

DRAFT

Assessment of the Need for Change

Monongahela National Forest

Land and Resource Management Plan

April 2004

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Monongahela National Forest (Forest) Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) was approved in 1986. Implementation of the Forest Plan over the last 16 years has resulted in the planning and accomplishment of thousands of management activities. As a result of implementing these activities, forest managers have learned about changes in the condition of the natural resources on the Forest. During Forest Plan implementation, new information on ecosystem management, social change, and analytical techniques have become available. In consideration of this new information, managers of the Monongahela National Forest have evaluated how the existing Forest Plan should be revised. Identification of specific changes will be needed to accomplish our goals and objectives. This document describes a process forest managers used to identify such changes.

The Monongahela Forest Plan will be revised under the 1982 version of the 36 CFR 219 regulations. Any references to these regulations are assumed to be referring to the 1982 version.

2.0. BACKGROUND

The Monongahela National Forest began evaluating the need for changing the Forest Plan in 2001, anticipating that the Forest Plan would be revised beginning in 2002. A preliminary evaluation began with the assessment of new information and changed conditions that occurred during implementation of the current Forest Plan. Sources of information for this effort include:

- Meetings with Forest Service employees on each ranger district;
- Discussions with non-governmental partners and interest groups, such as environmental advocacy groups, universities, county government officials, special use advocacy groups, and other state and federal agencies;
- Review of major decisions made in the current Forest Plan;
- Review of issues raised in appeals and litigation;
- Results of monitoring and evaluation;
- Changes in law and policy that are relevant to planning and management; and
- Relevant new scientific information.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE NEED FOR CHANGE (NFC) TOPIC DEVELOPMENT

The Forest has adopted a five-step process to identify revision topics. This process includes:

1. identifying preliminary topics through internal discussion,
2. gathering public input on the preliminary topics through a series of meetings and the NOI process,
3. considering public input,
4. refining draft revision issues (nfc topics) as a result of considering public input, and
5. reviewing the draft issues against the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) once completed.

3.1 Identifying Preliminary Topics through Internal Discussions

This step was a comprehensive effort to identify all potential revision topics from Forest employees. To do so required that interested parties (those responsible for implementing the Forest Plan, as well as those interested or affected by the Forest Plan implementation) were invited to provide input. The Forest initiated an internal solicitation of comments to identify a set of preliminary revision topics that were used to provide focus for public suggestions. These suggestions were grouped and sorted into topics and associated sub-topics. Following an evaluation by the Forest Leadership Team, topics were carried through for inclusion in the NOI. These topics and sub-topics were refined and/or supplemented via input from external interested parties (i.e., public, non-government organizations, universities, state and federal agencies) through the public involvement process.

This internal identification was used to develop a framework, which served as a basis and focus for public comment, discussion and evaluation of the current plan. Via initial scoping, several indicators suggested a need for revision of the 1986 Forest Plan. These indicators include:

- Land conditions and public demands have changed.

Increasing demand for forest commodities such as game wildlife and outdoor recreation opportunities suggest needed changes. Recognition of the importance of long-term ecosystem health has also increased. These factors suggest a need to revise the forest plan to recognize these changes in conditions and demands and evaluate their effects on ecological sustainability including social and economic aspects of a sustainable and healthy forest ecosystem.

- National guidance for strategic plans and programs has changed since 1986.

The Government Performance and Results Act Strategic Plan (1998), Forest Policy Statements on Ecosystem Management (1992), Forest Service's Natural Resource Agenda (1998), National direction to adopt Scenery Management System (1999), and development of the Strategic Fire Plan (2000) have shifted the course of agency goals and programs since 1986. This shift affects the Monongahela National Forest programs and should be addressed in a revision of the Forest Plan.

- Results of monitoring and evaluation suggest the need for revision.

Annual Forest Plan implementation, monitoring and evaluation results show that it is not always possible to implement plan direction and still achieve the plan's desired future conditions and projected outputs.

- New information is available.

New scientific information has been published since 1986, including the Southern Forest Resource Assessment and Region 9 Conservation Assessment Progress Matrix.

