

1. Proposed Meeting Agenda And Information Packet

Documents:

[PROPOSED 10 MARCH 2023 NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA \(1\).PDF](#)
[NEWS_ DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AVAILABLE FOR THE CHIMERA FUELS REDUCTION PROJECT, BLACK HILLS NATIONAL FOREST.PDF](#)

1.1. Additional Meeting Information

Documents:

[2023 FOREST PLANNING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WHITE PAPER.PDF](#)



LAWRENCE COUNTY

SOUTH DAKOTA

"Where Beauty and Adventure Meet"

Lawrence County
Natural Resources Committee Meeting
~ Commission Room ~
90 Sherman Street,
Deadwood, SD 57732
Friday, March 10, 2023

MEETING AGENDA

3:00 p.m. ~ Call Meeting to Order

DISCUSSION/ACTION: □ Call meeting to order □ Approve agenda

~ General Business

DISCUSSION/ACTION: □ Update: LiDAR project data presentation and discussion □ Updates: Forest projects and Forest Plan Amendment

~ Items from the Public

BOARD DISCUSSION: □ Items raised by the public for discussion

~ Items From Commissioners

BOARD DISCUSSION: □ Items raised by Commissioners for discussion

5:00 p.m. ~ Adjourn

DISCUSSION/ACTION: □ Adjourn

*Agenda subject to change. Times are approximate.

**ADA Compliance: Lawrence County fully subscribes to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you desire to attend this public meeting and are in need of special accommodations, please notify the Commissioners' Assistant 605.722.4167 24 hours prior to the meeting so that appropriate auxiliary aids and services are available.

*** Next meeting: future meetings T.B.A. as needed

Join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/152688557>

Version date: 02/27/2023

NEWS: Draft Environmental Assessment Available for the Chimera Fuels Reduction Project, Black Hills National Forest

External

InboxUSFS



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Black Hills National Forest

Forest Service News Release

Media Contact: Beth Doten

(605) 440-0263

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 www.fs.usda.gov/blackhills



Draft Environmental Assessment Available for the Chimera Fuels Reduction Project

Spearfish, S.D., March 9, 2023 — The Black Hills National Forest, Northern Hills Ranger District (NHRD), is announcing the availability of the draft environmental assessment (EA) for the Chimera Fuels Reduction Project (Chimera Project), located east of Lead/Deadwood, SD and south of Sturgis, SD, encompassing the Boulder Canyon, Galena, and Vanocker Canyon areas.

The draft EA is available for review by visiting the project website at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=61689>.

The Forest is proposing to conduct a combination of commercial and non-commercial vegetation treatments on National Forest System (NFS) land within the Chimera project area.

The project area encompasses a total of 55,159 acres (includes 15,942 acres of private) in the northeastern corner of the Northern Hills Ranger District, east of the communities of Lead and Deadwood, and south and west of the Interstate 90 corridor, which includes the

communities of Whitewood, Sturgis, and Tilford. Major geographical features located within the project area include Vanocker Canyon, Deadman Mountain, Dome Mountain, Crook Mountain, Veterans Peak, and Strawberry Ridge.

The purpose of the Chimera project is to increase the resiliency of forest landscapes and communities to wildfire, decrease the impacts of wildfires within the wildland urban interface, and allow for an effective and safe response to wildfires when they occur by implementing vegetation treatments that would reduce ladder fuels, thin dense pine stands, and promote the expansion of hardwood stands and meadows while working toward management area objectives within the project area.

This EA is being prepared under the provisions of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA).

A second authority being considered is the Western Firesheds Emergency Action Determination (EAD) under Section 40807 of the 2022 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law as this area is one of the top ten firesheds in the region as identified in the Chief's 10 year wildland fire strategy.

Comments on the draft EA will be accepted for 30 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of a legal notice in the Rapid City Journal, which was published on March 8, 2023. All written comments received, including names and addresses of commenters, will be placed in the project file, and will become public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Agency with the ability to provide the commenter with subsequent environmental documents. Comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider (36 CFR 218.2).

