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AGENDA ITEM NO.: 7

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING DATE:**

May 22, 2013

SUBJECT:

Inyo National Forest Plan Update/Revision – Topic Papers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The County is working with the Inyo National Forest on its update to the Inyo National Forest Plan. Topic papers recently were released regarding the Plan Update/Revision, and input from the Planning Commission is being requested for the Board of Supervisors' consideration.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Supervisory District: County-wide

Recommended Action: **Provide input and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors**

Project Planner: Joshua Hart, AICP, Planning Director

BACKGROUND

The Inyo National Forest (INF) is working on updating its Forest Plan. Background information regarding the Plan update was presented to the Commission at its March meeting; attached is that staff report, as well as the County's priorities for the project. Draft Topic Papers for the Update/Revision were released on May 8 for public review. Staff is presenting the Topic Papers to the Planning Commission for its recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, which is anticipated to review the documents in mid June. The Natural Resource Advisory Committee is scheduled to review the Topic Papers on June 6. Comments regarding the Topic Papers are due June 30.

ANALYSIS

The Topic Papers¹ build on the work begun with the Science Synthesis and Bioregional Assessment, and are intended to provide the basis for the Forest Plan Update/Revision Assessment (e.g., the first phase of Plan revision). The Papers comprise 15 chapters corresponding with the topics identified in the 2012 Planning Rule, as follows:

- Chapter 1:* Aquatic Ecosystems
- Chapter 2:* Air, Soil, Riparian Areas, and Water Resources
- Chapter 3:* Assessing System Drivers and Stressors
- Chapter 4:* Assessing Carbon
- Chapter 5:* Identifying and Assessing At-Risk Species in the Planning Process
- Chapter 6:* Assessing Social, Cultural, and Economic Conditions
- Chapter 7:* Assessing Benefits People Obtain from the NFS Plan Area
- Chapter 8:* Assessing Multiple Uses – Water; Fish, Plants and Wildlife; Range, and; Timber
- Chapter 9:* Assessing Recreation Settings, Opportunities and Access, and Scenic Character
- Chapter 10:* Assessing Renewable and Nonrenewable Energy and Mineral Resources
- Chapter 11:* Assessing Infrastructure
- Chapter 12:* Assessing Areas of Tribal Importance
- Chapter 13:* Assessing Cultural and Historic Resources and Uses
- Chapter 14:* Assessing Land Status and Ownership, Use, and Access Patterns
- Chapter 15:* Assessing Designated Areas

Staff is reviewing the Topic Papers and soliciting input from a variety of sources. Staff has identified the following issues in its preliminary review of the Topic Papers.

- numerous discussions are more relevant to the west side
- the potential effects from changing fire management strategies should be discussed.
- the implications of continuing transformation of the economy to a service (and particularly tourism) base should be discussed.
- the cultural historical discussions should be expanded.
- impacts of disasters (e.g. fire, floods, mudflows, etc.) on local communities should be addressed.
- economic diversity – the specialization index is counterintuitive, since the local economy is predominantly service based – this discrepancy should be explained.
- the impacts of forest fires (particularly smoke) on local economies should be addressed.
- there is disagreement among experts about the reasons for the decline of the Sierra yellow-legged frog, which should be identified.
- the effects of Forest Service management and the evolving global, national, and regional economies on the local economy, both positively and negatively, should be better described.
- the implications to local government finance of the uncertainty of Payment in lieu of Taxes (PILT) payments should be addressed.
- the discussion of stewardship should be more balanced.

¹ Refer to <http://livingassessment.wikispaces.com/Chapters> to review the Topic Papers.

