



NEWS RELEASE

Western State Foresters Stay Engaged with The US Forest Service on New Planning Rule

For Immediate Release

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January 26, 2012: DENVER: In a significant step towards the completion of a new National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS) released today the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for a new Planning Rule. This is the most recent action in a process that was initiated in December of 2009 to promulgate a new rule under the National Forest Management Act to replace the 1982 rule. The Planning Rule guides land and resource management planning on National Forest System lands. As threats to our nation's forests grow, a sound Planning Rule, as a result of an open and collaborative process, is critical to the sustainability of federal lands.

Due to the substantial amount of federal lands in the West, there is a particularly strong connection between the health and sustainability of state, private, and federal lands. The Council of Western State Foresters (CWSF) has expressed concern with current planning processes under the 1982 rule and has fully engaged in the effort to draft a new rule.

“We are glad to be at the table throughout the effort to draft a new Planning Rule” states Dr Scott Josiah, Chairman of the CWSF, and Director of the Nebraska State Forest Service. “We believe that State Foresters can and should play a unique role in the planning process,” continues Josiah. For example, all states have completed Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies that can feed important localized data on forests across all management boundaries within a state into the USFS planning process.

The CWSF participated in the regional Planning Rule forums held by the Forest Service in the West and was also represented at the National Forum in Washington, DC. Additionally, the CWSF and several individual member States have provided feedback to the Forest Service on the Draft rule.

We are encouraged by the open and collaborative process the Forest Service undertook in drafting the new Planning Rule. The ultimate measure of success of the Planning Rule will be on-the-ground accomplishments that improve forest health and the health and sustainability of local communities and economies. The Council of Western State Foresters looks forward to carefully reviewing the FEIS and will work to ensure that State Foresters are represented as the USFS convenes a Federal Advisory Committee focused on implementation of the new Planning Rule.

The Council of Western State Foresters represents the State and Island Forestry Agencies in the seventeen states and six island territories of the western United States. State Foresters' responsibilities include assisting family forest-owners, managing state lands, providing rural and state fire protection, and aiding community forestry groups. The success of our programs helps to ensure healthy forests for today and tomorrow. For more information please visit www.westernstateforesters.org