

Forest Plan Component Descriptions

Desired Conditions (required)

Desired conditions describe the vision of what the plan area should look like.

A desired condition (DC) is a description of specific social, economic, and/or ecological characteristics of the plan area, or a portion of the plan area, toward which management of the land and resources should be directed. DCs set forth the desired landscape of the future. Desired conditions are described in terms that are specific enough to allow progress toward their achievement.

Desired conditions:

- Must be internally consistent so they are feasible and attainable.
- Must reflect the capability of the plan area and the fiscal capability of the Agency.
- Are fundamental to determining monitoring strategies and requirements.
- Are *not* commitments or final decisions approving projects and activities. The desired condition for some resources may currently exist, or for other resources may only be achievable over a long time period.
- Should be developed within the context of the plan area's distinctive roles and contributions.

Objectives (required)

Objectives are concise, measureable, and time specific statements of a desired rate of progress toward a desired condition or conditions. Objectives should be based on reasonably foreseeable budgets. They:

- Must be outcomes.
- Help set the basis for priority areas or activities, with a timing expectation that near-term objectives would be completed first (depending on funding).
- Are clearly stated in measurable terms with specific and reasonable timeframes {an end date (by 2016) or by a period of time from an identified starting point (within 5 years of plan approval)}.
- Are written in terms of outcomes, not actions, and
- Are fiscally attainable (3 to 5 yrs.)

Examples:

- Enhance or restore 30 – 100 miles of fisheries and other aquatic habitat to maintain or restore structure, composition, and function by 2025.
- Rehabilitate 5 – 10 dispersed recreation sites that have erosion or sanitation issues within 10 years of plan approval.

Standards (required)

Standards are mandatory constraints on project and activity decision-making, established to help achieve or maintain the desired conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements. A standard is a restrict constraint, allowing no variation. Standards can be used to limit disturbances from projects. Standards can also be used to protect resources by restricting authorization of specific uses in appropriate circumstances.

Standards:

- Place design or operation constraints on projects.
- Are stated in a precise manner, using mandatory wording such as: must, shall, must not, may not, etc...
- Are clear and unambiguous
- Should not direct or compel processes (analysis, assmnt., consultation, planning, inventory)

- Do not restate other components.
- May be used to provide limitations or direction on whether or how a specific toll is appropriate.
- Do not mandate conditions beyond those affected by a project (that would be an OBJ or DC)
- May impose alternative constraints – which may be useful when conditions do not currently exist in some project areas.

Examples:

- New motorized routes or areas shall not be designated in primitive or semi-primitive nonmotorized desired ROS settings.
- No surface occupancy for oil and gas leasing occurs and no common variety mineral extraction occurs within the national trail corridor.
- Vegetation management activities must retain an average of four snags per acre on forested acres of the project area unless this average does not exist. In such case, make up the difference from the largest live trees in the project area.

Guidelines (required)

Guidelines are constraints on project and activity decision-making that allows for the departure from its terms, so long as the purpose of the guideline is met. Guidelines are established to help achieve or maintain a desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements. Guidelines serve the same purpose as standards, but they differ in that they provide flexibility in defining compliance, while standards are absolute constraints.

Guidelines:

- Place constraints on projects to help achieve DCs, avoid undesirable effects, or meet applicable legal requirements.
- Are not absolute – allow for departure as long as underlying purposes are met (using the words “should” and “should not”).
- Describe circumstances and manner in which the guidelines apply so that other options may be carried out if they meet the purposes of the guidelines.
- Should not direct or compel processes (analysis, assessment, consultation, inventory, planning, monitoring).
- Do not restate other plan components.
- May be used to provide limitations or direction on whether or how a specific tool is appropriate.
- May not impose conditions beyond those affected by a project.
- May impose alternative guidance when appropriate – which may be useful where conditions do not currently exist in some project areas.

Examples:

- To maintain and protect the scenic qualities of the CDNST, management activities should be consistent with the scenic integrity objective of high to very high.
- Encourage the use of nondestructive berry harvesting methods to protect red-berry plants.

- **Suitability (required)**

- Specific lands within a plan area will be identified as suitable for various multiple uses or activities based on the desired conditions applicable to those lands. The plan will also identify land within the Forest as not suitable for uses that are not compatible with desired conditions for those lands. The suitability of lands need not be identified for every use or activity. Suitability identifications may be made after consideration of historic uses and of issues that have arisen in the planning process. Every plan must identify those lands that are not suitable for timber production.
- Identifying suitability of lands for a use in the forest plan indicates that the use may be appropriate, but does not make a specific commitment to authorize that use. Final suitability determination for specific authorizations occur at the project or activity level decision making process. Generally, the lands on the Forest are suitable for all uses and management activities appropriate for national forests, such as outdoor recreation, range, or timber, unless identified as not suitable.
- The identification of suitability of lands is not required for every resource or activity.
- Identifying lands as suitable (or not) for a particular use may arise from issues raised during public participation, existing uses, monitoring, and/or resource plans (fire mgt., travel mgt., watershed, and others).
- Identified suitable lands will include rationale and sources of information (tools, standards, technical guidance documents, databases).

Goals (optional)

A plan may include goals as plan components. Goals are broad statements of intent, other than desired conditions, usually related to process or interaction with the public. Goals are expressed in broad, general terms, but do not include completion dates.

Goals may be appropriate:

- To describe a state between current conditions and desired conditions but w/o specific amounts of indicators (acres, %, etc)
- To describe overall desired conditions of plan area that are also dependent on conditions beyond the plan area or FS authority (for example, the outcome is the result of a partnership between the FS and other land owners)
- If scientific info is not adequate to provide sufficient specificity to establish a desired condition.
- If the Responsible Official is not sure a concise, measurable, and time-specific statement of a desired rate of progress is within the control of the unit.