



Sierra Forest Legacy

Protecting Sierra Nevada Forests and Communities



November 28, 2012

Nancy Upham, Public Affairs Officer
Inyo National Forest
351 Pacu Lane, Suite 200
Bishop, CA 93514

Re: Inyo National Forest: Collaboration in Forest Plan Revision Workshop, November 16, 2012.

Dear Nancy Upham,

Sierra Forest Legacy is submitting comments on the Collaboration and Communication Plan and on the questionnaire provided for the small break out sessions on November 16th.

We understand the Bioregional Assessment is currently underway. Based on the Planning Milestones and Appendix 1 (Collaboration and Communication Plan, p. 5, p. 25-26), it is not clear how the Inyo National Forest will incorporate the Bioregional Assessment in to the development of the Forest Assessment. As part of the Inyo National Forest Plan Revision process, the Bioregional Assessment and Science Synthesis are equally important to the development of a forest plan. We encourage the forest to include the Bioregional Assessment in the Planning Milestones.

Establishing the proper sideboards and guidance for the public when providing input in the revision process is a critical component for successful collaboration. This is briefly outlined in the Communication and Collaboration Plan in the General Principles Guiding Collaboration and Communication:

- *Maintain clarity, consistency, and transparency with regard to expectations, process, “sideboards” (e.g. law, regulation, and policy that restricts what is possible, and timeline.... (p.8)*

It is important that the agency explain the sideboards at the very beginning of the revision process, i.e., the laws, policies, and regulations the Forest Service operates under that constrain agency decision-making. This will help manage public expectations for what can and cannot be accomplished through forest planning. Furthermore, establishing these sideboards early in the process will ensure public input is appropriately focused and relevant for agency decision-making.

To help lay the groundwork for a successful plan revision, we strongly suggest that the agency hold educational workshops for stakeholders on NEPA, FACA and other basic guiding laws and policies. The Forest Service should engage the public in a review of other directives such as the roadless policy and regional directives specific to the Sierra Nevada and/or Inyo National Forest. We believe such instructional workshops and Tier 1 tools and activities (p. 11) fact sheets, outreach materials, and the design forum will greatly enhance the public's understanding of the process and foster the best collaborative thinking and dialogue.

The following are responses to the questionnaire provided for the break out discussions.

Question #1: What does success look like to you? Imagine that Forest Plan Revision is over and you are looking back. How will the Inyo National Forest staff and stakeholders know that communication and public involvement in Forest Plan Revision were successful? What would spell success to you?

Success is a balance between local stakeholder involvement and non-local stakeholders. National Forests are more than just for locals and equal engagement with others outside of the local influence would achieve a successful collaboration. It is also very important for the Inyo to communicate and collaborate with the adjoining National Forests to develop Forest Assessments and Monitoring plans that sync up on issues of connectivity both for wildlife and for restoring fire regimes.

Question #2: Tier 1 Activities. In the Draft Collaboration and Communication Plan, the Inyo has proposed "Tier 1" activities that they intend to do each time they present significant new information or draft documents for comment during the Assessment and Plan Revision Phases. Understanding that resources and time will be finite, are these the right activities that staff should do every time? Is there anything you would add, drop, or change?

Tier 1 is a requirement for the Forest Service and two areas of engagement that are a necessity to the entire forest plan revision process are Science and Interagency Collaboration (both currently in Tier 2). These should be required at all levels of the revision process outlined on page 5 of the collaboration plan.

Question #3: Prioritizing Tier 2 Activities. In the Draft Collaboration and Communication Plan, the Inyo has proposed "Tier 2" activities that they may pursue at various times in the process. Understanding that resources and time will be finite, please tell us which three of these activities you think would be the highest priority to use in Forest Plan Revision, and why. For each one, is there a critical time in the process (Assessment, Plan Revision, or Monitoring) when it would be most relevant?

During the Forest Assessment and Monitoring – the Science Forum, Agency Partner Forums are top priorities and should be required by the Forest Service as Tier 1 outreach activities. Tier two activities seem to be focused on local engagement at many different levels, but there is little to no involvement

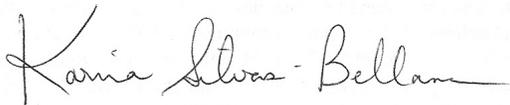
strategies for non-local stakeholders to engage with the forest during the Forest Assessment, NEPA, and the monitoring of the forest plans for the future. Non-local involvement should be a priority on all phases of the forest plan revision process.

Question #4: Community Support and Commitments. Many stakeholders have expressed an interest in partnering with the Inyo to assist with communications and public involvement. Might you (or your organization or your community) be interested in helping to support this planning process? What skills or connections can you bring to help the Forest Service network, reach out, and involve more of the people who care about the Inyo National Forest?

Sierra Forest Legacy is committed to forwarding information and notifying our coalition partners on updates and timelines for the forest plan revision process. We will also continue to organize with our partners on the commenting process as the Inyo National Forest solicits public comments on the Inyo Forest Assessment and development of the Environmental Impact Statement for the forest plan revision. Sierra Forest Legacy is also reaching an audience via social media outreach and we are committed to posting updates on the forest plan revision process and directing others to the Inyo National Forest's website for more public engagement.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Inyo National Forest Collaboration in Forest Plan Revision Workshop, and for setting up a remote access for the participants that were unable to make the workshop in person.

Sincerely,



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