

Allegheny Forest Alliance

Summer 2006 Newsletter

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DEIS RELEASED

During the third week of May, the ***Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)*** was finally released by the Forest Service Planning Team. I say finally because it is nearly a year overdue. The ***Draft*** is over 600 pages long, but is accompanied by a ***Summary*** document that captures the major points of the ***DEIS***. It is worth a read for those interested in the future management of our local national forest.

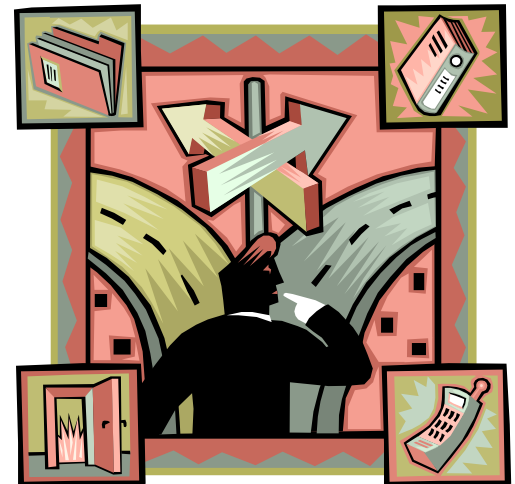
The plan offers four alternatives with C being the preferred version by the planning team. The preferred alternative is essentially a compromise between the “green” planning version (D), which calls for far less timber harvesting and a lot more unmanaged land, and the “industry” version (B), calling for just the opposite. Alternative A is essentially the “no action” alternative.

While a compromise alternative leaves many important issues relevant to local municipalities and school districts unfulfilled, it does not offer the greatest opportunity for revenue, jobs, motorized recreation or sustainable harvest. In fact, both alternatives A and B better meet the social and economic needs of our communities by far. The preferred alternative does, however, provide a litany of ecological benefits to selected plants and animals, a good share of non-motorized recreational opportunities and greater structural diversity across the landscape.

Perhaps most disturbing is the failure of the Planning Team to account for the uniqueness of the ANF. It holds greater potential for economic profit than any other national forest and it is the only one that has 93% of the subsurface rights privately owned.

Unfortunately, black cherry and oak, the two most valuable tree species on the forest are by and large being factored out of the resource equation and roadless/remote areas are being promoted where OGM activity remains probable. Neither makes much sense.

I recommend reading the ***Summary*** at the very least and would encourage each of you to express your opinion to the Forest Service before the 90 day comment period ends on August 28. If you fail to comment your concerns about the final plan, which is due in January of '07, will not be legitimately recognized and you will be saddled with a sorted outcome for the next twenty years.



Copies of the **DEIS** can be picked up at the Forest Service office in Warren or can be solicited by calling 814-723-5150. The 600 page document is also available on CD for those who do not wish to deal with the paper version. Please make the effort to become informed and engaged.

HOODWINKED INDEED

Did you ever get involved in one of those condo sales pitches where you were led to believe you could afford the good life for a few modest bucks? If you were fortunate enough to walk away and come to your senses, you realized it was a fantasy. A similar scenario is being perpetrated in the draft forest plan (DEIS) and we again need to come to our senses. Regardless which alternative suits your fancy, only alternative D is realistic from a financial perspective.



The sales pitch goes like this. The preferred alternative (C) is being reported to yield revenues nearing \$50M. Better yet, alternative B is to yield \$62M and alternative A nearly \$65M. Given the fact that the average revenue stream on the ANF for the last five years has been just under \$18M the alternatives seem very seductive. But, here's the catch. In order to achieve the amounts presented, the annual budget to run the program must increase by nearly 40%. That's right, a whopping 40% increase! The federal government will need to nearly double the operating budget for the ANF, which quite frankly is very unlikely. The story gets even more interesting.

