



**AGENDA REQUEST FORM**  
 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
 COUNTY OF INYO

For Clerk's Use Only: <b>AGENDA NUMBER</b>

- Consent    
  Departmental    
  Correspondence Action    
  Public Hearing  
 Scheduled Time for    
  Closed Session    
  Informational

**FROM:** Inyo County Planning Department

**FOR THE BOARD MEETING OF:** February 25, 2014

**SUBJECT:** Inyo National Forest Plan Update/Revision

**RECOMMENDATION:** (1) Receive a presentation from staff about coordination with Forest Service staff regarding the Inyo National Forest Plan Update/Revision and provide input and (2) review and authorize the Chair to sign correspondence regarding Roles and Contributions, Desired Conditions, Purpose and Need, and Objectives for Inyo National Forest Plan Update/Revision.

**SUMMARY DISCUSSION:** The Inyo National Forest is working on updating the Inyo National Forest Plan.<sup>1</sup> Staff is working with Forest Service staff in developing the Plan, and is reporting on recent activities periodically.

Staff provided an update to the Board on February 11, 2014, at which time the Board directed staff to prepare correspondence regarding the Roles and Contributions, Desired Conditions, Purpose and Need, and Objectives for Inyo National Forest Plan Update/Revision for its consideration. Forest Service staff report that together with the Need for Change, these work products will be the basis of the Notice of Intent, which is anticipated to be released in mid-April.

Staff has prepared the attached draft correspondence for the Board's consideration. Attachment 2 is the draft Roles and Contributions document prepared by the Forest Service.

**OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:** Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service; Mono, Fresno, Madera, and Tuolumne counties; other interested persons and organizations.

**FINANCING:** General fund resources are utilized to monitor planning work in the Forest. Resources for Willdan's assistance with the effort are funded by operating transfer from the Geothermal Royalties fund.

<b><u>APPROVALS</u></b>	
COUNTY COUNSEL:	AGREEMENTS, CONTRACTS AND ORDINANCES AND CLOSED SESSION AND RELATED ITEMS <i>(Must be reviewed and approved by county counsel prior to submission to the board clerk.)</i>
AUDITOR/CONTROLLER:	ACCOUNTING/FINANCE AND RELATED ITEMS <i>(Must be reviewed and approved by the auditor-controller prior to submission to the board clerk.)</i>

<sup>1</sup> Refer to <http://inyoplanning.org/InyoNationalForest.htm> for more information about the County's participation in the Plan Update/Revision.

PERSONNEL DIRECTOR:	PERSONNEL AND RELATED ITEMS (Must be reviewed and approved by the director of personnel services prior to submission to the board clerk.)
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**DEPARTMENT HEAD SIGNATURE:**  
(Not to be signed until all approvals are received)



Date: 2-17-14

**Attachments:**

1. Draft Correspondence
2. Draft Roles and Contributions

February 25, 2014

U.S. Forest Service  
Attn.: Randy Moore  
1323 Club Drive  
Vallejo, CA 94592

**Re: Inyo National Forest Plan Update/Revision  
Roles and Contributions, Desired Conditions, Purpose and Need, and Objectives**

Mr. Moore:

On behalf of the Inyo County Board of Supervisors, attached is input regarding the Roles and Contributions, Desired Conditions, Purpose and Need, and Objectives for the Inyo National Forest Plan Update/Revision. We had been working closely with the local planning team for the Forest Plan Update, but we understand that many of the decisions are being made at the regional level. We recognize that the Forest Service has not requested this input from us, despite the fact that our draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) calls for it, but we are providing it because we feel that this is one of the most important stages of the Plan Update process. We are saddened that the schedule is driving this process at this very important phase of Plan Revision, contrary to letter and spirit the 2012 Planning Rule. However, we hope that your staff will consider this input in development of these components of the Notice of Intent (NOI). We also hope that you will work with us to execute the MOU as soon as possible.

As we have conveyed to Forest Service staff in the past, we are dismayed that one Environmental Impact Statement is being prepared for the three early adopter Forests in the Region. We believe that it is unwise to develop these documents that are so integral to the Plan update in the context of one NOI for three planning processes. Furthermore, we implore you to take some time to work with us and other members of the public in developing these integral documents prior to the NOI.