- the effect of increased entitlement costs to permittees should be addressed.
- the discussion of the historic significance of grazing and agriculture to the local economy and culture should be enhanced.
- existing and potential opportunities for private entrepreneurship should be better addressed.
- A number of small communities rely on the Forest for their water supplies (e.g., Aspendell, Mt. Whitney, Onion Valley, etc.) – these should be addressed.
- fish hatcheries should be included in the discussion of beneficial uses.
- the increased demand for water in the Lower Owens River (for rewatering) and Owens Lake (for dust suppression) should be addressed.
- the impacts of quagga mussel and other invasive aquatic species be better addressed.
- flood risks should be better addressed – this is one of the most potentially severe impacts of the Forest on our local communities.
- water supplies for fire protection be addressed.
- the discussion of mineral resources should be substantially expanded to address important and strategic minerals in the Forest that provide opportunities for commercial utilization (e.g., tungsten, gold, silver, etc.), as well as utilization of gravel resources for local roads.
- dam failure/inundation hazards should be addressed
- public services should be better addressed
- the Forest’s commitment to vehicular and other access should be described.
- references to the Inyo County Renewable Energy Ordinance should be included.
- a discussion about means to mitigate for soil erosion should be included, particularly for roads.
- private land ownership patterns in and adjacent to the Forest should be better discussed.

Public Outreach and Next Steps

The Forest Service is planning a number of public meetings to present the Topic Papers, including a public meeting at the INF Bishop offices on May 20 and a webinar on June 5. Additional opportunities for input may be provided prior to the close of the review period. The Forest Service plans to incorporate the input into final documents for development of the Assessment by the Regional Team. The Forest Service is also planning an Addendum to the Science Synthesis focusing on the east side of the Sierra later in the year.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Notice
2. March Staff Report
3. County Priorities

Prepared and Approved by:

Joshua Hart, AICP
 Director, Inyo County Planning Department

NEWS



Forest Service
United States
Department of
Agriculture

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Inyo National Forest

Date: May 7, 2013

Inyo National Forest Announces Open Houses for Forest Plan Revision

BISHOP, Calif., May 7, 2013 – The Inyo National Forest announces a series of planned meetings to continue dialogue and receive input from the public and interested stakeholders for the Forest Plan Revision.

This follows multiple meetings in March and April to launch the Forest Plan Revision process. As part of the current Assessment Phase, the Forest Service has posted a series of “topic papers” to the Living Assessment Wiki and the Forest website for review. Input can be provided through the Living Assessment wiki, or by hardcopy or email. **The topic papers are available for public review and feedback through June 30, 2013.**

“I look forward to meeting and discussing forest management with those who care about the Inyo National Forest, said Ed Armenta, Forest Supervisor. “These conversations are important for us to understand your interests as we proceed with Forest Plan Revision.”

<p>Bishop, CA May 20, 6pm-8 pm Forest Supervisors Office 351 Pacu Lane</p>	<p>Town of Mammoth Lakes, CA May 29, 6-8 pm Community Center 1000 Forest Trail</p>	<p>Dyer, Nevada, June 4, 6 pm -8 pm Fish Lake Valley Community Center, Highway 264</p>
<p>Hawthorne, Nevada June 6, 2013, 6 pm-8 pm, Mineral County Library, First & "A" Street</p>		<p>Webinar June 5, 2013, 2 pm-4 pm, For those who cannot attend a meeting in person.</p>

Please contact Susan Joyce, Forest Planner, at (760) 873-2516 or sejoyce@fs.fed.us for more information about the topic papers, meetings, or to register for the webinar.

The Forest’s Land and Resource Management Plan was completed in 1988. While parts of the plan remain relevant, some elements need to be updated to meet changing demands and to incorporate new information.

These meetings will build on conversations from earlier meetings and allow participants to discuss Forest Assessment topics in greater detail with Inyo National Forest employees. During this Assessment Phase of the Forest Plan Revision process, the public can share key information they have about the forest and raise specific interests and concerns.

More information about the meetings and Forest Plan Revision is available at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/inyo/landmanagement/planning>

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AGENDA ITEM NO.: 10
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING DATE: March 27, 2013
SUBJECT: Forest Plan Revision

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Inyo National Forest is working on updating the Inyo National Forest Plan. County Staff is working with Forest Service in developing the Plan, and will report on recent activities.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Supervisory District: County-wide
Recommended Action: No Action Necessary – Informational Only
Project Planner: Nolan Bobroff, Planning Coordinator

BACKGROUND

The Inyo National Forest (INF) is working on updating the Inyo National Forest Plan. In 2012, the US Forest Service (USFS) released a new planning rule and the INF was one of eight forests selected as an “early adopter” of the rule and is one of the first forests to revise their plan under the new rule. Inyo County participated extensively in development of this rule and the new rule requires that the USFS coordinate with local governments in developing the plan. The Forest Service has created a website with relevant Plan Revision information at www.fs.usda.gov/main/inyo/landmanagement/planning. The planning website, www.inyoplanning.org also has a wealth of information related to plan revision on the “Current Projects” page.

