



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Southwestern
Region



Guide to Comprehensive Evaluation for Revising Land and Resource Management Plans

Operational Draft: This document is prepared to provide guidance to forest plan revision teams. As this guidance is implemented, we expect to learn improved ways to do this work. As we learn, this document will be updated.

Contents

Part 1 – Flowchart	1
Part 2 – Process Outline	3
Introduction – Purpose of the Comprehensive Evaluation	3
Overview of the Comprehensive Evaluation Process	3
The Comprehensive Evaluation Process Steps	4
Phase II: Evaluating the Proposed Plan	8
Part 3 - Comprehensive Evaluation Report Outline	13
Phase I: Need-for-Change Evaluation.....	13
Phase II: Evaluating the Proposed Plan	14
Part 4 – Information Sources	17
Part 5 – Glossary	19
Part 6 – Consideration of Planning Issues	23

Part 1 – Flowchart

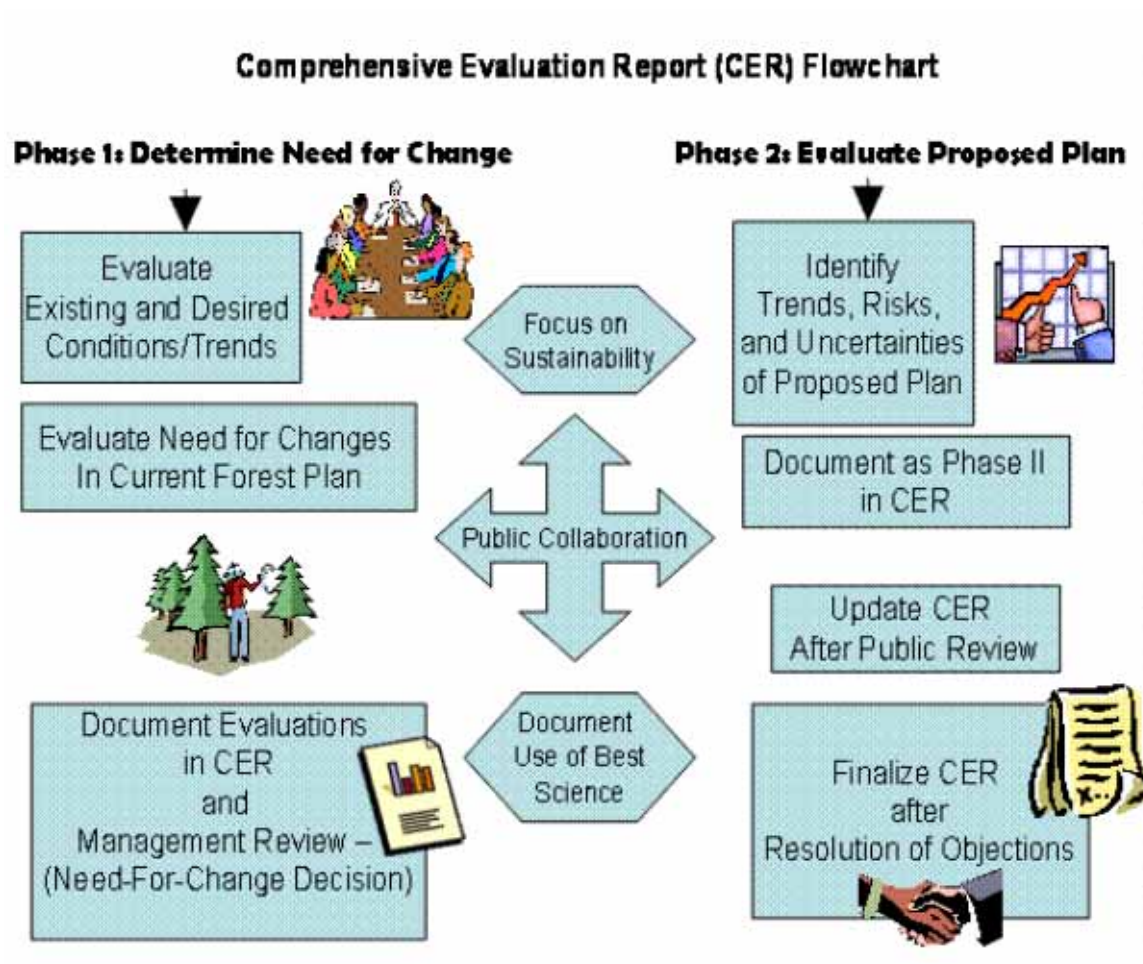


Figure 1. Flowchart

Part 2 – Process Outline

Introduction – Purpose of the Comprehensive Evaluation

The comprehensive evaluation is an important foundation for forest plan revision under the 2005 planning rule. Comprehensive evaluations are required for plan revision and plan development (36 CFR 219.6(a)). “The Responsible Official must review the results of the comprehensive evaluation to determine if there is a need for change one or more plan components” (Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12, chapter 20, section 24.24). The evaluation report is the principal document that supports the need to change a plan (36 CFR 219.6).

The comprehensive evaluation report (CER) replaces (but is slightly different from) the analysis of the management situation report that was completed prior to development of our current forest plans. The comprehensive evaluation is also different from a broad-scale assessment or compilation of resource conditions and trends. Rather, it uses assessments and other resource condition and trend information to evaluate how well current forest management strategies and management plan direction is working. The primary purpose of the comprehensive evaluation is to (1) evaluate contributions and risks to the current state of ecological, social, and economic sustainability; (2) evaluate existing conditions and trends; (3) evaluate current plan direction; and finally and most importantly to (4) evaluate the need to change current plan direction, in light on how management under the current plan is affecting the existing conditions and trends of sustainability.