Through this initial process, five preliminary issues were identified and published in the NOI in May 2002. These preliminary issues are:

- Watershed Health
- Ecosystem Health
- Vegetation Management
- Visitor Opportunities and Access
- Land Allocations

3.2 Gather Public Input on Preliminary Topics

In May 2002, the Monongahela National Forest conducted public scoping on the Forest Plan Revision. A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS to revise the Forest Plan was published, which initiated a 90-day public scoping period. Six open houses were held across the Forest during this time. The purpose of the scoping period was to gather public input on the draft preliminary issues and identify additional need for change topics. A total of 705 responses were received, of which 412 were form letters.

3.3 Consideration of Public Input

A content analysis was completed in April 2003. The content analysis is intended to provide an unbiased and impartial summary of the comments received.

The Forest Plan Revision Core Team (Core Team) evaluated the responses to the scoping period in order to ensure public comments have been fully considered. This process allowed the Forest to refine the need for change represented in the preliminary issues identified in the NOI. During this exercise, all suggested need for change items identified in public comment were put through a filter to determine which need for change items will be further discussed and analyzed in the Forest Plan Revision.

Criteria were developed to give the determination process some boundaries and allow it to move forward in an unbiased and objective manner. The criteria identify key factors or conditions that must be met for the potential need for change topic to be carried forward and used to refine revision topics listed in the NOI.

The criteria are:

1. Is the suggested change relevant to one of the six decisions made in the Forest Plan?

- Forest-wide multiple-use goals and objectives
- Forest-wide management requirements (standards and guidelines)
- Management prescriptions
- Lands suited and not suited for timber production and sets an ASQ
- Monitoring and evaluation plan
- Evaluation of roadless areas in order to make wilderness recommendations

2. Is the suggested need for change consistent with national law and policy?
3. Is the suggested need for change within the Forest Service's decision-making authority?
4. Is the suggested need for change a Forest Plan implementation issue or site-specific analysis?
5. Is the suggested need for change already adequately addressed in the current Forest Plan?
6. Can the suggested need for change be adequately addressed through the Forest Plan or is it outside the scope of Forest Planning?
7. Need for change item. This category would be included as a major need for change topic in the FP revision.
8. Is the suggested need for change of narrow scale and scope, without public concern, widely supported and considered an improvement or clarification?

The Core Team evaluated the content analysis results using the criteria as a filter. The results have been documented in an "issue matrix", found in Appendix A.

Several of the above-mentioned criteria are subjective. The Forest Leadership Team has decided that the Forest Plan Revision will only address high priority needs. The forest will limit revision to those issues that are most critical. Other issues will be addressed through ongoing plan maintenance and amendments.

Therefore, some of the suggestions made concerning need for change in the forest plan will not be addressed during Forest Plan revision. In nearly all cases, the reasons those suggestions are not being addressed is due to the application of the evaluation criteria discussed above. Some of the more common reasons include:

- The suggestion is already addressed in the Forest Plan or recent decision;
- Sufficient information or rationale is not provided and does not exist to support a change in the forest plan;
- The suggestion is outside the mission or authority of the Forest Service;
- Additional research or data is needed to evaluate if a change is needed; and
- The suggestion is an implementation item that may be addressed at the project level.

3.4 Refine Draft Major Revision (NFC) Topics Based on Public Input

The Core Team reviewed and refined the preliminary NFC topics as a result of the evaluation process used with the content analysis. The NFC topics are:

- Remote Backcountry
- Vegetation Management
- Timber Supply
- Soils and Water

3.5 Ensure Topics are Supported by the Results of the Analysis of the Management Situation and Resource Assessments

The Forest is currently working to complete the Analysis of the Management (AMS) situation. The AMS is a “determination of the ability of the planning area covered by the forest plan to supply goods and services in response to society’s demands. The primary purpose...is to provide a basis for formulating a broad range of reasonable alternatives” (36 CRF 219.12).

In addition, several resource assessments will be completed in conjunction with the AMS and include such things as a timber suitability assessment, a roadless/wilderness assessment, a wild and scenic river evaluation, and a social assessment.

Once the AMS and the resource assessments are completed, the results will be compared to the draft NFC topics. The NFC topics will then be altered, if needed, to reflect NFC items identified in the AMS and resource assessments.

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE MAJOR REVISION (NFC) TOPICS

These topics relate directly to one of the six decisions in forest planning and are interrelated, meaning that changes in one topic would have impacts on other topic areas. Changes in Forest Plan direction in these topics could also cause significant changes in the goods and services provided by the Forest.

