

Proposed Forest Plan Direction

The Forest Service is proposing to add the following text to the *Forestwide Goals and Objectives* section of Chapter 1:

Goals

1. Provide for recreational sport shooting opportunities across the planning area in a manner that protects public health and safety.
2. Cooperate with counties and Colorado Parks and Wildlife to identify designated shooting areas for each county within or adjacent to the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests.

Objectives

1. Consider the following in determining the suitability of an area for dispersed RSS:
 - a. Public health and safety
 - b. Proximity to residential development or high recreation use areas
 - c. Topography, terrain, and presence of safe and environmentally sensitive backstops
2. Consider the following in determining the suitability of lands as designated shooting areas:
 - a. Public health and safety
 - b. Proximity to residential development
 - c. Accessibility to the public
 - d. Topography
 - e. Environmental and social impacts
3. Develop enforceable closure orders in areas that are not suitable for RSS.
4. Identify at least one designated shooting area within each county inside or adjacent to the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests.

Introduction

The Forest Service is proposing Forest Plan direction for managing recreational sport shooting (RSS) on the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and is requesting your comments.

Attached for your review and comment is the proposed direction. This direction includes:

- (1) Forest Plan goals and objectives for recreational sport shooting;
- (2) Lands proposed as suitable for dispersed RSS;
- (3) Lands proposed as not suitable for dispersed RSS for safety reasons; and
- (4) Sites proposed as designated shooting areas.

Proposed Forest Plan direction does not include any change in management for lawful hunting activities.

Need for Management Direction

There are two primary reasons for proposing this direction. First, the Forest Service has a responsibility to protect public health and safety. As population along the Front Range has increased, so have the number of people who live near and use the National Forest. In urban interface areas, housing development within ¼ mile of National Forest System lands has increased by as much as 29% since 1989. In addition, the participation rate in RSS and other recreation activities have also increased. The mixing of RSS activities on National Forest lands in close proximity to residences and other high use public areas is causing safety concerns.

Second, RSS is an important and growing use of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests. However, there is currently no specific Forest Plan direction that recognizes RSS or provides guidance on how it should be managed. Developing Forest Plan direction specifically for RSS will explicitly address this use and provide a framework for management.

This framework will help guide management of RSS by identifying considerations that will be used for determining what areas are suitable for dispersed RSS, not suitable for dispersed RSS for safety reasons, and suitable as designated shooting areas. This framework will also direct the Forest to coordinate and cooperate with the counties and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to identify designated shooting areas. These areas may occur on National Forest System lands or other public lands and will be set aside and publically available for RSS.

Initial Proposal and Public Comments Received

On May 2, 2015, the Forest Service requested comments on an initial proposal for Forest Plan direction for RSS. While the initial proposal did not include specific Forest Plan direction,

comments were helpful in understanding the public's view on the need for direction. Approximately 300 comments were received.

Proposed Forest Plan Direction

The proposed Forest Plan direction includes two goals and four objectives for RSS (see Proposed Forest Plan Direction attachment). Resulting from this direction, the Forest Service has also prepared a map proposing which lands on the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forest are suitable for dispersed RSS, not suitable for dispersed RSS, and proposed as designated shooting areas.

In general, suitable lands for RSS included areas that were further than ½ mile from residential subdivisions or concentrated high use recreation areas. Approximately 1.1 million acres (or 80% of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests) are proposed as suitable for RSS. Conversely, areas that were not suitable for RSS were generally within a ½ mile of residential subdivisions and concentrated recreation use areas. Approximately 287,000 acres (or 20% of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests) are proposed as not suitable for RSS.

Two designated shooting areas have been identified; one at Allenspark in Boulder County and one at Devils Nose in Clear Creek County. However, the proposed Forest Plan direction includes an objective that additional designated shooting areas will be identified in other counties within the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests.

Comment Period and Next Steps

The Forest Service is requesting comments on this proposal for 30 days.

Comments should be submitted to:

Email: fs-comments-rm-araphaho-roosevelt@fs.fed.us

US Mail:

Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests

Attn: RSS Proposal

2150 Centre Ave. Building E

Fort Collins, CO

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After considering comments, the Forest Service will prepare an environmental assessment and may develop reasonable alternatives to this proposal. The environmental assessment will disclose the social and environmental impacts of the proposed direction and any alternatives. The environmental assessment will also be circulated for public comment for 30 days.

Any decision to amend or implement the proposed Forest Plan direction will be subject to the 36 CFR 218 or 36 CFR 219 Subpart B predecisional administrative review process.

For additional information, please visit: www.fs.usda.gov/goto/arp/recshootingmgt or contact:

Joshua Milligan

Forest Planner

Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland

2150 Centre Ave. Building E

Fort Collins, CO

80526

Email: jmilligan@fs.fed.us Phone: 970-295-6761