A secondary purpose of the comprehensive evaluation is to determine the major trends and risks regarding sustainability associated with the proposed (revised) management plan. Thus, this second phase of the comprehensive evaluation process evaluates how forest management strategies and plan components (desired conditions, objectives, guidelines, suitability of areas, and special areas) may affect sustainability in the future. The directives indicate that this evaluation of the proposed plan is also documented in the CER.

Overview of the Comprehensive Evaluation Process

The comprehensive evaluation process is divided into two distinct phases:

Phase I is the pre-revision need-for-change evaluation. This is the evaluation used to define the scope of the plan revision by identifying the need for changing specific components of the management plan. Although it occurs prior to the Notice of Initiation (NOI), it must be developed collaboratively with the interested public (36 CFR 219.9 (a)). Once the need-for-change issues or elements have been identified in the CER, the forest supervisor conducts a management review of the CER to determine which need-for-change issues to carry forward into plan revision at this time. The management review document, signed by the responsible official, ultimately defines the scope of the plan revision (36 CFR 219.2 (d)(3)).

Phase II is the proposed plan evaluation. This is the evaluation of the forest’s proposed revised management plan, and occurs concurrently with the collaboratively developed proposed plan. This evaluation does not mimic the detailed environmental consequences section of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). It is a more concise and broad-based evaluation to identify the major trends and risks regarding sustainability that would be expected to occur under the proposed plan. The focus would be on the trends and conditions or risks expected to change based on the proposed changes to the plan, thereby avoiding repetition of phase I descriptions for

situations where the trends would remain relatively stable. This evaluation includes some specific evaluation requirements for timber from the National Forest Management Act (NFMA). “Evaluations should be commensurate to the level of risk or benefit associated with the nature and level of expected management activities in the plan area” (Forest Service Manual (FSM) 1921.2).

The two phases of the Comprehensive evaluation include a series of process steps and associated tasks to accomplish, beginning at the pre-revision/pre-Notice of Initiation stage and ending with issuance of the final revised plan. Although process steps are displayed in chronological order, certain steps may be repeated and documents edited in an iterative manner.

The tasks identified for each process step are those that must be accomplished to meet the minimum requirements contained in the planning rule and associated directives, with a few exceptions. The exceptions or discretionary tasks are noted through the use of “may” or “should”.

The Comprehensive Evaluation Process Steps

Phase I: Evaluating the Need for Change

Process Step	Main Task	Sub-Task
Sustainability Assessment / Need-For-Change Evaluation Process		
1	Identify area of analysis (36 CFR 219.6 (a)(1)(i)).	Briefly describe and/or map the administrative unit or units included in the evaluation process for plan revision
2	Evaluate existing conditions and trends with focus on risks to social, economic and ecological sustainability (FSM 1921.7 and FSH 1909.12, Chapter 20, Section 24.2).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Gather and organize available information for this task (see Part 4 - Information Sources). b. Use an interdisciplinary approach (FSH 1909.12 chapter 20, section 25.2). c. Use available information from a variety of sources to facilitate the evaluation of current social, economic, and ecological conditions and trends that contribute to sustainability (36 CFR 219.6 (a)((1)(ii)). d. Identify substantial changes from past conditions or trends (CFR 219.6 (a)(1)), impacts from management activities or suitable uses, and operational controls (i.e. mitigations) that influence those impacts. e. Incorporate social and economic sustainability information from the Southwestern Region’s Social and Economic Work Group direction, and from assessments of Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values (ABV) and Socio-Economic Sustainability. Follow direction in (FSM 1921.72b) and (FSH 1909.12, chapter 40, section 42.22) for evaluating social and

Process Step	Main Task	Sub-Task
		<p>economic sustainability.</p> <p>f. Incorporate ecosystem and species diversity information from Southwestern Region’s Ecological Sustainability Work Group direction and from assessments of mid-scale vegetation and historical range of variation reports/ecological diversity reports/ vegetation dynamics detection tool (VDDT) models from the the Nature Conservancy (TNC) Challenge Cost-Share products. Follow direction in (FSM 1921.73, 73a, and 73b) and (FSH 1909.12, chapter 40, section 42.11–43.14a and 43.21–43.24, 43.26) for evaluating ecological sustainability.</p>
3	Identify desired conditions for social, economic and ecological sustainability.	Identify desired conditions from the existing plan and plan final EIS. Determine where these desired conditions are currently not meeting management or public objectives. Further identify changes in science, law, or regulation that may affect the applicability of the existing plan desired conditions by reviewing the National Strategic Plan, environmental laws, regulations, directives, widely recognized scientific findings, or other sources of information (FSH 1909.12, chapter 20, section 24.21). Focus on sustainability to identify existing conditions and trends.
4	Compare existing conditions and trends to existing (plus known changed conditions) desired conditions.	Compare and document the significant gaps between existing conditions and trends to existing plan desired conditions, taking into account the changed conditions identified in the process step above (FSH 1909.12, chapter 20, section 24.21). This step focuses on evaluating the progress made toward desired conditions under the current forest plan. It should clearly indicate the need for change based on conditions and trends (FSH 1909.12, chapter 20, section 24–24.24).
5	Based on the assessment of sustainability (process steps 2-4 above) evaluate the need to change ¹ the current plan’s desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines.	<p>a. Remove current plan language already addressed by laws, regulations, and policy. Relevant laws, regulations, policies will be referenced in the design criteria section of new plan. Document (track) changes.</p> <p>b. Remove plan direction that is not strategic or is no longer required under the 2005 planning rule.</p>

¹ “Need to change” means the need to eliminate, modify or add-to current plan direction.