Forest Plans act as the General Plan for the forest and provide guidance for management of the National Forest. They typically have a 10-15 year life span, although the previous plan was approved in 1988.

Plan Revision is broken down into 3 phases including: (1) Assessment; (2) Plan Revision; and (3) Monitoring. Currently, the process is in the assessment phase. The Final Assessment Report is expected to be released in December, 2013 and Plan Revision is expected to be completed in 2016. The local Forest Service office has assembled a team of experts to revise the plan and a core team in the regional office has been assembled, comprised of an economist, ecologist, social scientist, and a technical editor. They have also teamed up with the Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP) to assist in public outreach. Through the CCP, the Forest Service has held numerous meetings with the public and other agencies to gather information and direction for what should be included in the plan revision.

Collaboration and Communication Plan (C&C Plan)

In early 2013, the final C&C Plan was released. This plan outlines how the INF will work with its partners, stakeholders, interested public members, and Tribes during the Plan Revision process. It is intended to define the public outreach, involvement and collaborative processes that will be used to develop a Forest Plan and identify activities and communications tools to provide information and solicit input on forest planning from the above named groups. Public Outreach has been divided into two tiers. The first tier focuses on public outreach during all phases of the effort, and includes maintaining a website; email announcements; media relations; outreach materials; tribal, federal, state, county, and municipal government notifications/briefings; and permittee notification. The second tier is for more focused outreach activities, such as brochures, social media, regional status updates, and video briefings; forums with scientists, agency partners, local government, and tribes; youth summits; Hispanic community workshops; open houses; visitor comment forms; collaborative issue forums; town halls; and volunteers. Staff believes this plan is adequate, but fails to include specific references to coordination.

Sierra Cascades Dialog

The Forest Service has conducted a series of Dialogs with the assistance of the CCP over the last several years to discuss a range of issues affecting national forests in the Sierra Nevada and the Cascades and people who live, work, and recreate there. The Dialogs have focused on the future of the national forests, providing opportunities for learning, shared meaning, aligned actions, and understanding different perspectives.

Science Synthesis

The 2012 Planning Rule requires the forests to consider the best available science and encourages a more active role for research in plan development. To accomplish this, the Pacific Southwest Research Station (PSW) worked on a Science Synthesis to provide background data regarding Sierra-wide issues. This report mainly focused on the western side of the Sierra's and largely ignored the eastern side. This report was released in January, 2013 and discussed at the January Sierra Cascades Dialog. There has been discussion amongst local Forest Staff to hold a Science Symposium which focuses solely on the eastern sierras.

Bioregional Assessment

Forest Staff has begun working on the Bioregional Assessment, a report synthesizing existing information related to social, economic, and ecological conditions and trends related to all ten of the National Forests in the Sierra Nevada mountain range. It is intended to be conducted rapidly, using readily available information and existing data, identify knowledge or information gaps, and provide a source of information and context for plan revision. It is comprised of the 15 assessment topics identified in the 2012 Planning Rule. Each topic is broken down into processes and methods, current conditions, trends, and various other categories relevant to each topic. The report is a “living assessment” and is available on a Wiki-Style website that allows the public to provide input on the various topics. Forest Staff is continually updating the Assessment with information provided on the wiki site and intend to release the draft Assessment Report in the winter of 2013. The “living assessment” can be found at www.livingassessment.wikispaces.com.

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the INF and Inyo County

Staff has been working with Forest Staff to develop an MOA outlining coordination direction and efforts between the two groups. The agreement designates the County as a Cooperating Agency with special expertise in certain areas relevant to the County and allows the County to provide recommendations regarding the scope, scale, timing, methods, and forums for public involvement. It encompasses the concepts of a Regional MOA between the BLM, USFS, California State Association of Counties, and Regional Council of Rural Counties and expands on certain areas that are more relevant and important to Inyo County. The MOA maintains the County’s rights to participate in plan development outside of the MOA, including the right to object to the Plan Decision.