The most efficient method of submitting comments on this draft EA is by visiting the project website (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=61689>) and clicking the

“Comment/Object on Project” link. You may also submit comments to the project leader, Chris Stores, by mail, phone, or fax to:

Northern Hills Ranger District

2014 North Main Street

Spearfish, SD 57783

Telephone: (605) 642-4622

Fax: (605) 642-4156

Office hours, for those who wish to hand deliver their comments, are 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday – Friday (except Federal holidays). Any questions regarding this project can be directed to Steve Kozel, Northern Hills District Ranger or Chris Stores, Natural Resource Planner, at the phone number listed above.

For more information on the Black Hills National Forest, visit www.fs.usda.gov/blackhills, follow Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/blackhillsnf> and/or Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BlackHillsNF>

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Forest

Draft draft draft

Forest Planning for “The People’s Forests”

In his 1933 book, Robert Marshall referred to the national forests as “The People’s Forests”. That description fits as well today as it did 90 years ago because, after all, the national forests are owned by “the people”. The US Forest Service are hired by “the people” to manage the national forests, and it should be no surprise that “the people” want a significant voice in the revision of the forest plans that will guide management for the next 10-15 years.

As discussed in A Citizens’ Guide to National Forest Planning:

“The national forests are owned by all Americans, and we all have a role to play in how they are managed. Under the 1982 Planning Rule, opportunities for public participation during the development of the plans were only required during portions of the planning process subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The 2012 Planning Rule requires decisionmakers, often referred to as “responsible officials,” to emphasize and incorporate opportunities for public involvement through every step of the planning process. Although this approach creates a great responsibility for both the Forest Service and the public, it also presents the public with an important opportunity to help create forest plans that serve the public’s interests.”

“Prior to the 2012 Planning Rule, public involvement typically occurred after a draft plan was developed and during the environmental analysis process required by NEPA. The 2012 Planning Rule focuses on engaging with and listening to the public at all phases of the planning process. Ensuring that the public is involved in the development (and not just the review) of plans is one of the ways forest planning has changed.”

Here is what the 2012 Planning Rule says about public participation in forest planning:

§ 219.4 Requirements for public participation.

The responsible official shall provide opportunities to the public for participating in the assessment process; developing a plan proposal, including the monitoring program; commenting on the proposal and the disclosure of its environmental impacts in accompanying NEPA documents; and reviewing the results of monitoring information. ... The responsible official should be proactive and use contemporary tools, such as the Internet, to engage the public, and should share information in an open way with interested parties. ...

The responsible official shall engage the public—including Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, other Federal agencies, State and local governments, individuals, and public and private organizations or entities—early and throughout the planning process as required by this part, using collaborative processes where feasible and appropriate.

“(iv)... Where appropriate, the responsible official shall encourage States, counties, and other local governments to seek cooperating agency status in the NEPA process for development, amendment, or revision of a plan.”

On numerous occasions, various Forest Service officials have described forest planning under the 1982 Planning Rule as “Jack-in-the-Box forest planning”, where Forest Service planners worked diligently, behind closed doors, on their various planning tasks until a day when they released, with great flourish, their newly completed plan to the public.

The 2012 Planning Rule is a whole new ballgame, with a foundational premise that the forest planning process would be transparent with opportunities for meaningful public participation and involvement throughout the process. That premise was woven into the 2012 Planning Rule, the Preamble and Response to Public Comments for the 2012 Planning Rule, the FS Manual, the FS Land Management Planning Handbook, the Citizens’ Guide, and the Guide for State, Local, and Tribal governments.

The national forests that have completed forest plan revisions using the 2012 Planning Rule have, in one form or another, embraced inclusive, transparent planning processes that allow for greater public involvement. Following are examples from planning documents for several of those Forests:

-Flathead NF (Montana)

- developed a collaborative stakeholder engagement process and hired the Meridian Institute to serve as neutral third-party facilitator.

- led field trips and held open houses to discuss existing information and trends on the Forest

- hosted monthly meetings with the intent to collaboratively develop plan components

-Francis Marion NF (South Carolina)

- posted their Public Participation Strategy on their Plan Revision website

- held 5 public meetings and 1 field trip as part of the public collaborative planning process to develop plan components. At each meeting, participants had the opportunity to learn about the Forest’s resources, give suggestions for plan components, and review and refine work from the previous meeting.