Each of the NFC topics includes a brief description of the factors leading to a need for change in the Forest Plan. In some cases, a specific change for the Forest Plan is identified. In other cases, further discussion and analysis will be needed to determine what specific action best resolves or narrows the issue.

4.1 Adjust Amount and Distribution of Remote Backcountry

The existing Monongahela National Forest Plan identified management direction through the use of management prescriptions that provide a mix of resource management emphasis. The Forest Plan currently emphasizes backcountry recreation on approximately 127,000 acres of primarily un-roaded landscapes, as described under Management Prescription (MP) 6.2. An additional 79,000 acres, roughly, of congressionally designated Wilderness (MP 5.0) also supports this type of management emphasis.

The recent Forest Plan amendment for Threatened and Endangered Species Management allocates an estimated 110,000 acres of habitat for West Virginia northern flying squirrel habitat, referred to as OA 832. Many of these areas support opportunities for a remote backcountry experience.

The combined MP 6.2, 5.0, and 832 areas that may be considered remote backcountry make up an estimated 35% of the Monongahela National Forest.

This issue explores the question of whether the current mix of management emphasis associated with the remote backcountry experience is appropriately distributed across the landscape.

Proposed Direction

- Update direction as needed and consider adjusting allocations of MP 6.2 based on roadless/wilderness evaluation and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Map.

4.2 Adjust Direction and Allocations Related to Vegetation Management within the Suitable Timber Base

The Forest Service is responsible for providing a diversity of plant and animal communities and tree species, and the agency must provide for the overall multiple-use objectives of national forests (36 CFR 219.26). The Forest Service is also responsible for ensuring a sustainable flow of forest products (Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act).

In the current Forest Plan, rotation ages and size class objectives are identified for some management prescriptions that allow timber harvesting. These management prescriptions emphasize long-term needs for commercial timber products, and the protection and improvement of habitat conditions for game and non-game wildlife species. The expectations used in developing the current forest plan for age class and size class goals were not achieved during the last planning cycle.

In addition, the Forest Plan emphasizes the use of clearcutting as the primary method for regeneration. Implementation monitoring indicates that clearcutting has not been the primary even-aged silvicultural method prescribed.

The Forest Plan needs to be updated to ensure forest vegetation can be sustained into the future, including a discussion on the role of insect and disease, and large-scale disturbances on the landscape.

Additionally, new science is available indicating that patch size, location on the landscape, and percentage of old growth protected under the current Forest Plan may not be adequate.

There are differing opinions about what mix of forest ages and forest tree species will provide adequate forest structure in order to provide for forest health and long-term sustainability, while providing for the social and economic needs of people over the long term. Through Forest Plan revision, the Forest will explore long term goals for young, mature, old, and old growth forests. The revised Forest Plan will identify the desired species composition of forest communities, types of forest vegetation communities, and distribution of communities across the landscape.

Proposed Direction:

- Provide direction for desired species composition of forest communities, types of forest communities, and distribution across the landscape. This includes consideration for old growth and the needed wildlife habitats that forest communities provide.

- Provide direction that will allow for long term forest community sustainability, including discussions on the role of insect and disease, and large-scale disturbances.
- Update standards and guidelines to accommodate appropriate silvicultural methodologies.
- Identify the long term goals for old growth management, including size, amount and distribution.

4.3 Adjust Timber Supply Estimates and Direction Related to Commercial Timber Harvest

In 1897, the Organic Act established the national forests to, among other things, furnish a continuous supply of timber. This direction remains today. The regulations for implementing the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) require the Regional Forester to estimate the amount of timber that can be sold annually on a sustained-yield basis. The NFMA also requires that forest planning identify lands that are not suited for timber production.

The current Forest Plan identifies 46% of the Monongahela National Forest lands as suitable for timber production. Among these acres are some that are actually unsuitable for timber production because of constraints such as extremely steep slopes or limited access. Changes in national policy such as the Roadless Area Conservation Rule have identified additional acres that may be inappropriate for intensive timber production.

Through implementation of the Forest Plan, it has become apparent that areas available for timber harvest and commercial treatment are less than originally estimated. This has resulted from the combined effects of mitigation factors such as riparian protection buffers, a limitation on fine sediment loading in spawning gravels, and limitations relating to visual quality objectives.