Process Step	Main Task	Sub-Task
		<p>Document (track) changes.</p> <p>c. Evaluate remaining direction relative to components in the plan model: vision, strategy and design criteria. To complete this step, reformat the current plan into the new plan model. Existing direction may be rephrased as needed to clarify or create a better fit with the new plan model. Document (track) changes.</p> <p>d. Evaluate the need to change the resulting modified plan. Document (track) changes.</p>
6	Evaluate need to change the current plan’s land use suitability and special area designations.	<p>a. Evaluate and document the need to change (add, modify or eliminate) existing plan suitability for timber production and timber harvest, pursuant to requirements in: NFMA, 36 CFR 219.12 (a), FSM 1921.12c, and FSH 1909.12, chapter 60, section 62.</p> <p>b. Evaluate and document the need to change (add, modify or eliminate) current plan suitability determinations, which may include: outdoor recreation, viewing scenery, livestock grazing, timber production, fisheries and wildlife, cultural and heritage resource interpretation, watershed, and other land uses (refer to 36 CFR 219.7 (a)(2)(iv), 36 CFR 219.12 (a)(1), and FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, section 11.14).</p> <p>c. Evaluate and document the need to change (add, modify or eliminate) Wilderness designations, pursuant to FSH 1909.12, chapter 70, and FSM 1923.</p> <p>d. Evaluate and document the need to change (add, modify or eliminate) current Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSRs) designations, pursuant to FSH 1909.12, chapter 80, and FSM 1924.</p> <p>e. Evaluate and document the need to change (add, modify or eliminate) other Special Area designations, pursuant to FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, section 11.15, and 36 CFR 219.7 (a)(1)(v).</p>
7	Evaluate need to change the current plan’s management areas and associated management area direction.	<p>a. Evaluate and document the need to change (add, modify or eliminate) management areas. This includes options to retain, modify or eliminate management areas, or use other categories to characterize or differentiate specific areas as needed.</p> <p>b. Evaluate and document the need to change (add, modify or eliminate) management area</p>

Process Step	Main Task	Sub-Task
		<p>emphases and descriptions, and any other management area direction not previously evaluated.</p> <p>c. Ensure development of Geographic Areas for consistency among Southwestern Region Forests.</p>
8	Evaluate need to change the current plan’s monitoring requirements.	Evaluate and document the need to change (add, modify or eliminate) monitoring requirements, pursuant to new monitoring program and evaluation requirements (FSM 1921.5 and FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, section 12)
Science Documentation		
9	Evaluate and document use of best available science.	<p>a. Document consideration of best available science (or science consistency) throughout each step in CER phase I. Document sources and assess the quality of information used for objectivity, utility, relevance, and integrity (FSM 1921.84).</p> <p>b. Follow additional process guidance from the Southwestern Region’s Science Consistency Work Group direction, your forest’s science consistency review plan, and 36 CFR 219.11, FSM 1921.8, and FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, section 12.</p>
Collaborative Process And Documentation		
10	Collaborate on preliminary evaluation results and refine evaluations (Iterative Process).	<p>a. Collaborate with interested parties (including tribes) on previous CER Phase I steps. (FSH 1909.12, chapter 30, section 31, and FSM 1921.6)</p> <p>b. Document the collaboration steps taken in developing the CER, in the documentation of public involvement within the plan set of documents (36 CFR 219.7(a)(1)).</p> <p>c. Follow additional guidance provided by the Southwestern Region’s Collaboration Work Group direction and your forest’s Public Involvement Plan.</p>
Comprehensive Evaluation Report (Cer) Documentation		
11	Complete CER Phase I for management review.	Complete documentation of CER as needed for the responsible official’s management review decision on the need for change.
Management Review Process And Documentation		
12	Management review—responsible official’s decision on scope of revision.	Conduct and document a management review of the CER, documenting the forest supervisor’s review and decision on which need-for-change

Process Step	Main Task	Sub-Task
		items or issues will be carried forward into plan revision at this time (FSH 1909.12, chapter 20, section 24.24, and FSM 1921.2). A listing of specific “issues” is not required ² . See Part 6 – Consideration of Issues.

Other plan revision steps that are in addition to the comprehensive evaluation process: **After completing the management review of the CER**, the NOI will be published, if a determination of Need to Change current plan direction is made.

After the NOI is published, Proposed Plan Option(s) will be developed.

Phase II: Evaluating the Proposed Plan

Evaluate the iteratively developed proposed plan option(s) concurrently during plan option(s) development. Iterative evaluations and refinements of the proposed plan option(s) should be documented within the plan set of documents.