-Inyo NF (California)

- public participation efforts ensured engagement and collaboration with stakeholders throughout the planning process. This provided transparency, understanding of the planning process, regular dialogue among difference groups, and resulted in a land management plan that is responsive to State and local governments, other Federal agencies, Indian Tribes, and the public.

-Cibola NF (New Mexico)

-42 federal, state, local, and tribal government entities were cooperating agencies. Cooperating agencies participated as an extended interdisciplinary team with the Cibola NF in land management plan tasks.

-The role of the cooperating agencies was to co-convene and co-design the public engagement process, outreach to diverse stakeholders and interests, provide information to the Cibola NF staff per their relevant expertise, review all public comments, and provide recommendations to the Forest Service.

-Custer Gallatin NF (Montana, South Dakota)

-established an Inter-Governmental Working Group with Tribal, State, County, and local governments and other Federal agencies. Virtual meetings held several times per year helped inform participants of the planning process, provided an opportunity for greater understanding and feedback, and allowed participants to hear from a broad range of other participants.

-Counties, State agencies, and other Federal agencies suggested plan components, requested additional information in the plan, requested additional analysis, and supported, or opposed, particular alternatives.

-overall results of public participation efforts were greater transparency, greater public understanding of the planning process, and promotion of constructive dialogue among and between different groups.

-Nantahala Pisgah NF (North Carolina)

- “an unprecedented amount of public engagement”

-49 face-to-face public meetings across the forest, with Tribes, scientists, citizen groups, and youth.

- “The ideas garnered from involvement are notable on every page of the plan.”

-Drafts of the plan were shared with and input received from the public throughout the development of the revised plan.

- “Through this planning process, one thing is clear—there is an inspiring amount of passion for these forests. We are grateful to the thousands of members of the public who shared their input in the development of this plan. We especially appreciate those who worked in collaborative settings to share your values with others and work together toward solutions that advance common interests. As a result of diverse public input, this plan provides a strong foundation for addressing the challenges ahead of us, while moving all our interests forward.”

Fortunately, it is not too late for the Black Hills NF to learn from what’s worked well for other national forests and to craft a ‘Black Hills approach’ that includes robust opportunities for public

involvement throughout the forest plan revision process. The overarching benefit for all parties, as discussed on page 21194 of the Preamble, is that “engaging the public early and throughout the [planning] process is expected to lead to better decisionmaking and plans that have broader support and relevance.”

One of the requirements of the FS Land Management Planning Handbook is the development of a Public Participation Strategy. A very positive next step by the Black Hills NF would be completion of a Public Participation Strategy, with public involvement, and then posting that strategy on the Forest Plan Revision website, as done by the Francis Marion NF, in the interest of transparency.

As the old saying goes, “Sometimes you need to go slow to go fast.”

The Black Hills NF is one of the “people’s forests” and the “people” who live, work, and play in the Black Hills want the best possible forest plan that addresses the spectrum of issues. The “people who live, work, and play” in the Black Hills NF want to have substantive involvement in the development of the plan, and are prepared to do the heavy lifting that will be required. For the Forest Service to embark on a forest plan revision process that does not include that opportunity is contrary to the intent and letter of the 2012 Planning Rule.

Following are excerpts from the 2012 Planning Rule, the Preamble and Response to Public Comments for the 2012 Planning Rule, the FS Manual, the FS Planning Handbook, the Citizens’ Guide, and the Guide for State, Local, and Tribal Governments.

Preamble and Response to Comments for the 2012 Planning Rule

P. 21162 – “[The planning rule] also emphasizes providing meaningful opportunities for public participation early and throughout the planning process, increases the transparency of decision-making, and provides a platform for the Agency to work with the public and across boundaries with other land managers to identify and share information and inform planning.”

P. 21167 – “[The Final Rule] would require the responsible official to provide opportunities for public participation throughout all stages of the planning process ...”

P. 21178 – “As described in the PEIS, best practices in public involvement and collaboration emphasize the importance of engaging a broad spectrum of participants. ... A plan revision or amendment process that offers a broad spectrum of participation opportunities is much more likely to produce a meaningful, shared understanding of the social, economic, or ecological factors of importance in the plan area. Forests and grasslands that already engage a broad spectrum of public interests early and often report that their proposed projects and plans more accurately incorporate public vision and interests. They further report that upfront public involvement builds more understanding of proposed actions, and that people typically respond more positively to these proposals.”