In addition, assumptions were made about the market for timber sales to be logged using cable logging systems on steeper areas of the Forest. Timber operations with cable logging systems have not developed as predicted. Helicopter logging has increased as a form of mitigation where timber harvest is desired in areas with soil and water concerns.

The over estimation of suitable lands along with the differences in assumptions made relating to wood products led to an inflated ASQ that has never been met by the Forest, and is no longer considered feasible.

This issue explores how much timber the Forest can supply without adversely affecting ecosystem integrity and the social and economic needs of people in the long term.

Proposed Direction:

- Revisit suitable lands determination, revise demand estimations, and rebuild ASQ determination based on those changes.

4.4 Adjust Direction and Allocations to Address Riparian Areas, Acid Deposition, and Sedimentation in Order to Protect the Soil and Water Resources

New information relating to needs for streamside protection zones, the effects of acid deposition, and sedimentation has been documented since the Forest Plan was written. This issue explores the question of whether or not the 1986 Forest Plan adequately protects soil and water resources. It also looks at the location of the assigned management prescriptions across the landscape when considering the erosive nature and acid buffering abilities of certain soils.

Streamside management zones allow protection of streams by providing such things as large woody debris, stream channel stability, and temperature regulation. Current information suggests that the existing stream protection provided for in the 1986 Forest Plan may not be adequate.

The soils on the Monongahela National Forest have a moderate to high potential for erosion. Natural occurrences such as slumps and slides, and activities which cause disturbances, such as timber harvesting, minerals activities, and road construction, on these erosive soils can cause sedimentation in streams. Erosion decreases soil quality and acts to produce sedimentation, which decreases water quality, and impacts fish habitat.

The Monongahela National Forest receives some of the highest acid deposition rates in the nation. This is primarily a result of the Forest being located downwind of large coal-fired power plants in the Ohio River Valley. These pollutant sources emit large amounts of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides that produce acidic precipitation. Some soil types on the Forest have high buffering capacity, neutralizing the acid deposition and protecting the existing pH of the streams. Other soil types on the Forest have low buffering capacity, which has caused acidification in some streams, with other streams trending towards acidification. Streams with low pH affect water quality and lose the ability to support aquatic life.

Proposed Direction:

- Review and update 1999 Interim Riparian Guidelines and incorporate into Forest Plan.
- Update standards and guidelines and management area direction to provide for adequate protection of water quality and fish habitat. In addition, risk for soil erosion and soil buffering capacity will be taken into account when assigning management area direction across the landscape.
- Review basal area removal limitations as mitigation for riparian area concerns and incorporate determination in the Forest Plan.

5.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE MINOR NFC TOPICS

In addition to the major revision topics listed above, other changes will be made that are important direction for the Forest but that tend to be narrow in scope. These changes and updates would be designated to make the plan more reflective of current national direction, and more responsive to changing Forest issues and concerns.

5.1 Non-Native Invasive Plant Species

Since the 1986 Forest Plan, the importance of managing and preventing the spread of non-native invasive plant species (NNIS) has become more apparent. Non-native invasive species can spread aggressively across the Forest and displace native species, decreasing species diversity. Direction for managing non-native invasive species will be incorporated in the revised Forest Plan.

5.2 Scenery Management System

The Scenery Management System (SMS) is the new nationally approved method for managing scenic values, replacing Visual Quality Objectives as a management tool. This new system will be incorporated into the revised Forest Plan.

5.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Through implementation of the monitoring and evaluation direction, the Forest has found that some of the Forest Plan requirements cannot be fully implemented, do not yield meaningful results, are not measurable or scientifically supported, or are not reasonably affordable. The monitoring and evaluation direction will be revised and improved to ensure that cost-effective, and meaningful monitoring can be accomplished.

5.4 Heritage Resources

A review of the current Forest Plan indicates that the direction provided in the Plan for cultural resources is inadequate. The revised Forest Plan will include direction to ensure compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and other more recent laws and policies, and to reflect the expanded role of the Heritage Program in interpretation and education.

5.5 Land Acquisition

Current land acquisition priorities do not necessarily reflect direction provided in the Forest Plan. This direction will be reviewed and updated. In addition, lands located outside of the proclamation boundary have been purchased. These lands will be assigned a management prescription.

