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Comments:

The USDA Forest Service is seeking input on either concurring with the proposed amendments to the decisionmaking process or if not, then to describe the requirements and procedures the commenter thinks the Forest Service should develop. Given the complexity of the mining laws and regulations, providing recommendations on requirements and procedures limits the realm of qualified comments for consideration to a very narrow audience of individuals with the education and knowledge of mining extraction laws at both the state and federal level - both of which apply to each mining proposal.

If the agency wants to align more with the Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management's regulations while fulfilling its mission "to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nations forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations," then I feel it would be in the best interest to address the proposed amendments in a public forum aligned with public participation as outlined in the 2013 Planning Rule. The public could ask qualified knowledgeable individuals questions to help clarify what can and cannot be done and why, in order to provide educated and potentially viable responses.

Yes, the NEPA process takes time but that is to ensure transparency of intent and everything considered is to ensure the integrity and sustainability of our public lands. I agree the NEPA process needs to be reviewed and improved upon to reduce the timeframe it takes to complete but not to a level that would compromise the integrity and sustainability of our public lands.

Regarding the proposed amendments, all are basically deferring FS authority to the determination of DOI/BLM regulations and enforcement. This is not taking command or responsibility of decisionmaking on NFS lands under NFS rules and regulations. How can the FS guarantee it will not compromise its mission if it aligns its actions outside of the agency's management framework? The only answer to this situation is to hire qualified personnel who are educated on state and federal mining laws and regulations. If the FS does not and proceeds to align with BLM rules and regulations, it will move another step closer to becoming one agency under the Department of the Interior. Given the direction that Department has taken in rescinding the designation of National Monuments and protected antiquities that would be a tragic mistake our future generations will have to live with.

It took over 13 years to finalize the FS Planning Rule because it circumvented the initial public involvement mandated in the proposed rule during its development. It did not get resolved and finalized until the final contested proposed rule was stripped down to a basic framework and the public and key stakeholders were brought to the table to reconstruct and stay engaged in the development and finalization of the rule. If you move forward with the proposed amendments as they stand, the agency will likely face long-term opposition. If you truly want to get the public approval, make the public part of the process from the onset so they have a stake and ownership in the outcome.

I am a 30-year FS retiree and was involved in the development of a revised Land Management Plan and stand alone Grasslands Land Management Plan in 2008-2011. As the planning team's public affairs specialist, I experienced first hand the public's desire to be engaged and appreciation of that engagement. Public involvement as mandated under the Planning Rule works and should not be manipulated elsewhere to circumvent and achieve a desired outcome. If the public chooses to not participate then it's on them. If the FS chooses to not engage, then it's on you.