P. 21184 – “The Department agrees the public process for land management planning must be clear and transparent.”

P. 21190 – “Under § 219.4, the final rule sets forth an open process for public collaboration, participation, and coordination to inform desired conditions and objectives for NFS lands.”

P. 21194 – “[Section 219.4] of the final rule requires the responsible official to provide meaningful opportunities for public participation throughout the planning process... The intent of this section is to emphasize the importance of active public engagement in planning and to provide direction for the responsible official to take an active, modern approach to getting public input, including recognition of the need for accessibility of the process and engagement of all publics, the responsibility for Tribal consultation, and engagement with other land managers as part of an all lands approach. The outcomes of public participation can include a greater understanding of interests underlying the issues, a shared understanding of the conditions on the plan area and in the broader landscape that provide the context for planning, the development of alternatives that can accommodate a wide range of interests, and the potential development of a shared vision for the plan area, as well as an understanding of how and why planning decisions are made. Engaging the public early and throughout the process is expected to lead to better decisionmaking and plans that have broader support and relevance.”

P. 21195 – “The rule requires the responsible official to engage and encourage participation by a diverse array of people and communities throughout the planning process.”

2012 Planning Rule

§ 219.4 Requirements for public participation.

“(a) Providing opportunities for participation. The responsible official shall provide opportunities to the public for participating in the assessment process; developing a plan proposal, including the monitoring program; commenting on the proposal and the disclosure of its environmental impacts in accompanying NEPA documents; and reviewing the results of monitoring information. ... The responsible official should be proactive and use contemporary tools, such as the Internet, to engage the public, and should share information in an open way with interested parties. ...”

“(1) Outreach. The responsible official shall engage the public—including Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, other Federal agencies, State and local governments, individuals, and public and private organizations or entities—early and throughout the planning process as required by this part, using collaborative processes where feasible and appropriate.”

“(iv)... Where appropriate, the responsible official shall encourage States, counties, and other local governments to seek cooperating agency status in the NEPA process for development, amendment, or revision of a plan.”

Here's how the Planning Rule defines "Participation" - "219.19 - Participation. Activities that include a wide range of public involvement tools and processes, such as collaboration, public meetings, open houses, workshops, and comment periods."

FS Manual 1920, Land Management Planning

1921.04d, Responsibility, Forest Supervisor

e. Provide meaningful public participation opportunities early and throughout the planning process.

FS Handbook 1909.12 – Land Management Planning Handbook

41 - PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation:

1. Helps build and maintain working relationships, trust, capacity, and commitment to the plan.
2. Supports shared learning and understanding between the Forest Service and public participants.
3. Promotes a common understanding of facts and issues that form the context for planning and the planning process.
4. Helps keep the public informed throughout sometimes lengthy and complex planning processes.
5. Is a defining element of an inclusive, transparent process that strengthens plans and adds clarity to the decision making process and the rationale for decisions.
6. Helps identify or clarify issues, conflicts, constraints, values, beliefs, or expectations.

42 – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

"The Responsible Official should ensure that the Interdisciplinary Team develops a public participation strategy prior to initiating the assessment ..."

A Citizens' Guide to National Forest Planning, (Advisory Committee, USDA-FS)

P. 11 - Enhanced Public Involvement – The Key to Success

"The national forests are owned by all Americans, and we all have a role to play in how they are managed. Under the 1982 Planning Rule, opportunities for public participation during the development of the plans were only required during portions of the planning process subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The 2012 Planning

Rule requires decisionmakers, often referred to as “responsible officials,” to emphasize and incorporate opportunities for public involvement through every step of the planning process. Although this approach creates a great responsibility for both the Forest Service and the public, it also presents the public with an important opportunity to help create forest plans that serve the public’s interests.”

“Prior to the 2012 Planning Rule, public involvement typically occurred after a draft plan was developed and during the environmental analysis process required by NEPA. The 2012 Planning Rule focuses on engaging with and listening to the public at all phases of the planning process. Ensuring that the public is involved in the development (and not just the review) of plans is one of the ways forest planning has changed.”