5.6 Fire Management

The topic of fire management focuses on the concept of using fire as a management tool. This includes all activities required for protecting natural resources and property from fire, and the use of fire to meet resource and land management goals. The existing Forest Plan addresses both aspects of fire management. However, there is an opportunity to clarify direction and emphasize management across the Forest.

5.7 Management Indicator Species

Information gathered on the management indicator species (MIS) identified in the Forest Plan suggests that there may be other species that would better reflect a cause-effect relationship with management activities. The MIS species will be reviewed and revised as needed

5.8 Planning Areas

The current Forest Plan breaks the Forest into planning areas called Opportunity Areas. The Opportunity Area boundaries do not necessarily follow geographic boundaries. The revised Forest Plan will emphasize using watershed boundaries in watershed-level and site-specific project planning areas.

5.9 Minor Editorial Changes

Minor editorial changes will be made in the revision of the Forest Plan. These could include changes needed to explain or clarify direction in the existing plan, removing items that do not pertain to the six decision made in forest planning, or removing direction that can be found elsewhere, such as in Forest Service manual or handbook direction. These changes would not represent an overall change in the direction, goals, or objectives in the Forest Plan.

5.10 Species Viability Evaluation/Regional Forester's Sensitive Species List

As a part of the requirements in 36 CFR 219, the Forest must ensure that viable populations of species are provided for under the Forest's multiple use management. A species viability evaluation will be completed and recommendations for conservation measures will be developed and incorporated into the revised Forest Plan. In addition, language related to the Regional Forester's Sensitive Species List will be reviewed and updated.

5.11 Wild and Scenic Rivers

The classifications (wild, scenic, recreational) made relating to existing eligible wild and scenic rivers will be brought forward and incorporated into the revised Plan. A suitability study and recommendation for designation of wild and scenic rivers will not be done at this time.

5.12 The Spruce Knob – Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area

Forest Planning direction provides guidance to assign one management prescription to congressionally designated areas. The National Recreation Area (NRA) is currently assigned several management prescriptions. A management prescription will be developed and assigned to the NRA to meet national direction.

Appendix A

ISSUE MATRIX



**Monongahela National Forest
Forest Plan Revision**

ISSUE MATRIX

On June 25, 2003, the Monongahela National Forest Plan Revision Core Team (Core Team) completed an exercise to help further define the preliminary issues identified in the NOI. This process involved taking a hard look at each topic identified as a potential need for change (NFC) during the public scoping period and determining whether or not the topic would be brought forward as a major revision topic. The content analysis was used to identify the potential NFC topics. Internal comments were once again requested and also addressed.

Table 1 “Evaluation of Potential NFC Topics” documents the results of filtering the potential need for change topics through the evaluation criteria. The highlighted potential NFC topics refer to preliminary issues identified in the NOI. The evaluation criteria have been attached (Attachment 1).

Once the evaluation was completed, topics that were not dismissed during the evaluation process have been identified to be addressed in 4 issues, or major NFC topics. Table 2 “Issues to Address Potential NFC Topics” displays the results. It should be noted that just because the topic is listed under a specific issue, it won’t necessarily be the primary driver of the need for change for the issue. For example, fragmentation will be considered under the vegetation management issue, but it probably won’t drive alternatives. Instead, fragmentation will be considered in updating management prescriptions direction and/or forestwide standards and guidelines.

Table 1- Evaluation of Potential NFC Topics

Potential NFC Topics	Six Decisions in FP	National Law or Policy	Outside FS Decision Authority	Implementation or Site-Specific Analysis	Adequately Addressed in FP	Outside Scope	Need for Change	Minor Change
Watershed Health								
Riparian Area	X						X	
Erosion/Sediment Control	X						X	
Flooding Concerns	X						X	
Acid Deposition	X						X	
Limestone Fines*				X				
Ecosystem Health								
Native Species	X	X						X
Old Growth	X						X	
Forest Habitat Fragmentation*	X						X	
Prescribed Fire*	X				X			X
Wildlife*	X						X	
MIS*	X	X					X	
RF Sensitive Species		X						X
Hunting			X					

