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field reviews of the design and selection of subsequent site-specific actions.

(c) *Monitoring.* (1) The responsible official must include scientists in the design and evaluation of monitoring strategies. Additionally, the responsible official must provide for an independent, scientific peer review of plan monitoring on at least a biennial basis to validate adherence to appropriate protocols and methods in collecting and processing of monitoring samples and to validate that data are summarized and interpreted properly.

(2) When appropriate and practicable, the responsible official should include scientists in the review of monitoring data and analytical results to determine trends relative to ecological, economic, or social sustainability.

§219.24 Science consistency evaluations.

(a) The responsible official must ensure that plan amendments and revisions are consistent with the best available science. The responsible official may use a science advisory board (§219.25) to assist in determining whether information gathered, evaluations conducted, or analyses and conclusions reached in the planning process are consistent with the best available science. If the responsible official decides to use a science advisory board, the board and the responsible official are to jointly establish criteria for the science advisory board and the responsible official to use in reviewing the consistency of proposed plan amendments and revisions with the best available science.

(b) The science advisory board is responsible for organizing and conducting a scientific consistency evaluation to determine the following:

(1) If relevant scientific (ecological, social, or economic) information has been considered by the responsible official in a manner consistent with current scientific understanding at the appropriate scales;

(2) If uncertainty of knowledge has been recognized, acknowledged, and adequately documented; and

(3) If the level of risk in achievement of sustainability is acknowledged and adequately documented by the responsible official.

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(c) If substantial disagreement among members of the science advisory board or between the science advisory board and the responsible official is identified during a science consistency evaluation, a summary of such disagreement should be noted in the appropriate environmental documentation within Forest Service NEPA procedures.

§219.25 Science advisory boards.

(a) *National science advisory board.* The Forest Service Deputy Chief for Research and Development must establish, convene, and chair a science advisory board to provide scientific advice on issues identified by the Chief of the Forest Service. Board membership must represent a broad range of scientific disciplines including, but not limited to, the physical, biological, economic, and social sciences.

(b) *Regional science advisory boards.* Based upon needs identified by Regional Forester(s) or Research Station Director(s), the Forest Service Research Station Director(s), should establish and convene science advisory boards consistent with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. app.) to provide advice to one or more Regional Foresters regarding the application of science in planning and decision-making for National Forest System lands. At least one regional science advisory board must be available for each national forest and grassland. The Station Director(s) must chair the board or appoint a chair of such boards. The geographical boundaries of the boards need not align with National Forest System Regional boundaries. Board membership must represent a broad range of science disciplines including, but not limited to, the physical, biological, economic, and social sciences. Regional science advisory board tasks may include, but are not limited, to:

(1) Evaluating significance and relevance of new information related to current plan decisions, including the results of monitoring and evaluation; and

(2) Evaluating science consistency as described in §219.24.

(c) *Work groups.* With the concurrence of the appropriate chair and subject to available funding, the national

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or regional science advisory boards may convene work groups to study issues and provide recommendations.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

§ 219.26 Identifying and designating suitable uses.

National forests and grasslands are suitable for a wide variety of public uses, such as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, timber harvest, off-road vehicle travel, or other uses except where lands are determined to be unsuited for a particular use. Lands are not suited for a particular use if that use: is prohibited by law, regulation, or Executive Order; is incompatible with the mission or policies of the National Forest System; or would result in substantial and permanent impairment of the productivity of the land. Through a plan amendment or revision, the responsible official may determine whether specific uses may begin, continue, or terminate within the plan area. Planning documents should describe or display lands suitable for various uses in areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions.

§ 219.27 Special designations.

The Forest Service may recommend special designations to higher authorities or, to the extent permitted by law, adopt special designations through plan amendment or revision. Special designations are areas within the National Forest System that are identified for their unique or special characteristics and include the following:

(a) *Congressionally designated areas.* Congressionally designated areas may include, but are not limited to, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, national trails, scenic areas, recreation areas, and monuments. These nationally significant areas must be managed as required by Congress and may have specific requirements for their management.

(b) *Wilderness area reviews.* Unless federal statute directs otherwise, all undeveloped areas that are of sufficient size as to make practicable their preservation and use in an unimpaired condition must be evaluated for rec-

ommended wilderness designation during the plan revision process. These areas may be evaluated at other times as determined by the responsible official.

(c) *Administratively designated areas.* Administratively designated areas may include, but are not limited to, critical watersheds, research natural areas, national monuments, geological areas, inventoried roadless areas, unroaded areas, motorized and non-motorized recreation areas, botanical areas, and scenic byways.

§ 219.28 Determination of land suitable for timber harvest.

(a) *Lands where timber may not be harvested.* The plan must identify lands within the plan area where timber may not be harvested. These lands include:

(1) Lands where timber harvest would violate statute, Executive Order, or regulation and those lands that have been withdrawn from timber harvest by the Secretary of Agriculture or the Chief of the Forest Service;

(2) Lands where technology is not available for conducting timber harvesting without causing irreversible damage to soil, slope, or other watershed conditions or produce substantial and permanent impairment of the productivity of the land; and

(3) Lands where there are no assurances that such lands can be adequately restocked within 5 years after harvest;

(b) *Lands where timber may be harvested for timber production.* The responsible official may establish timber production as a multiple-use plan objective for lands not identified in paragraph (a) of this section if the costs of timber production are justified by the ecological, social, or economic benefits considering physical, economic, and other pertinent factors to the extent feasible. Lands where timber production is not established as a plan objective are deemed not suited for timber production. These lands must be reviewed by the responsible official at least once every 10 years, or as prescribed by law, to determine their suitability for timber production considering physical, economic, and other pertinent factors to the extent feasible.