Understanding Your Opportunities for Participating in the Forest Service Planning Process: A Guide for State, Local, and Tribal Governments, (Advisory Committee, USDA-ES)

P. 7 – “The collaborative role of each State, local, and tribal government (and its agencies) in the planning process is unique. The opportunity for their involvement throughout the planning process is both required by the Planning Rule and essential to the successful development and implementation of land management plans. Intergovernmental participation, when carried out properly and with mutual respect for the rights and responsibilities of each government, can result in more robust land management plans that meet the needs of those governments.”

P 12 – “The 2012 Planning Rule places a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for meaningful participation early and throughout the planning process and directs outreach to “Tribes and Alaska Native Corporation, other Federal agencies, State and local governments, individuals, and public and private organizations or entities” (36 CFR 219(4)(a)(1)).” This is an “open door” invitation to participate. The purpose is to foster greater recognition and discussion of issues that have cross-boundary effects, look for common objectives and solutions, and find opportunities to integrate management across landscapes.”

Appendix (longer excerpts from various forest plan documents)

Flathead NF (Montana)

(excerpt from Forest Plan Revision Record of Decision)

Public Engagement

To facilitate local participation, the Forest contracted with the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution in 2012 to develop a collaborative stakeholder engagement process. The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution met with Forest Service employees and a representative group of key stakeholders to determine their willingness to engage in a collaborative process convened by a neutral third party. The Meridian Institute was selected to serve in that capacity and facilitated numerous topical work groups, an interagency group, and meetings to bring together all work groups and interested citizens. Beginning with a news release July 19, 2013, as part of the public involvement process, the Forest led field trips and held open houses to discuss existing information and trends related to a variety of conditions found on the Forest. From October 2013 through June 2014, the Forest hosted monthly public meetings with the intent to collaboratively develop plan components that the Forest could consider in the development of a proposed action. The dialogue and recommendations from this public involvement process were used to help develop the land management plan revision proposed action.

A key component of the involvement and transparency of the public involvement efforts associated with this planning effort has been the information made available to the public through the use of the land management plan revision website. The Forest also utilized collaborative mapping tools, an online forum for gathering public comments and input on specific areas of the Forest, throughout the planning process... The availability to provide equal opportunities to anyone who wanted to participate in the planning process was greatly enhanced through our ability to provide web-based information for the public to comment on the process as well as plan components.

Francis Marion NF (South Carolina)

Excerpt from Forest Plan Revision FEIS Appendix A

Starting in the fall of 2012, the planning team held two public meetings to kick off the plan revision process and invite the public to collaborate on the development of plan components. Between the winter of 2013 and fall 2013, the Francis Marion hosted two public meetings on sustainable recreation and ecological sustainability.

In January 2014, a meeting between USDA Forest Service officials and the Catawba Indian Nation was held to discuss the plan revision process and the findings in the assessment. Discussions focused on special forest products that might be of interest to local tribes. In the winter of 2014, the assessment, need for change, and proposed management strategies were posted online on the public website for the Francis Marion plan revision. In

February 2014, the Francis Marion hosted an open house on the proposed action, which was followed by scoping the proposed action starting in May 2014. The scoping process involved mailing a scoping letter summarizing the assessment, need for change on the 1996 Plan, and proposed management strategies, to more than 60 people on the Francis Marion's project mailing list. In addition, an email announcing the availability of the assessment, need for change, and the proposed management strategies was sent out to over 200 people that had signed up on the Francis Marion list.

The public collaborative planning process to develop plan components consisted of 5 subsequent meetings and 1 field trip during the spring and summer of 2014 with up to 60 participants at one meeting. Other Federal and state agency representatives, local officials, adjacent landowners, non-governmental organization and user group representatives, members of the academic community, and other interested individuals participated. At each meeting participants had the opportunity to learn something about the Francis Marion's resources, give suggestions for plan components, and review and refine work from the previous meeting.

Inyo NF, California

(excerpt from Forest Plan Revision Record of Decision)

Engagement with State and Local Governments, Indian Tribes, other Federal Agencies, and the Public

Our public participation efforts ensured engagement and collaboration with a variety of stakeholders throughout the multi-year plan revision process (2012 through 2019). This provided transparency, understanding of the planning process, regular dialogue among different groups, and resulted in a land management plan that is responsive to State and local governments, other Federal agencies, Indian Tribes and the public. We will continue to work with these groups to reach our goals over the next 15 years.