Potential NFC Topics	Six Decisions in FP	National Law or Policy	Outside FS Decision Authority	Implementation or Site-Specific Analysis	Adequately Addressed in FP	Outside Scope	Need for Change	Minor Change
Invasive Species								X
Pesticide/Herbicide Use*	X	X		X	X		X	
Vegetation Management								
Commercial Logging	X						X	
Silvicultural Methods	X	X					X	
Visitor Opportunities and Access								
ATV/OHV Use*					X			
Recreational Trails*					X			
Roads (Effects)					X			
Land Allocations								
Research Natural Areas	X	X						X
Wild and Scenic Rivers	X	X	X					X
Wilderness	X	X	X					
Roadless Areas*	X						X	
Potential Topics Not Covered in NOI Issues								
T&E Species					X			
Gas and Mineral Exploration					X			
Special Uses						X		
Law Enforcement						X		
Land Acquisition	X							X
Historic and Cultural Resources	X	X						X
Socio-Economic Concerns		X						
Air Quality (Rx fire)		X						
Biodiversity*	X						X	
Internal FS Suggestions								
MPs for Acquired Lands	X							X
Wording Change Related (lottery vs competitive bid)	X							X
Riparian S&Gs	X						X	
NNIS	X							X
Management Rx Emphasis*	X							X
Ecosystem Approach*	X							X

Potential NFC Topics	Six Decisions in FP	National Law or Policy	Outside FS Decision Authority	Implementation or Site-Specific Analysis	Adequately Addressed in FP	Outside Scope	Need for Change	Minor Change
Old Growth	X						X	
Revise WVNFS					X			
Revise Sensitive Species List		X						X
Consider Grazing Allotment in 5% Openings					X			
Revisit MIS	X	X						X
Incorporate All Amendments*					X			
Roadless vs Roadless Conservation Rule		X						
Herbicide Use Effects Update		X		X	X			
Age Class Distribution	X						X	
Emphasize NRA*								X
Special Uses- No Competition with Local Market		X	X					
Special Use Fees- Market Value		X	X					
Forest Health*	X						X	

* Further explanation below

LIMESTONE FINES: Adding limestone fines to acidic streams decreases the acidity of the stream, allowing aquatic resources to live in streams that would otherwise not support a wide variety of aquatic life. This practice is used by the DNR on streams located on the Forest. The Forest Plan does not specifically support or disallow adding limestone fines. This would be considered on a site-specific basis at the DNR’s request.

FOREST HABITAT FRAGMENTATION: Fragmentation may be caused from implementing forest management activities. Considering the Forest is in a predominantly closed-canopy condition, there is not much concern over fragmentation on a landscape level and potential fragmentation as a result of the revised Forest Plan will be addressed in the EIS. The Forest, however, will review the existing information in the plan and update language for fragmentation in terms of old growth or mature habitat protection.

PRESCRIBED FIRE: The Forest Plan allows for prescribed fire. The use of prescribed fire will be updated and highlighted as a tool for management.

WILDLIFE/MIS: Wildlife will be addressed primarily in terms if effects from vegetation management. The question of how/where to create wildlife habitat using vegetation management will be explored in the revision. T&E species will not specifically be addressed in detail as a major NFC topic because the Forest Plan amendment is current. MIS will be reviewed and updated.

PESTICIDE/HERBICIDE USE: The Forest Plan allows for pesticide and herbicide use. The effects analysis tiers off the R8 Vegetation Management EIS, which was recently updated. National and regional policy for use will be followed and then implemented on a site-specific basis. A review of the pesticide/herbicide direction is needed to determine if it is current.

ATV/OHV USE: The Forest Plan allows for special purpose trails. Where the trails are to be designated is an implementation/site-specific analysis issue.

RECREATIONAL TRAILS: Completion of a forest-wide trail use plan has been requested to resolve conflict between users such as horse traffic vs. foot traffic. The Forest plan allows for all users on most trails, unless posted otherwise. The Forest plans to approach a Forest Trails Plan as a mid-level analysis to be completed at some time in the future, outside the Forest Planning process.

ROADLESS AREAS: Roadless areas will be reviewed as a part of the roadless/wilderness assessment, which is one of the six decisions in Forest Planning. Most roadless areas are identified as having a semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunity, which is identified as a major NFC topic.

BIODIVERSITY: Biodiversity encompasses all life and its interconnections. Biodiversity will not be addressed as a need for change. Instead, elements of biodiversity will be addressed at many levels throughout the revision and include such topics as old growth, invasive species, water, soil, and fire regimes.