Process Step	Main Task	Sub-Task
Evaluation Of The Proposed Plan		
13	Evaluate proposed plan option(s) for changes in trends (FSH1909.12, chapter 20, section 25.32b and 36 CFR 219.10a, 219.6a, 219.7 (a)(6)).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Project future trends (based on underlying conditions) for the proposed plan option(s). b. Include timber management projections per NFMA requirements by identifying where timber harvest could occur and establishing the long-term sustained yield capacity (LTSYC) for those lands (FSM 1921.12d and FSH 1909.12, chapter 60, Section 63.1). Timber management projections should include estimating the timber sale program quantity (TSPQ) per FSH 1909.12, chapter 60, section 63.4. The evaluation should disclose estimated departures from LTSYC or changes to maximum size limits on harvesting, including clearcutting. c. Identify categories of actions that are exceptions to culmination of mean annual increment (CMAI) requirements in order to meet non-timber resource objectives (FSM 1921.12f and FSH 1909.12, chapter 60, section 63.3). d. Evaluate the trend in need for suitability of areas determinations (FSH 1909.12, chapter

² “Issues” has a variety of definitions and interpretations, as shown in the Glossary and used in the planning directives. Issues for plan revision are not the same as issues used in CEQ regulations or NEPA documents.

Process Step	Main Task	Sub-Task
		<p>10, section 11.14) and special area determinations (FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, section 11.15), with particular attention paid to wilderness evaluations of capability, availability, and need (FSH 1909.12, chapter 70, sections 72.1–72.3 and FSM 1923), and to Wild and Scenic River evaluations of eligibility (FSH 1909.12, chapter 80, section 82 and FSM 1924).</p> <p>e. Compare trends projected for the proposed plan option(s) with trends identified during phase I (process steps 2 and 3 in this guide) for the current plan, pursuant to direction in FSH 1909.12, chapter 20, section 25.32b. Focus on ecological/economic/social sustainability.</p>
14	Evaluate proposed plan options for risks and uncertainties (36 CFR 219.11(a)(2) and (3); and FSM 1921.82 and 1921.83)	<p>a. For all plan options, make projections about substantial risks. Compare and document major differences in risks related to the sustainability provisions/components in each plan option.</p> <p>b. Risk evaluations must include conditions or situations that involve hazards to various resources or impairment of long term productivity, per NFMA requirements</p> <p>c. Assess contributions to sustainability, ensuring the rigor of analysis is commensurate with level of risk to ecosystems and species, to the degree that past, present and projected conditions and actions contribute to that risk ,and to the degree to which expected actions influence risk, ecosystem complexity, and uncertainty of outcomes (36 CFR 219.6(a); FSH 1909.12, chapter 40, sections 43.14 and 43.26).</p> <p>d. Identify, evaluate and document substantial uncertainties related to sustainability provisions and trend/risk projections.</p>

Process Step	Main Task	Sub-Task
Science Documentation		
15	Evaluate the use of best available science (or science consistency).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Evaluate and document consideration of best available science throughout each step of CER phase II. Document sources of information reviewed and assess quality of information used, for objectivity, utility, relevance, and integrity (36 CFR 219.11, FSM 1921.8 and FSH 1909.12, chapter 40, section 41). b. Follow any additional guidance from the Southwestern Region’s Science Consistency Work Group direction, your forest’s science consistency review plan.
Collaborative Process And Documentation		
16	Collaborate on previous phase ii steps, and refine evaluations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Collaborate on all previous steps in CER phase II and use results to refine preliminary evaluations iteratively with the public (including tribes). It may be helpful (not required) to do preliminary interdisciplinary team (IDT) evaluations prior to initiating formal public participation processes. b. Document collaboration process and responses to comments in the Documentation Of Public Involvement Within The Plan Set Of Documents. c. Follow any additional guidance from Southwestern Region’s Collaboration Work Group direction and your forest’s public involvement plan.

Other plan revision steps that are in addition to the comprehensive evaluation pProcess:
At the conclusion of the above steps, the proposed plan is ready, and the Notice of 90-day Comment Period is published. This begins public review of the proposed plan and plan set of documents, including the CER updated by the phase II information.

Process Step	Main Task	Sub-Task
Update CER Based On Comments Received		
17	Review public comments and evaluate/refine the CER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review and evaluate public comments specific to CER (FSH 1909.12, chapter 20, section 25.34). b. Update the CER based on the evaluation of public comments. c. Document how public comments were used

Process Step	Main Task	Sub-Task
		to update the CER. Document in the documentation of public involvement within the plan set of documents.

Other plan revision steps that are in addition to the comprehensive evaluation process:

At the conclusion of the public review, evaluation of public comments, and any changes to the proposed plan and plan set of documents, a Notice of Availability is issued and the revised plan and plan set of documents are made available for 30-day pre-decisional objection filing period (36 CFR 219.9 (b)(3)(iii) and FSH 1909.12, chapter 50, section 51.11).

After the objection filing period, the responsible official “promptly” resolves objections and documents those resolutions. There is no mandatory time limit on resolving objections.

Process Step	Main Task	Sub-Task
Update Cer Based On Resolution Of Objections		
18	Resolution of objections that apply to the CER	Update the CER as needed based on resolution of applicable objections.

Other plan revision steps that are in addition to the comprehensive evaluation process:

After the objections resolution process has concluded, a Notice of Final Plan Approval is issued. The notice will identify where the public can obtain the final plan and plan set of documents. The CER will be issued as part of the plan set of documents.

Future annual evaluation reports will be prepared. Annual evaluation reports do not need to be comprehensive and do not require public involvement.