State and Local Governments and other Federal Agencies

The Inyo signed memoranda of understanding with two cooperating agencies: Inyo County and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Our memorandum of understanding with Inyo County led to better collaboration on developing the land management plan. As often as weekly, we met with County staff to discuss the plan revision with an emphasis on maintaining access and multiple uses on the Inyo. As a cooperating agency, the County provided essential information highlighting the contributions national forest activities provide to local economies. We worked with the County to determine key locations on the Inyo critical to providing these socioeconomic benefits. This information supported the development of a land management plan that works to sustain national forest benefits that contribute to local communities and local economies.

In summary, the land management plan is consistent with the county plans and incorporates elements of the following topics: opportunities for economic development and growth; providing continued tourist and recreation opportunities; addressing the need to provide for public safety regarding wildland fires; provide for forest and wetland health and habitat for aquatic and terrestrial species; and maintaining multiple uses on the national forest.

Other forest management issues raised by State and local governments and other Federal agencies and incorporated into the land management plan include: increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration; broader partnerships and cooperation; greater use of fire on the landscape; concern over undesirable effects of more managed fire; suggestions for species of conservation concern; and the need for sustainable recreation planning. State and local government and Federal agency input became the basis for plan components and other plan content in the fire, vegetation management, recommended wilderness, wild and scenic river eligibility, terrestrial ecosystems and species-specific sections of the land management plan.

Indian Tribes

The Inyo engaged 14 Native American Tribal entities including 9 federally recognized Tribes. We communicated through letters, in-person meetings, e-mails, and phone calls. Throughout the plan revision, Tribal members shared input including: comments on wording and language; expressing desire for holistic management of ecosystems; fostering greater collaboration between Tribes and the Forest Service in resource management activities; providing more opportunities for Tribal youth engagement and Tribal employment; greater application of traditional ecological knowledge in forest management processes; supporting opportunities for non-timber forest product gathering and traditional activities; and reintroducing or utilizing the important role of fire for healthy ecosystems.

Public Participation

Public engagement is a key part of the 2012 Planning Rule. Modifications to the alternatives, the analysis and the land management plan were made throughout the planning process in response to public input. The public was encouraged to provide information and ideas, and we incorporated much of the publicly provided information into our plan and final EIS analysis. There were widely varying views on many topics, so there was not always consensus. However, I considered those varying views and modified my decision to try to be responsive to input received. The overall result of our public participation efforts was greater transparency, greater public understanding of the planning process, and the promotion of constructive dialogue among and between different groups, which we hope will continue into the implementation of this plan.

Cibola NF (New Mexico)

(excerpt from Forest Plan Revision Record of Decision)

Engagement with State and Local Governments, other Federal Agencies, Federally Recognized Tribes, and the Public

State and Local Governments, other Federal Agencies, and Federally Recognized Tribes Local Tribes and communities depend on the economic, social, and ecological benefits provided by the Cibola National Forest. The national forest supports jobs and economies, local traditional communities and uses, healthy wildlife populations, and clean air and water, among other benefits. Many of the issues and concerns facing the Cibola require a cohesive management approach across the landscape and across ownership boundaries. Active involvement by the representatives of Tribes, counties, other federal agencies, and local communities has therefore been integral to plan development and will be essential during implementation.

Also integral were the cooperating agencies—various federal, state, local, and tribal governmental entities—lending technical assistance or other resources to the development of the land management plan. Cooperating agencies participated as an extended interdisciplinary team with the Cibola National Forest in land management plan revision tasks and milestones. The role of the cooperating agencies during 2015 and 2016 was to co-convene and co-design the public engagement process, outreach to include diverse stakeholders and interests, provide information to the Cibola per their relevant expertise, review all public comments, and provide recommendations to the Forest Service as part of the extended interdisciplinary team. Comments from cooperating agencies were considered and addressed, where applicable, in the pre-publication draft plan in the fall of 2018.