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

Sincerely,

Rick Pucci, Chair  
Inyo County Board of Supervisors

cc: Board of Supervisors  
County Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Planning Department  
Doug Wilson, Willdan  
Ed Armenta  
Regional Council of Rural Counties  
California State Association of Counties  
National Association of Counties  
Ed Armenta, Inyo National Forest  
Randy Moore, Region 5 Forester

## **Attachment**

### **Roles and Contributions**

The Roles and Contributions should be enhanced to accentuate socioeconomics, access, downwind smoke impacts, and public services/infrastructure.

### **Desired Conditions**

The Board identified the following in its June 19, 2012 correspondence regarding the County's priorities for the Update/Revision, which should guide the Desired Conditions.

1. 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.
  - a. 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).
  - b. Roadless Areas should be identified for removal as they are no longer relevant or roadless.
  - c. Conflicts between biological resources and human access should be identified and planned for.
2. 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.
  - a. 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.
  - b. 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.
  - c. 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.
3. Local Culture – the Plan should support and enhance the culture of local communities to the extent social and cultural issues revolve around the forest.
  - a. 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.
  - b. Provide access to the Forest for gathering activities, prospecting, sightseeing, exploration, and camping.
  - c. Provide a continuing voice to the people living around the forest through their local government representatives.

### **Purpose and Need**

We offer the following guiding principles for the Purpose and Need from the County's perspective, based on previous input into the Plan Update.

1. There is a need to expand multiple uses per the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act. Multiple uses have been diminished in the Forest, and there is a need to refocus the Forest's planning priorities to expand and enhance multiple uses.

2. There is a need to protect communities, watersheds, and certain other at-risk lands from catastrophic wildfire and for measures to enhance efforts to protect watersheds and address threats to forest and rangeland health, including catastrophic wildfire, across the landscape, and further other provisions of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act.
3. There is a need to encourage recreation by streamlining the permitting process. Permittees and the Forest outlay significant resources for minor permits, and streamlining the process can enhance the local economy.
4. There is a need to accentuate the private sector's role in the vibrancy of our Forests. Forest Service resources are inadequate to provide for all of the Forest's needs, and with continuing diminished budgets, this situation is expected to worsen. By partnering with local businesses and communities, land management and economic development can be enhanced.
5. There is a need to address the fragility of small rural economies such as ours, which is dependent on the National Forest. The socio-cultural links between the Forest and our communities make this dependency all the more sensitive to change.
6. There is a need to provide for fire management and limit smoke impacts downwind. Severe wildfires can devastate the Forest and impact our communities, and there is a need for fuels management; however, care should be taken to minimize smoke impacts to our communities from these activities.
7. There is a need to better plan for public services and infrastructure. These assets are in many cases tied to the Forest, and can be enhanced through resource-sharing.

## **Objectives**

We believe that the following Objectives exemplify the type of outcomes that would be most productive for the Forest Plan Update:

1. Work to enhance populations of the Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged Frog, the Northern Distinct Population Segment of the Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog, and the Yosemite Toad while preserving fishing opportunities.
2. Provide for enhanced access to existing trailheads, including expanded camping and parking opportunities.
3. Enter into agreements with private sector and non-profit entities to expand existing campgrounds and develop new campgrounds.
4. Reduce permit processing times by 25 percent within five years.
5. Reinstigate grazing in Big Whitney Meadow.

## The Roles and Contributions of the Inyo National Forest - DRAFT

The Inyo NF, located on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada is known for its spectacular mountain scenery and world-class recreational opportunities. The forest encompasses approximately 2 million acres that are between 3,800 and 14,495 feet in elevation. The eastern Sierra Nevada is known for its large expanses of undeveloped land. The forest includes the Mono Lake Designated National Scenic Area and almost 1 million acres of designated wilderness. The forest shares boundaries with Sequoia-Kings Canyon, Yosemite, and Death Valley National Parks, the Devils Postpile National Monument, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), private entities, and the Sequoia, Sierra, and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests. The communities within and adjacent to the forest are relatively small and discrete. Limited sprawl exists, so connectivity between the forest and similar ecosystems on adjacent lands is relatively intact with regard to development.