Future comprehensive evaluations will be completed and documented at least every 5 years (36 CFR 219.6 (a)(1) and FSH 1909.12, chapter 20, section 24.2). Lands identified as not suitable for timber production shall be reviewed at least every 10 years, as needed, to respond to changed conditions in the plan area (FSM 1921.12c and FSH 1909.12, chapter 60, section 62.3)

Part 3 - Comprehensive Evaluation Report Outline

This comprehensive evaluation report (CER) outline is intended to be used as a tool to assist planning teams in Southwestern Region when they are developing their CER. It should be used together with the process outline. Like the process outline, this CER outline is divided into two key phases: Phase I–Need for Change Evaluation occurs prior to the management review and Notice of Initiation (of plan revision), and Phase II–Proposed Plan Evaluation occurs after developing the proposed plan.

The report headings are intended to reflect requirements in the planning rule and directives. Additional subheadings will be added based on the most important topics or issues, conditions or trends. This report outline could be substantially modified as long as the CER clearly documents the results of the required comprehensive evaluation process steps previously listed.

This outline is in a simple style (1,a,b,c, 2,a,b,c) but may be re-done in a Roman-numeral style (I, A,B,C, II, A,B,C) (see the Government Printing Office *Style Manual*, section 15.31).

The CER must have a cover sheet and table of contents

Phase I: Need-for-Change Evaluation

1. Introduction
 - a. Area of Analysis (required element; brief narrative and/or map)
 - b. CER Requirements (optional; references from planning rule and directives)
 - c. Summary of the Collaborative Evaluation Process (optional, and may also include a summary of assessments, inventories and other information sources used)
2. Social-Economic Conditions and Trends

For each human dimensions topic (recreation, scenery, heritage, lands, minerals, roads, facilities, special uses, etc, etc) describe:

 - a. Contributions to Sustainability³
 - b. Sustainability Risks - Departures from Desired Conditions and Trends⁴
3. Ecological Conditions and Trends

For each natural resources topic (vegetation, species, water, soil, geology, air, etc) describe:

 - a. Contributions to Sustainability
 - b. Sustainability Risks - Departures from Desired Conditions and Trends
4. Current Management Plan Direction – Need-for-Change Recommendations⁵
 - a. Desired Conditions – Need for Change and Rationale
 - b. Goals – Need for Change and Rationale

³ Include the causal factors and degree of influence from Forest Service management strategies or actions.

⁴ Identify the departures from desired conditions/trends (eg. resource requirements or standards) in terms of the risks to sustainability that are within our agency's authority and ability to affect. Risks involve hazards to resources or impairment of long-term productivity (NFMA). This provides the basis for evaluating the need to change the plan.

⁵ Evaluate how well plan direction contributes to sustainability and desired conditions and trends previously identified. This evaluation provides the rationale for what specific changes, if any, are recommended. Specific changes should be listed, which may include eliminating, modifying or adding-to current plan direction.

- c. Objectives – Need for Change and Rationale
 - d. Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines – Need for Change and Rationale
 - e. Suitability of Areas – Need for Change and Rationale
 - f. Management Areas and Special Areas– Need for Change and Rationale
 - g. Monitoring – Need for Change and Rationale
5. Other Recommended Changes to Meet the 2005 Planning Rule and Directives
[Include a table, summary or listing that tracks changes such as:]
- a. Elimination of unnecessary contents: legal requirement reiterations; background and issues from original plan development; site-specific/project-level direction; procedural (non-strategic) direction; administrative direction; outdated direction (science or assumptions no longer valid); direction outside the agency’s jurisdiction or ability to control.
 - b. Reorganization of plan contents.
 - c. Clarification/Rephrasing of plan contents.
6. Summary of Need for Change Recommendations **or** Management Review of the CER
An optional list, which may be prioritized, of the need-for-change items or issues previously described. Consider including rationale regarding how these issues: address critical resource needs, the strategic nature of plan, are feasible to address in a timely manner, are supported by available scientific information, and other factors. The management review will determine which need-for-change items will carry forward into revision. Management review will disclose the changes to be made in the plan that need no further consideration, such as those described in item 5 above (similar to FSH 1909.12, chapter 20, section 24.24, exhibit 01)

It is yet to be determined whether the management review is a separate document or part of the CER.

Phase II: Evaluating the Proposed Plan

1. Introduction – Development of the Proposed Plan
Optional summary of how the plan was revised, whether other plan options were developed..., with references to other documents
2. Projected Changes in Social and Economic Sustainability under the Proposed Plan
 - a. Changes in Timber Outputs–long term sustained yield capacity (LTSYC) and timber sale program quantity (TSPQ).
 - b. Other Changes in Social-Economic Trends (changes in uses/activities, values, products, services, opportunities and benefits; how the plan strategy helps move toward desired conditions).
 - c. Socio-Economic Risks and Uncertainties under the Proposed Plan (includes potential negative outcomes and how operations, budgets and other factors influence plan implementation).
 - d. Changes in suitability of Areas and Special Areas.
3. Projected Changes in Ecological Sustainability under the Proposed Plan

