

COALITION FOR RECREATION IN THE NATIONAL FORESTS

- ▶ Americans enjoy 173 million recreation adventures in National Forests annually, and additional 300 million visits occur on scenic byways and other public roads through National Forests to view leaves, wildlife and landscapes. The adventures are remarkably diverse and are hugely important contributions to regional and national economies. Conservative estimates of recreation-related spending in National Forests exceed \$13 billion each year, sustaining more than 224,000 full and part time jobs.
- ▶ The future of recreation in the national forests depends upon provisions of forest plans – documents which guide management and investment decisions on some 190 million acres of public lands. The Forest Service is now developing a replacement **Planning Rule** to guide the development of forest plans and the agency's Notice of Intent regarding the rule gave almost no consideration to recreation.
- ▶ During the public comment period on the **Planning Rule**, enthusiasts and recreation organizations participated in National and Regional Roundtables and submitted comments highlighting concerns.
- ▶ Forest Service officials and its contractors have assured the recreation community that concerns were heard and that recreation would be made a priority. But widespread concern remains among recreation groups about the direction the Forest Service is taking with the **Planning Rule** and treatment of recreation, largely based upon the proposed parameters for the new rule shared by agency officials at the Fourth and final National Roundtable held in early August.
- ▶ The recreation community position is clear: recreation is a key Congressionally-mandated use of national forests under various laws, including MUSY, NFMA and NEPA and that recreation is a primary contributor to economic viability for communities throughout the nation. Recreation on national forests is also an important factor in overcoming lifestyle threats to our health – particularly those caused by lessened physical activity.
- ▶ The recreation community calls upon the Forest Service to use the **Planning Rule** to direct national forests to be more proactive in managing recreation, and in seeking out partners able to assist in managing and enhancing recreation , including state agencies, organized recreationists and businesses.
- ▶ Rather than wait for the Proposed **Planning Rule** to be published for comment and then face the potential of a major delay in the rule development if recreation does not receive deserved treatment, a big and diverse group of recreation organizations chose to write to, and meet with, the Chief of the Forest Service, and other key officials to express our collective concerns and to offer specific recommendations for rule revisions. The letter is at: www.funoutdoors.com/node/view/2591
- ▶ On November 18, 2010, 41 Members of Congress wrote Forest Chief Tidwell to reaffirm support for recreation and to express that the planning rule must not impose new burdensome regulations or create new obstacles that could ultimately reduce recreational opportunities on Forest lands. See www.funoutdoors.com/files/New%20FS%20letter%20b-w%20version.PDF.
- ▶ Publication of the draft Planning Rule, anticipated for December 2010, is now delayed until late January or February 2011. Once published, an additional comment period will occur.
- ▶ The FS projects a final rule by November 11, 2011. While we support expeditious action, schedule must not prevail over appropriate resolution of the many concerns raised by recreation leaders.
- ▶ This process must produce a workable rule. The rule currently in place has hampered Forest Service responsiveness to changes in public expectations, including changes in recreation preferences.

For additional information, contact the Coalition for Recreation in the National Forests at 202-682-9530.