The eastern Sierra Nevada offers many benefits both socially and economically thus establishing a deep-rooted connection between this land and the people of the area. Indigenous human populations are known to have been in the Sierra Nevada for at least 10,000 years. Archaeological evidence shows that these populations practiced land management, including agriculture and burning, for 3,000 years or more. By the mid-1800s, Euro-Americans had settled in the Owens Valley. Native occupancy and practices continued, although on a much smaller scale and in limited areas. Mining practices in the surrounding mountains influenced the culture and changed the landscape. Though placer mining was limited on the east side of the Sierra Nevada, a large number of smaller mines resulted in the development of a transportation network that brought humans into areas not previously well traveled. Logging of pinyon pine and Jeffery pine was intensive in some areas as a fuel source for mining operations and growing urban centers. The forest's contribution to this history is important in defining the social and economic structure of the landscape.

The east half of the Inyo NF includes the Glass and White-Inyo Mountain Ranges, and falls within the Great Basin and Intermountain Desert bio-regions. These areas have a rich ecological and cultural history which differs from that of the Sierra Nevada. In particular, historic Euro-American use was more focused on livestock grazing and mineral prospecting than on timber. In the past, the presence of different fauna, including desert bighorn and pronghorn antelope, shaped the human use of this land.

Recreational uses on the Inyo NF are extremely important, both socially and economically. Over 2 million users visit the Inyo NF yearly; with the majority of visitors coming from Southern California. The forest also receives high visitor use from citizens from other countries. This is due to the opportunities the eastern Sierra Nevada provides with Death Valley National Park, Mt. Whitney, and Yosemite National Park all within a day's drive of each other. Recreation uses of the forest have changed over the past couple decades. Historic recreation uses such as pack stock use, fishing and hunting, backpacking, and mountaineering continue today. Commercial pack stock use allows for access into Wilderness areas and the backcountry of both Sequoia and Kings Canyon and Yosemite National Parks. Recreation use on the forest has expanded and includes activities such as: hiking, rock climbing and bouldering, off-highway vehicle use, day-use areas, and winter activities including alpine, cross-country, and backcountry skiing.

The breath-taking landscapes also provide opportunities for photography and filming. All these activities provide for vital economic benefits, and provides sustainability, to local communities. This contribution occurs through visitor spending that supports jobs in local businesses and also contributes to county sales tax revenues that local governments use to provide important public services in these communities.

Although recreation may be what draws the majority of visitors and economic benefits to this area, other uses of the forest, such as livestock grazing, mining, and renewable energy, also maintain the historic uses of this area while also providing economic benefits to the local economy.

The changing elevation across the forest, combined with the variability in aspect and slope, the variety of geology and soils, and the amount and timing of precipitation creates an extremely high diversity of ecosystems inhabited by at least 1,300 plant species, and approximately 300 terrestrial wildlife species. The forest's terrestrial and aquatic plant and animal species, and the resulting biodiversity contributes to resilient and healthy forest ecosystems upon which all social and economic contributions depend. The Inyo NF is also part of a large block of contiguous wilderness habitat connecting the eastern and western portions of the Sierra Nevada. The forest's terrestrial and aquatic plant and animal species and the resulting biodiversity are critical for a resilient and healthy forest ecosystem on which, all social and economic contributions are dependent.

Maintaining wildland urban interface areas in a condition that prevents the spread of fire into adjacent lands and communities is a key contribution of the plan to local communities. Fire along with mechanical treatments will be used as a tool within the national forest to reduce hazardous fuels and achieve other desired conditions. However, fire will also be suppressed actively to protect key resources within the national forest and to prevent intrusion of dangerous fires into the wildland urban interface.

At a regional level, runoff from the forest flows into Mono Basin in the north, the Upper San Joaquin River to the west, Owens River in the east, and the Upper Kern River to the south. About 93 percent of the perennial streams on the forest are free flowing and stream flows are functioning within their range of natural variability. An average of 34 percent of the runoff produced into the Owens Lake and Mono Lake watersheds are exported to the City of Los Angeles a critical component in supporting social and economic sustainability in that area. Water on the forest also is used for development of hydroelectricity that powers homes and businesses in the region.

Some of these benefits of the forest are more easily appreciated than are others. For example, forest recreational and cultural opportunities as well as a clean water supply are enjoyed directly by people and communities as a whole and as a result, their contributions to our well-being are more clearly understood. Other vital forest ecosystem services provide benefits that are less apparent in our daily lives but are important because they support and regulate the ecosystems and social environments in which we live (e.g. biodiversity). The benefits from all forest contributions provide tremendous ecological, social and economic value to us all. The term "value" is used here to represent something more inclusive than a monetary or dollar value and capture the idea that all contributions of the Inyo NF, even when they are not directly relatable to dollars that are spent or received, still contribute to improving the quality of our lives.