- a. Changes in Ecosystem Diversity (includes changes in veg. composition/structure/function, rare/unique habitats, invasive plants, landscape patches, disturbance regimes...; how the plan strategy helps move toward desired conditions).
 - b. Changes in Sustainability Factors for Federally-Listed Species, Species of Concern and Species of Interest (how plan addresses species conservation and moves toward desired conditions).
 - c. Changes in Sustainability of Water, Soil and Air Resources.
 - d. Ecological Risks and Uncertainties under the Proposed Plan.
4. List of Preparers
 5. Science Consistency Summary and Literature Cited

Part 4 – Information Sources

The primary sources of information for the CER include but are not limited to the following:

Monitoring and evaluation reports

Annual accomplishment reports

Landscape or watershed assessments

Resource condition surveys

Inventory and monitoring data from Forest Service corporate database systems

Social and economic assessments from the Region's 2005-2006 contracts

- Attitudes, Values and Beliefs report
- Social-Economic assessment

Ecosystem and species assessment reports from the Nature Conservancy (2005-2006)

- Literature review of scientific information developed since the last (1980s) plans
- Characterization of the range of variation for major vegetation types
- Characterization of biological diversity and disturbance regimes
- Models of vegetative change for major southwest vegetation types

Southwestern Region's mid-scale existing vegetation inventory

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents regarding eligibility, suitability or proposed designation of Research Natural Areas, Wild Horse and Burro Territories, Withdrawal Areas, Roadless Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, or other special area designations

Land use suitability analyses and maps from development of current plan

The NEPA documents contents including significant issues (ensure that issues selected are strategic issues and not project-level site-specific issues), mitigation measures or Monitoring Requirements, effects and cumulative effects, and selected management actions

Roads analysis process documents

Fire management plans

Final EIS and maps for the current plan

National Strategic Plan, National Fire Plan, and other Forest Service policy documents that describe key threats to ecological sustainability, desired conditions, and possible management strategies to emphasize

State Comprehensive Wildlife Plans (to be completed by October 1, 2005)

Land and resource management documents or plans developed by other Federal, state and local government agencies

Laws, Executive Orders, regulations, policies, FSH/FSM, species recovery plans, habitat or species conservation plans, and other agency direction that may be used to help define desired conditions and evaluate the need for change.

Part 5 – Glossary

This part contains selected definitions of terms from the planning directives (FSM 1905) that are relevant to the comprehensive evaluation process and report.

Area of Analysis. The geographic area within which ecosystems, their components, or their processes are evaluated during analysis and development of one or more plans, plan revisions, or plan amendments. For a plan, an area of analysis may be larger than a plan area. For development of a plan amendment, an area of analysis may be smaller than the plan area. An area of analysis may include multiple ownerships (36 CFR 219.16).

Assessment. An analysis and interpretation of the social, economic, or ecological characteristics of an area using scientific principles to describe existing conditions as they affect sustainability.

Characteristics of Ecosystem Diversity. Parameters that describe an ecosystem in terms of the composition (such as major vegetation types, rare communities, aquatic systems, and riparian systems); structure, including successional stages, water quality, wetlands, and floodplains; principal ecological processes, including stream flows and historic and current disturbance regimes; and soil, water, and air resources.

Collaboration. *(Not defined in Directives).* Synonymous with public participation.

Design Criteria. Part 3 of the plan model. The design criteria limit the strategy and subsequent projects designed to implement the strategy. The design criteria include guidelines, related monitoring measures, and a reference to other applicable guidance.

Desired Conditions. The social, economic, and ecological attributes toward which management of the land and resources of the plan area is to be directed. Desired conditions are aspirations and are not commitments or final decisions approving projects and activities, and may be achievable only over a long time period (36 CFR 219.7 (a)(2)(i)).

Ecological Conditions. Components of the biological and physical environment that can affect diversity of plant and animal communities and the productive capacity of ecological systems. These components could include the abundance and distribution of aquatic and terrestrial habitats, roads and other structural developments, human uses, and invasive, exotic species (36 CFR 219.16).

Evaluation. A comprehensive analysis of social, economic, and ecological conditions and trends relevant to a unit. The analysis of monitoring data that produces information needed to answer specific monitoring questions. Evaluation may include comparing monitoring results with a predetermined guideline or expected norm that may lead to recommendations for changes in management, a land management plan, or monitoring plan. Evaluations provide an updated compilation of information for use in environmental analysis of future project and activity decisions.

Guidelines. Information and guidance for project and activity decision making to help achieve desired conditions and objectives in the plan area (36 CFR 219.7 (a)(2)(iii)).

Issue. Issues may be considered as: (1) a potential factor for determining need for change for a plan; (2) specific resource concerns related to a proposed action under NEPA (FSM 1950); (3) points of contention or disagreement, or (4) a subject or question of widespread public interest relating to management of the National Forest System.

Long-term Sustained-Yield Timber Capacity. The highest uniform wood yield from lands being managed for timber production that may be sustained under specified management intensity consistent with multiple-use objectives.

Management Area. A specifically identified area within the plan area to which specific plan components (desired conditions, objectives, identification of suitable and unsuitable land uses, or special designations) are applied.

Mean Annual Increment and Culmination of Mean Annual Increment. Mean annual increment is the total increment of increase of volume of a stand (standing crop plus thinnings) up to a given age divided by that age. Culmination of mean annual increment is the age in the growth cycle of an even-aged stand at which the average annual rate of increase of volume is at a maximum. In land management plans, mean annual increment is expressed in cubic measure and is based on the expected growth of stands, according to intensities and utilization guidelines assumed in the plan or its supporting plan document or set of documents.

