

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Forest Service****Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Allegheny National Forest (Elk, Forest, McKean and Warren Counties, PA.)**

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: The USDA Forest Service intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for revising the Allegheny National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(5) and USDA Forest Service National Forest System Land and Resource Management Planning regulations (36 CFR 219). The revised Forest Plan will supersede the current Forest Plan, which the Regional Forester approved on April 24, 1986, and has been amended 11 times. This notice describes the preliminary issues which will be emphasized, the estimated dates for filing the EIS, the information concerning public participation, and the names and addresses of the responsible agency official and the individual who can provide additional information.

DATES: Your comments on this Notice of Intent (NOI) should be submitted in writing by November 10, 2003. The Draft EIS is expected to be available for public review by July 2005. The Final EIS and revised Forest Plan are expected to be completed by March 2006.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to: Allegheny National Forest, Plan Revision Notice of Intent, c/o Content Analysis Team, P.O. Box 221090, Salt Lake City, UT 84122. Fax: (801) 517-1014; e-mail: alleghenynoi@fs.fed.us.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michael Hampton, Forest Plan Revision Staff Officer, (814) 723-5150. TTY: (814) 726-2710. Information will also be posted on the Allegheny National Forest Web page at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/allegheny>.

Responsible Official: Randy Moore, Regional Forester, Eastern Region, 626 E. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Regional Forester for the Eastern Region gives notice of the agency's intent to prepare an EIS to revise the Allegheny Forest Plan. The Regional Forester approved the original Allegheny Forest Plan on April 24, 1986. This plan guides the overall management of the Allegheny National Forest. The National Forest Management Act requires that national forests revise forest plans at

least every 15 years (U.S.C. 1604[f][5]). Additional indicators of the need to revise the 1986 Allegheny Forest Plan are: (1) Changes in forest conditions; (2) changes in public demands and expectations; (3) changes in law, policy or regulatory direction; (4) results of monitoring and evaluation of implementation under the current Forest Plan; (5) new science that indicates emerging issues, concerns or opportunities that are not adequately addressed in the current Forest Plan.

Nature and Scope of the Decision to be Made: Forest plans make the following types of decisions:

1. Forest-wide multiple-use goals and objectives. Goals describe a desired condition to be achieved sometime in the future. Objectives are concise, time-specific statements of measurable planned results that respond to the goals.
2. Forest-wide management direction and requirements. These include limitations on management activities, or advisable courses of action that apply across the entire forest.
3. Management direction specific to certain portions (management areas) of the Forest. This includes the desired future condition for different areas of the forest, and the accompanying management direction to help achieve that condition.
4. Lands suited and not suited for resource use and production (e.g. timber management).
5. Monitoring and evaluation requirements needed to gauge how well the Forest Plan is being implemented.
6. Recommendations to Congress, if any (e.g. additional Wilderness designation).

The scope of this decision is limited to revisiting only those portions of the current Forest Plan that need revision, update, or correction. The Allegheny National Forest proposes to narrow the scope of revising the Forest Plan by focusing on issues identified as being most critically in need of change.

Preliminary Issues

Many sources were reviewed to identify the parts of the current Forest Plan that need revision, update, or correction. These sources included: Input from the public; comments from employees of the Forest Service and other governmental agencies; consultations with the Seneca Nation of Indians; results of monitoring and evaluation; changes in law and policy; new scientific information, as well as the direction outlined in the 2000 USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan.

Based on the Allegheny National Forest's review of the current Forest

Plan and the sources listed above, the Allegheny National Forest proposes to emphasize the following preliminary issues:

A. Recreation

This issue involves providing for various types of recreation opportunities, in order to provide an appropriate array of recreation for the public.

- *Recreation.* This involves developed recreation facilities and trails and dispersed recreation for both motorized and non-motorized use. A determination of available settings, opportunities and experiences for recreation will be made using the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. The types, amount and location of semi-primitive, remote recreation on the Allegheny National Forest will be evaluated. Additionally, public input, current use, compatibility of uses, resource capability, existing development, and changes in recreation supply, demand and trends are all factors that will affect how recreation will be addressed. Revising the Forest Plan will also likely include refining goals, objectives, and updating standards and guidelines to address current conditions and projected changes in recreation supply and demand within the Allegheny National Forest. Anticipated changes would likely occur both forest-wide and for individual management areas, as well as monitoring requirements.

B. Vegetation Management

This issue involves maintaining healthy forest conditions capable of providing sustainable levels of forest products.

- *Vegetation composition.* This addresses the diversity of tree stands (particularly by species and age-class) on the Forest. In addition to changes in land allocations, proposed changes may also include revising standards and guidelines to modify the timing, sequence, or intensity of some harvesting or reforestation practices, which could lead to an increased emphasis on adaptive management and modifications to the range and types of activities available for use in specific management areas.

- *Forest health.* This addresses the Forest's resistance to health threats posed by pest infestations, disease, acid deposition, wind events, and other damaging agents. For example, information obtained by the Allegheny National Forest indicates some species, such as American beech and sugar maple, are being affected disproportionately by these health