part of the plan applicable to any experimental forest within the plan area, in accordance with §219.2(b)(3);

(3) A statement of how the plan, plan amendment, or plan revision applies to approved projects and activities, in accordance with §219.8;

(4) Science documentation, in accordance with §219.11; and

(5) The effective date of the approval (§219.14(a)).

§219.8 Application of a new plan, plan amendment, or plan revision.

(a) *Application of a new plan, plan amendment, or plan revision to existing authorizations and approved projects or activities.* (1) The Responsible Official must include in any document approving a plan amendment or revision a description of the effects of the plan, plan amendments, or plan revision on existing occupancy and use, authorized by permits, contracts, or other instruments implementing approved projects and activities. If not expressly excepted, approved projects and activities must be consistent with applicable plan components, as provided in paragraph (e) of this section. Approved projects and activities are those for which a Responsible Official has signed a decision document.

(2) Any modifications of such permits, contracts, or other instruments necessary to make them consistent with applicable plan components as developed, amended, or revised are subject to valid existing rights. Such modifications should be made as soon as practicable following approval of a new plan, plan amendment, or plan revision.

(b) *Application of a new plan, plan amendment, or plan revision to authorizations and projects or activities subsequent to plan approval.* Decisions approving projects and activities subsequent to approval of a plan, plan amendment, or

plan revision must be consistent with the plan as provided in paragraph (e) of this section.

(c) *Application of a plan.* Plan provisions remain in effect until the effective date of a new plan, plan amendment, or plan revision.

(d) *Effect of new information on projects or activities.* Although new information will be considered in accordance with agency NEPA procedures, nothing in this subpart requires automatic deferral, suspension, or modification of approved decisions in light of new information.

(e) *Ensuring project or activity consistency with plans.* Projects and activities must be consistent with the applicable plan. If an existing (paragraph (a) of this section) or proposed (paragraph (b) of this section) use, project, or activity is not consistent with the applicable plan, the Responsible Official may take one of the following steps, subject to valid existing rights:

(1) Modify the project or activity to make it consistent with the applicable plan components;

(2) Reject the proposal or terminate the project or activity, subject to valid existing rights; or

(3) Amend the plan contemporaneously with the approval of the project or activity so that it will be consistent with the plan as amended. The amendment may be limited to apply only to the project or activity.

§219.9 Public participation, collaboration, and notification.

The Responsible Official must use a collaborative and participatory approach to land management planning, in accordance with this subpart and consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and policies, by engaging the skills and interests of appropriate combinations of Forest Service staff, consultants, contractors, other Federal agencies, federally recognized Indian Tribes, State or local governments, or other interested or affected communities, groups, or persons.

(a) *Providing opportunities for participation.* The Responsible Official must provide opportunities for the public to collaborate and participate openly and meaningfully in the planning process, taking into account the discrete and