The allowable sale quantity (ASQ) or timber harvested in millions of board feet (mmbf) is being projected as follows: A-61.1, B-64.9, C-56.3, and D-25.3. The catch again is the Forest Service would need the huge increase in budget to achieve those lofty goals. Attractive-yes; realistic-no. The same fantasy plays out throughout the plan whether it involves habitat diversity, recreational opportunities or the use of timber management techniques. Goal achievement will depend on increased funding.

As I stated above, alternative D is the most realistic projection because it actually requires a budget reduction to meet its expectations. It is quite understandable when you consider the large amount of acreage being transferred to non-managed status under this alternative. Unfortunately, alternative D only projects to maintain status quo with respect to revenue, which is far from the customary and frankly unacceptable.

The Forest Service is not doing a whole lot to enhance their "good neighbor" image by promoting such a farce. It is time to stand up and demand some real accountability.

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE ON SPECIES VIABILITY

The Eastern Region National Forest established a "scale of five viability outcome levels" to summarize existing conditions within a planning area for the purpose of documenting species distribution. It is intended to measure the viability of some 300 animals and more than 1,200 plants. Coincidentally, its

application applies quite nicely to homo-sapiens as well, particularly with respect to the socioeconomic consequences of forest planning.

The scale listed on page ES-22 of the *Draft Summary* reads as follows:

- **Outcome A:** *Suitable ecological conditions are broadly distributed and of high abundance across the historic range of species within the planning area.*
- **Outcome B:** *Suitable ecological conditions are either broadly distributed or of high abundance across the historical range of species within the planning area, but there are gaps where suitable ecological conditions are absent or only present in low abundance.*
- **Outcome C:** *Suitable ecological conditions are distributed frequently as patches and/or exist at low abundance. Gaps where suitable ecological conditions are either absent, or present in low abundance, are large enough that some subpopulations are isolated.*
- **Outcome D:** *Suitable ecological conditions are frequently isolated and/or exist at very low abundance.*
- **Outcome E:** *Suitable ecological conditions are highly isolated and exist at very low abundance, with little or no possibility of population interaction.*

Using this scale, you may determine for yourself where the viability of local communities and their citizens stand with respect to the social and economic management of the ANF.

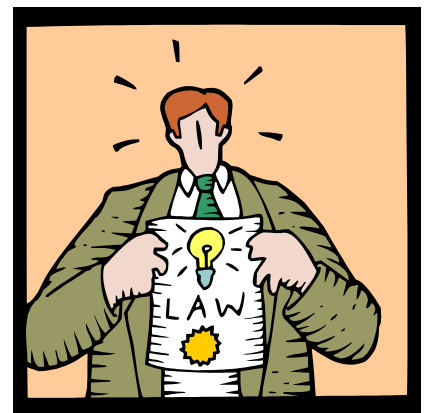
THE CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS

The **Code of Federal Regulations** provides the marching orders for most if not all government agencies. In particular, **Chapter II** of **Title 36** provides the roadmap for the Forest Service. Several sections under subpart A of **Title 36** bear consideration when reviewing the conclusion presented in the draft of the new forest plan.

Section 36CFR219.14 for instance, addresses state and local government involvement in management planning. It states that the responsible official, hereafter referred to as the supervisor, must provide “early and frequent opportunities for state and local governments to participate in the planning, including identification of issues and to contribute to the streamline coordination of the resource management plans and programs.” Inviting county commissioners, township supervisors, county planning agents, borough managers, school district superintendents and the like to collaborative planning meetings open to the general public begs compliance to this regulation in the opinion of many.

Likewise, **Section 36CFR219.19** requires the Forest Service to consider the “sustainability of interdependent ecological, social and economic elements without impairment to the productivity of the land...” when engaging in management planning. In the opinion of many, the **DEIS** gives a ton of consideration to the ecological elements while only a pound or two to the social and economic elements, the very elements most essential to local community well being.