Involving cooperating agencies in this planning process provided a forum for maximizing the collective voice and interests of the communities and greater public around the Cibola National Forest. The Cibola benefited from cooperating agencies' knowledge and understanding related to the concerns and needs of local communities in central New Mexico. Both parties also benefited from better communication and representation to the public and their constituents. The Cibola National Forest considered cooperating agencies' and other potentially affected entities' management plans, objectives, and goals in designing the land management plan; this is documented in the final environmental impact statement, appendix A, "Coordination with Other Planning Efforts" section.

Forty-three agencies ultimately signed on as cooperators in 2015; forty-two agencies have remained as cooperators to date. The cooperating agencies for the Cibola National Forest's plan revision process are:

Public Involvement

Cibola National Forest personnel have engaged the public frequently and innovatively throughout the planning process. This effort has included conventional public meetings, collaborative work sessions, information sharing via social media, and the development of self-convening groups organized around each of the four mountain ranger districts.

Custer Gallatin NF (Montana, South Dakota)

(excerpt from Forest Plan Revision Record of Decision)

State and Local Governments and Other Federal Agencies

The Custer Gallatin worked directly with State and local governments, other Federal agencies, and Indian Tribes throughout the planning process.

Given their important management role across the broader landscape, the Custer Gallatin established an Inter-Governmental Working Group with Tribal, State, County, and local governments, and other Federal agencies. Virtual meetings held several times per year between 2016 and 2019 helped inform the participants of the planning progress, provided an opportunity for greater understanding and feedback, and allowed participants to hear from a broad range of other agency participants. We used the contributors' information to plan other public engagement efforts throughout the planning process.

Cooperating agency status was available to any interested government. Four governments or agencies requested cooperating agency status: Park County, Montana, Sweet Grass County, Montana, the State of South Dakota, and the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. Cooperators were invited to participate (by phone) in planning team meetings and in the review of draft documents.

Counties, State agencies, and other Federal agencies suggested plan components, requested additional information in the plan, requested additional analysis, and supported or opposed particular alternatives. While not every suggestion or request was accommodated, plan components were modified, information was added to the plan, and analysis was added to the final environmental impact statement in response to comments from Tribes, State and local governments and other Federal agencies.

The Custer Gallatin plan revision process has involved 19 federally recognized Indian Tribes located in North and South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

Public Involvement

Public involvement for the Custer Gallatin plan revision was guided by the principles of transparency, inclusion, adaptability, and a focus on finding solutions. A wide range of methods was used, including collaborative style public meetings, webinars to reach a wide geography, resource-oriented podcasts, a “Science of Forest Planning” symposium, collaborative mapping tools, email announcements, press releases, social media, and website information.

Public comments on the draft environmental impact statement and draft plan provided important information in development of the preferred alternative. The public comments and the interdisciplinary team’s responses were critical to improving the final environmental impact statement and the plan. The overall results of our public participation efforts were greater transparency, greater public understanding of the planning process, and promotion of constructive dialogue among and between different groups.

Nantahala Pisgah NF (North Carolina)

(excerpt from National Forests in North Carolina website)

Public Involvement in the Forest Plan Revision Process

The planning process has involved an unprecedented amount of public engagement, which is intended to set the stage for future involvement in project design. There were more than 49 face to face public meetings across the forest, with Tribes, scientists, citizen groups, and youth – bringing in a diverse range of voices. The ideas garnered from involvement are notable on every page of the plan.

Public input helped...

- Identify the need for change
- Draft our forest-wide plan components
- Develop our management area structure

- Define geographic areas on the forests
- Create alternatives that were analyzed
- Inform our analysis of effects (how implementing the plan will impact multiple resources)

Diverse groups of stakeholders provided several hundred hours of input on the process, with high expectations for the resulting plan and EIS. Drafts of the plan were shared with and input received from the public throughout the development of the revised plan. The forest hosted traditional face to face meetings and used emerging technologies, such as interactive StoryMaps, Facebook live, and You Tube Video postings, to name a few engagement approaches.

Through this planning process, one thing is clear—there is an inspiring amount of passion for these forests. We are grateful to the thousands of members of the public who shared their input in the development of this plan. We especially appreciate those who worked in collaborative settings to share your values with others and work together toward solutions that advance common interests. As a result of diverse public input, this plan provides a strong foundation for addressing the challenges ahead of us, while moving all our interests forward.