Assessment Phase Kick-Off Meeting

The Forest Service recently held Kick-Off meetings for the Assessment Phase of Plan. Meetings were held in Bishop and Mammoth Lakes. The Bishop meeting had approximately 35 people in attendance representing a wide range of agencies, groups and the public. Forest Staff gave a brief presentation on Plan Revision and organized discussion groups based on the assessment topics. Information gleaned from this meeting will help the Forest Staff refine the assessment topic papers.



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF INYO

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June 19, 2012

Mr. Ed Armenta, Supervisor
Inyo National Forest
351 Pacu Lane, Suite 200
Bishop, CA 93514

Re: Inyo National Forest Plan Update/Revision

Dear Supervisor Armenta:

On behalf of the Inyo County Board of Supervisors, thank you for attending our workshop on April 17 to discuss the impending Inyo National Forest Plan Update/Revision. As you know, we are more than just a stakeholder in the planning process; we represent the people of Inyo County through a democratic process, and we attempt to balance the viewpoints of all of our constituents and sift through the vast amount of materials necessary to participate in planning for the Inyo National Forest. Below, based on our discussion and with the input of our Natural Resource Advisory Committee, are our priorities for the Update/Revision.

- Access – enhanced to accommodate vehicular use, packing, hunting, hiking, and other recreational opportunities, as well as mining and other uses of the Forest. Mitigation opportunities for potential environmental impacts resulting from increased access should be identified and implemented.
 - Roads and trails should be protected and expanded to provide access for recreation and exploration for natural resources and other uses of the Forest, including grazing, mining, and the activities of native peoples (such as gathering).
 - Roadless Areas should be identified for removal as they are no longer relevant or roadless.
 - Conflicts between biological resources and human access should be identified and planned for.
- Vibrant Economy – the Plan should contribute substantially to the local economy due to the impact of the Forest on the County's culture and fiscal health, and should not result in significant socioeconomic impacts.
 - Grazing, Mining, Renewable Energy Production, and other Uses – the Plan should support and encourage consumptive and sustainable uses of the Forest to contribute to the County's economy and culture.
 - Roads and trails should be protected and expanded to provide access for recreation and exploration for natural resources. This type of recreation is an important economic driver for the County.
 - Mitigation Bank – opportunities to shift land acquisition for mitigation of environmental impacts to restoration of degraded wilderness areas should be incorporated into the Plan to accommodate mitigation of human development elsewhere in the County.
- Local Culture – the Plan should support and enhance the culture of local communities to the extent social and cultural issues revolve around the forest.

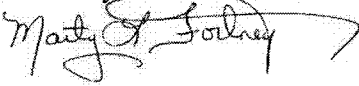
Mr. Ed Armenta, Supervisor
Inyo National Forest
June 19, 2012
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- Public Safety – access and accommodation for public safety purposes should be of paramount concern in the Plan, including for law enforcement (such as eradicating illegal drug production), fire management and suppression, and search and rescue.
- Provide access to the Forest for gathering activities, prospecting, sightseeing, exploration, and camping.
- Provide a continuing voice to the people living around the forest through their local government representatives.

The Inyo National Forest is of vital importance to Inyo County, and we look forward to working with you and your team over the coming years to craft a locally sustainable Plan that contributes positively to our society and culture. Our General Plan Government Element provides more detailed guidance regarding the County's priorities, and we encourage you to refer to it and on the County's website at http://inyoplanning.org/general_plan/goals.htm.

If you have any questions, please contact the County's Administrative Officer, Kevin Carunchio, at (760) 878-0292 or kcarunchio@inyocounty.us. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Supervisor Marty Fortney, Chairperson
Inyo County Board of Supervisors

cc: Board of Supervisors
Kevin Carunchio, CAO
Randy Keller, County Counsel
Joshua Hart, Planning Director
Doug Wilson, Willdan
Inyo County Natural Resource Advisory Committee
Regional Council of Rural Counties
California State Association of Counties
National Association of Counties
Secretary Vilsak, USDA
Randy Moore, Pacific Southwest Regional Forester, USFS
Chief Tidwell, USFS
Susan Joyce, USFS
Sustainable Forest Action Coalition