

NEWS RELEASE
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USDA FOREST SERVICE WILL HOST PUBLIC EVENTS ON DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW PLANNING RULE

WASHINGTON, Feb.24, 2010--USDA Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell today announced a series of events to provide opportunities for public discussion on the development of a new Forest Service Land and Resource Management Planning Rule (planning rule). The Forest Service will host a national science forum, three national roundtables and nine regional roundtables.

Providing multiple opportunities for public participation ties directly to President Obama's call for open government that is transparent, participatory and collaborative, and illustrates Forest Service commitment to engage the public in the development of a new planning rule.

"We encourage broad participation in the creation of our new planning rule," said Tidwell. "Through collaboration we will be able to better address the current and future needs of the National Forest System such as restoration, protecting watersheds, addressing climate change, sustaining local economies, improving collaboration, and working across landscapes."

Following the meetings, notes will be posted on the planning rule Web site, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/planningrule>, to allow for further feedback. Summaries of the presentations and discussions in the science forum and roundtables, along with the individual comments received during the 60-day formal comment period on the Notice of Intent, will be used to develop the proposed rule and a draft environmental impact statement.

The meetings announced today include:
National Science Forum March 29 and 30, 2010, in Washington, DC.

National roundtables April 1 and 2, April 20 and 21, and May 11 and 12, 2010, in Washington, DC.

Nine regional roundtables in the following locations:

- * Pacific Northwest Region (Region 6), Portland, OR on April 6, 2010;
 - * Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5), Sacramento, CA on April 6, 2010;
 - * Intermountain Region (Region 4), Salt Lake City, UT on April 8, 2010;
 - * Rocky Mountain Region, (Region 2), Lakewood, CO on April 12, 2010;
 - * Northern Region (Region 1), Missoula, MT on April 13, 2010;
 - * Alaska Region (Region 10), Juneau, AK on April 13, 2010;
 - * Southern Region (Region 8), Atlanta, GA during the week of April 12, 2010 (exact date to be determined);
 - * Eastern Region (Region 9), Chicago, IL during the week of April 28 (exact date to be determined); and
 - * Southwestern Region (Region 3), Albuquerque, NM on April 28, 2010.
- * Region 2 will host additional meetings on April 14 in Cheyenne, WY and on April 21 meeting in Rapid City, SD.

Webcasting may also be available for selected meetings; please check the planning rule website, at

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/planningrule>, for the most up-to-date information.

To encourage widespread participation the Forest Service is using new media tools in conjunction with the public meetings. Please visit <http://blogs.usda.gov/usdablogs/planningrule> to participate in the [Forest Service web-based planning rule blog](#).

The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The agency manages the 193 million acres of National Forest System land, provides stewardship assistance to non-federal forest landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world.

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