Monitoring. A systematic process of collecting information to evaluate changes in actions, conditions, and relationships over time and space or progress toward meeting desired conditions or plan objectives.

Need for Change. A finding by the responsible official that there is a need to modify plan components through a review of new issues and information, monitoring and evaluation results, and changes in law or regulation.

Niche. The forest's, grassland's, or prairie's role in contributing to social, economic, and ecological sustainability.

Objectives. Concise projections of measurable, time-specific intended outcomes. The objectives for a plan are the means of measuring progress toward achieving or maintaining desired conditions. Like desired conditions, objectives are aspirations and are not commitments or final decisions approving projects and activities (36 CFR 219.7 (a)(2)(ii)).

Plan. A document or set of documents that integrates and displays information relevant to management of a unit of the National Forest System (36 CFR 219.16). (*Not in Directives:* The term “plan” refers to a unit’s land and resource management plan, also known as a forest plan).

Plan Document. Information that documents the process of developing, amending, or revising a plan, including evaluation reports, documentation of the public involvement process, applicable approval documents, descriptions of the environmental management systems, and other information. This information also includes records that support analytical conclusions made, options considered by the interdisciplinary team throughout the planning process, and any new science or information added by the responsible official (see Set of Documents).

Planning Horizon. The overall time period considered in the planning process to evaluate conditions and trends in the social, economic, and ecological resources that contribute to sustainability in the plan area.

Plan Model. An ideal pattern that organizes the five plan components (see plan components) into three parts: the vision, strategy, and the design criteria. The vision includes roles, contributions, and desired conditions. The strategy includes objectives, identification of suitable and unsuitable

land uses, and special area designations. The design criteria include guidelines and other statutory requirements.

Plan Area. The National Forest System lands covered by a plan (36 CFR 219.16).

Plan Components. Broad guidance in a plan that identifies desired conditions, objectives, guidelines, suitability of areas, and special areas.

Plan Provisions. (*Not defined in directives*). Synonymous with what was formerly referred to as “management direction” in a plan, including desired conditions, objectives, suitable uses and special designations, guidelines and monitoring criteria

Potential Wilderness Area. An area including those previously identified in the *Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volume 2*, dated November 2000, in a unit plan, or in a land management plan, which remain essentially roadless and undeveloped, and which have not yet been designated as wilderness or for non-wilderness uses by law. **Wilderness** areas are designated by Congress as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System established in the Wilderness Act of 1964.

Public Participation. Activities that include a wide range of public involvement tools and processes, such as collaboration, public meetings, open houses, workshops, and comment periods (36 CFR 219.16).

Research Natural Area. A specially designated area in as near a natural condition as possible, which exemplifies typical or unique vegetation and associated biotic, soil, geologic, and aquatic resources. The area is established by the Forest Service to preserve a representative sample of an ecological community primarily for scientific and educational purposes.

Responsible Official. The official with the authority and responsibility to oversee the planning process and to approve plans, plan amendments, and plan revisions (36 CFR 219.16).

Risk. A combination of the likelihood that a negative outcome will occur and the severity of the subsequent negative consequences.

Science. For the purposes of this manual, “science” refers to the knowledge, information, concepts, and theories based on organized systems of facts that have been learned from study, observation, and experience.

Science Consistency Review. A process to determine whether scientific information of appropriate content, rigor, and applicability has been considered, evaluated, and synthesized in the documents that underlie the land management plan approval. The science consistency review does not advise the decision maker for or against a particular course of action.

Set of Documents. (See Plan Document)

Social and Economic Elements. The variety of tangible and intangible uses values, products, services, opportunities, and benefits provided by National Forest System lands.

Special areas. Areas within the National Forest System designated for their unique or special characteristics (36 CFR 219.7 (a)(2)(v)).

Strategy. Part 2 of the plan model. The strategy describes how the national forest, grassland, or prairie intends to move toward desired conditions. The strategy explains suitable uses and monitoring. It includes a prospectus of key objectives for anticipated levels of conditions, uses, and activities and related monitoring measures. Optionally, it can include recommendations for special area designations.

Suitability. The appropriateness of applying certain resource management practices to a particular area of land, as determined by an analysis of the social, economic, and environmental consequences and the alternative uses foregone. A unit of land may be suitable for a variety of individual or combined management practices.

Suitability of Areas. National Forest System lands are generally suitable for a variety of multiple uses, such as outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes. Areas within a National Forest System unit are generally suitable for uses that are compatible with desired conditions and objectives for that area. (36 CFR 219.7 (a)(2)(iv) and 219.12 (a)(1))

Sustainability. Meeting needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainability is composed of desirable ecological, economic, and social conditions or trends interacting at varying spatial and temporal scales. Embodies the principles of multiple-use and sustained-yield, appropriate to scale, without impairment to the productivity of the land.

Timber Harvest. The removal of trees for wood fiber utilization and other multiple use purposes.

Timber Production. The purposeful growing, tending, harvesting, and regeneration of regulated crops of trees to be cut into logs, bolts, or other round sections for industrial or consumer use (36 CFR 219.16).

Transportation and Utility Corridor. A parcel of land, without fixed limits or boundaries, which is being used as the location for one or more transportation or utility right-of-way.