ECOSYSTEM APPROACH: The forest-wide goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, and management area direction will be updated to represent an ecological approach to management. The Forest is considering this an update, not a major NFC topic. Elements of ecosystem management will be touched on in the major NFC topics, such as old growth, species diversity, and watershed health.

INCORPORATE ALL AMENDMENTS: Once an amendment is signed, it is considered a part of the Forest Plan; therefore, all amendments are already incorporated as a part of the Forest Plan and will be carried forward into the revised Plan in a consistent manner.

EMPHASIZE NRA: National direction provides that all congressionally designated areas should be assigned their own management prescription. The revised Forest Plan would assign the NRA its own MP.

FOREST HEALTH: Defined broadly, forest health encompasses all aspects of forest conditions. Elements of forest health include vegetation age, composition, spatial arrangement, habitat provided, fire, insects, disease, non-native invasive species, forest growth, forest productivity and sustainability. These aspects of forest health will be addressed throughout the revision, many of them through the Vegetation Management major NFC topic.

Table 2- Issues to Address Potential NFC Topics

Potential NFC Topics	Timber Supply	Vegetation Management	Remote Backcountry	Soil and Water	Minor NFC Topic
Watershed Health					
Riparian Area				X	
Erosion/Sediment Control				X	
Flooding Concerns				X	
Acid Deposition				X	
Ecosystem Health					
Native Species					X
Old Growth		X			
Forest Habitat Fragmentation*		X			
Prescribed Fire*		X			
Wildlife*		X			
MIS*					X
RF Sensitive Species					X
Invasive Species					X
Pesticide/Herbicide Use*		X			
Vegetation Management					
Commercial Logging	X				
Silvicultural Methods		X			
Land Allocations					
Research Natural Areas		X			
Wild and Scenic Rivers					X
Roadless Areas*			X		
Potential Topics Not Covered in NOI Issues					
Land Acquisition					X
Historic and Cultural Resources					X
Biodiversity*		X			
Internal FS Suggestions					
MPs for Acquired Lands					X
Wording Change Related (lottery vs competitive bid)	X				
Riparian S&Gs				X	
NNIS					X
Prescribed Rx Emphasis*		X			
Ecosystem Approach*		X			
Old Growth		X			
Revise Sensitive Species List					X
Revisit MIS					X
Age Class Distribution		X			
Emphasize NRA*					X
Forest Health*		X			

ATTACHMENT 1

**NEED FOR CHANGE
EVALUATION CRITERIA**

INTRODUCTION: The Forest needs to evaluate the responses to the scoping period in order to ensure public comments have been fully considered. This process will allow the Forest to refine the need for change represented in the preliminary issues identified in the Notice of Intent.

During this exercise, all suggested need for change items identified in public comment will be put through a filter to determine which need for change items will be further discussed and analyzed in the Forest Plan Revision.

BACKGROUND: In May 2002, the Monongahela National Forest conducted scoping on the Forest Plan Revision. A Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS to revise the Forest Plan was published, which initiated a 90-day public scoping period. Six open houses were held across the Forest during this time. The intent of the scoping period was to identify what needs to be changed in the Forest Plan and why. A total of 705 responses were received, of which 412 were form letters. A content analysis process was completed on the responses and will be used as the basis for this evaluation.

EVALUATION CRITERIA- NEED FOR CHANGE:

1. Is the suggested change relevant to one of the six decisions made in the Forest Plan?

- Forestwide multiple-use goals and objectives
- Forestwide management requirements (standards and guidelines)
- Management area direction
- Lands suited and not suited for timber production and sets an ASQ
- Monitoring and evaluation requirements
- Evaluation of roadless areas in order to make wilderness recommendations

2. Is the suggested need for change consistent with national law and policy?

3. Is the suggested need for change within the Forest Service's decision-making authority?

4. Is the suggested need for change a Forest Plan implementation issue or site-specific analysis?

5. Is the suggested need for change already adequately addressed in the current Forest Plan?

6. Can the suggested need for change be adequately addressed through the Forest Plan or is it outside the scope of Forest Planning?

7. Need for change

8. Is the suggested need for change of narrow scale and scope, without public concern, widely supported and considered an improvement or clarification?