Section 36CFR219.21 specifically addresses social and economic sustainability stating the supervisor must provide information and analysis that addresses the social and economic well being of



communities in the region. Such consideration is to include employment, income, and other trends; the range and estimated long-term value of market and non-market goods, uses, services, and amenities that are provided by national forest lands. The supervisor is also required to estimate the effect of providing such goods and services on regional and local communities. Special attention is to be paid to the uses, values, products, and services the Forest Service is uniquely poised to provide.

The same section also requires the supervisor to analyze the “risk and vulnerability” to communities from changes in ecological systems as a result of natural succession or potential management actions. Additionally, the supervisor must weigh the potential consequences to communities from land management changes that affect available capital, employment opportunities, wage levels, local tax bases, federal revenue sharing and the ability to support public infrastructure and social services.

While addressing these vital issues, many believe far too much analysis was done using national cookie-cutter models such as IMPLAN and far too little using local sources like county planning agencies and Northwestern and North Central Regional Planning Commissions. These agencies provide a more accurate assessment of the social and economic condition of the region.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

While engaged in a conversation with various representatives of government officials recently, the discussion focused on winners and losers in the turf battle associated with the new draft forest plan. I noted that preservationists cannot lose because they bargain from a position knowing they will never have less than the current condition. On the contrary, advocates for production over preservation have nothing to win, because their slice of the pie can never get bigger. Therefore, as the new goal post is set with each round of planning, it can only be moved further down the field. Let me explain.

By act of Congress in 1974, all national forests were required to develop forest plans periodically. These plans are to embrace the multiple-use concept required by the *Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960*. Understand that previous to 1960 the focus of forest management was for the production of wood and water for the citizens of our nation. With the passage of the 1960 act, production lost its significance and in fact was prohibited in many cases as recreation; habitat and wilderness were then added to the planning spectrum. Planning took on a new dimension where desired goals required compromise.

This simple act has had a profound effect on forest planning and management. By setting land aside, the amount of available resource for production (namely wood) becomes smaller. As each subsequent plan is written, more land is becoming parks-like and production advocates can only watch as available resources dwindle before our eyes. Wilderness areas, national recreation areas, and wild and scenic rivers are added to subsequent forest plans later to be preserved forever by act of Congress. In addition, there are remote areas, historic areas, research and study areas, corridors, riparian areas, and the like, further eroding the availability of potentially productive land.

With regard to winners and losers in the forest planning process, the conclusion is fairly obvious. Preservationists cannot lose because what they have achieved can never be taken away. On the other hand, production advocates cannot win because it is highly improbable that their slice of the pie will ever increase. They are reduced to minimizing their losses as much as possible.

EDWARD F. KOCJANCIC, Sr. PASSES AWAY

It is with much regret that I report the death of Edward F. Kocjancic, Sr., on May 9, 2006. Ed was highly respected for his knowledge of forestry issues throughout the region and I relied heavily on his perspective and technical support over the years. On many occasions I called on him to clarify issues relative to public forests management and he never failed to answer the call. I remain eternally grateful for his service to the AFA.

Ed was a life-long resident of Kane where upon graduation from the Penn State School of Forestry he established a forest consulting business. He soon became renowned throughout the region and state for his expertise in hardwood management and utilization. He served on and led the boards of several professional, business and civic organizations and remained highly active at PSU where he was recently named a University Fellow.

Ed is survived by his wife Pat, daughter Tricia, sons Ed Jr., Mike and Jeff along with several grandchildren. While his legacy is well established through his sons, Ed's presence will be missed by this coalition and the entire forest community.

AFA BOARD MEETING SCHEDULED

The summer meeting of the Board of Directors of the **Allegheny Forest Alliance** is scheduled to meet at the Olmsted Manor in Ludlow on Tuesday, August 8. A review of up-coming activities concerning the ***Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)*** and its impact on local school districts and townships will be the focus of discussion along with a report on activities regarding National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition. All board members should plan to attend this important meeting.

Your membership contribution for 2006 is due. Payment ensures you are represented in advocating for multiple-use management and a sustained yield on the Allegheny National Forest. Thank you.