Vision. Part 1 of the plan model. The vision provides direction for management and describes the roles and contributions (niche) of National Forest System lands. It describes the desired conditions of the landscape, the disturbance processes, and the benefits and experiences that these lands can supply. It contains monitoring measures to assess progress toward desired conditions.

Watershed Condition. The state of the watershed based on physical and biogeochemical characteristics and processes (such as, hydrologic, geomorphic, landscape, topographic, vegetative cover, and aquatic habitat), water flow characteristics and processes (such as volume and timing), and water quality characteristics and processes (such as chemical, physical, and biological) as they affect water quality and water resources (65 FR 62572, October 18, 2000).

Part 6 – Consideration of Planning Issues

In the fall of 2004, the Southwestern Region regional leadership team and Southwestern Region planners identified some preliminary issues or questions to be addressed during forest plan revision. The preliminary issues were grouped into two broad issues:

1. How will we manage to contribute to ecological sustainability?
2. How will we manage to contribute to social and economic sustainability?

Other preliminary issues became part of the set of questions connected to the two sustainability issues. The two issue statements on sustainability mirror the focus of the 2005 planning rule and directives. The set of connected questions compliments the other plan revision considerations emphasized in the directives.

The specific issues regarding ecological, social and economic sustainability to be addressed during plan revision will be defined during the comprehensive evaluation process- a required pre-revision step that identifies the need for change. The comprehensive evaluation report (CER) will describe and compare the existing and desired conditions and trends associated with ecological and social-economic sustainability. The gap between existing and desired conditions/trends in relation to current forest plan direction will help define the need for change in the forest plan or **issues to be addressed during plan revision.**

The forest supervisor will review the CER and determine which need-for-change topics or issues to address during plan revision, as well as which will be deferred to a later plan amendment or not addressed at all. The forest supervisor’s determination regarding the scope of plan revision is documented in a separate National Environmental Policy Act document.

The following table shows issue topic questions regarding sustainability that surfaced during the 2004 issue identification sessions. It also shows **when** to consider those questions during development of the CER and proposed (revised) plan. The table references specific steps in the *Southwestern Region’s Comprehensive Evaluation Guide (CE Guide) Process Outline.*

Questions or Issues To Consider in Developing the Comprehensive Evaluation and Proposed Plan	When to Consider These Questions or Issue Topics
How will we manage to contribute to ecological sustainability?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the reference, current and desired conditions of major vegetation types? ▪ What are the reference, current and desired conditions of riparian and aquatic systems? 	Evaluation of existing and desired conditions and trends related to ecological sustainability (comprehensive evaluation phase I; steps 2 and 3 of the CE Guide)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the appropriate methods/tools to create this landscape, e.g. wildland fire use, prescribed fire, mechanical treatments? 	Evaluation of Need for Changes in current plan direction (comprehensive evaluation phase I; steps 5 and 7 of the CE Guide). Also, during development of objectives in Strategy section of proposed plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Where is it appropriate to apply these methods? 	Evaluation of suitable land uses (comprehensive evaluation phase I; step 4 of the CE Guide). Also during development of general suitability for timber harvest,

	timber production and fire use, in Strategy section of proposed plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What will be the effects of this created landscape on other resource values, e.g. wildlife, fisheries, water, soil, air, visuals, cultural etc.? ▪ What will be the effects of prolonged drought? 	Evaluation of projected trends and risks to sustainability for each plan option (comprehensive evaluation phase II; steps 12-13 of the CE Guide).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do we manage for threatened and endangered species and species at risk? ▪ Do we have species of interest and species of concern that require specific management? ▪ How do we address invasive species? 	Evaluation of existing and desired conditions and trends related to ecological (ecosystem and species) sustainability (comprehensive evaluation phase I; steps 2 and 3 of the CE Guide). Also during development of objectives and other plan components in proposed plan.
How will we manage to contribute to social and economic sustainability?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How will increasing populations change the use of National Forest System lands? 	Evaluation of existing and desired conditions and trends related to social-economic sustainability (comprehensive evaluation phase I, steps 2 and 3 of the CE Guide).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How will we manage to protect communities and other wildland urban interface areas? 	Evaluation of need for change in current plan direction (comprehensive evaluation phase I; steps 5 and 7 of the CE Guide). Also, during development of objectives and other plan components in Strategy section of proposed plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Which lands are suitable for timber production? ▪ Which lands are suitable for livestock grazing? ▪ Which lands are suitable for minerals and energy production? ▪ Which lands are suitable for special uses, communications sites or other social infrastructure needs? ▪ Which lands are suitable for off-highway vehicles (OHV) and other backcountry recreation use? ▪ Which areas should be recommended for wilderness? ▪ Which streams are eligible and/or suitable for wild and scenic river designation? ▪ Which areas should be designated Research Natural Areas? 	Evaluation of need for change regarding suitable land uses and special area designations (comprehensive evaluation phase I; step 6 of the CE Guide). Also, during development of general suitability in Strategy section of proposed plan.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the appropriate roads and trail systems to meet access management needs? 	<p>Evaluation of need for change in current plan direction, and evaluation of existing and desired conditions and trends (comprehensive evaluation phase I; steps 2, 3, 5 and 7 of the CE Guide).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is our desired land ownership pattern? 	<p>Evaluation of need for change in current plan direction, and evaluation of existing and desired conditions and trends (comprehensive evaluation process phase I; steps 2, 3, 5 and 7 of the CE Guide).</p>