

# National Forest Site Visits Field Guide

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# Overview

## Introduction and Informed Consent

Thank you for your time. The purpose of our discussion is to learn about you, as a Forest Service customer or stakeholder and how you engage with Payette National Forest.

We are researchers with careers focused on improving user experience through design. We're interested in your honest feedback and opinion, and there are no right or wrong answers. Your answers will be confidential and we won't link your name to anything that we discuss today.

This interview will help us improve the user experiences for services offered by the US Forest Service and Payette National Forest, with a focus on the environmental assessment and decision-making process. We're looking to ensure that we deliver services in way that is valuable to the Forest Service employees and community members who will use them, which sometimes might be different than what we think they should be like when we start out.

I am looking to hear about you as a person and how you think and work, your relationship with the Forest Service, as well as your ideas, and suggestions for improvement.

I will also be asking you questions specifically about the environmental assessment and decision-making process as well as the steps that customers go through to give their input, what works well, any barriers to participation, and your suggestions about areas for improvement.

You don't have to answer any questions if you'd rather not or don't have time. Please feel free to skip over questions, tell me to stop, or to go back to something you find interesting. Answer with as much or as little depth as you feel like and take as long as you like. I will change your name to an alias in any printed quotations.

*[Reference others that may be observing.]* They are here to observe the session and take notes. We will also be collecting an audio and recording of this discussion. The recordings will only be used for this study and will not be released to any third parties.

With your permission, we'd like to record the conversation to make sure that we have captured the discussion accurately. Is it okay with you if I record? (optional)

Do you have any questions before we get started with the interview?

*[If yes - answer the questions.]*

Alright, let's get into the interview. If you need a break at any time, let us know.

# Interview Guide

## [Research Question Matrix](#)

### FS Staff Interview

Hello, my name is [NAME] with the Forest Service. The purpose of this interview is to:

- Learn a little bit about you
- Understand your role in the Forest Service
- Understand how you engage the public
- Figure out how to use your unique experience to help the whole Forest Service engage the public in more transparent and meaningful ways

The whole interview should take about an hour to an hour and a half, and will be recorded or transcribed, based on your preference. Located [here](#) and [here](#) are both the consent form and the form telling you that we will safely keep and dispose of any information you provide to us.

#### Questions:

1. What methods does your Forest use to raise public awareness or understanding of upcoming projects (specific materials distributed, sessions hosted, interactive sessions)?
2. How do you currently engage the public in the environmental assessment and decision-making processes (open houses, brochures, etc)?
3. Is social media currently a tool you use to engage the public? How do you use it and how might you like it to be used?
4. If you had to give yourself a grade (A being the best, F being the worst) on how well you involve the public in environmental assessment and decision-making process, what grade would you give yourself and why?
5. What information do you think the public should be provided about each project?
6. How do you personally know, as a FS staff member, what projects are coming up in the pipeline? (Federal registry, social media, Forest Service website, etc.)
7. Have you ever used the federal registry to learn about or comment on a project? If so, what was your experience like?
8. Have you ever submitted environmental assessment and decision-making comments via mail, email, etc? If so, how was that experience?
9. What works well about the current process for environmental assessment and decision-making?
10. How would you like to see the environmental assessment and decision-making process improved?

11. What changes could be made to specifically improve how the public is engaged in decision-making and environmental assessments?
12. What do you consider a successful public engagement?
13. What do you consider an efficient public engagement? If it is days to decision, what do you see as the roadblocks to shortening the process?

## **FS Community Member Interview**

Hello, my name is [NAME] with the Forest Service. The purpose of this interview is to:

- Learn a little bit about you
- Understand your relationship with National Forests and Grasslands and the USDA Forest Service
- Figure out how to use your unique experience to help the whole Forest Service engage the public in more transparent and meaningful ways

The whole interview should take about an hour to an hour and a half, and will be recorded or transcribed, based on your preference. Located here and here are both the consent form and the form telling you that we will safely keep and dispose of any information you provide to us.

### **Questions:**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about why you are interested in the decisions of the Forest Service, and this particular forest?
2. How do you typically interact with the Forest Service, beyond visiting the Forest?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the best) how would you rate your engagement with this forest? As in, how well do you know what's going on here and how it affects you?
4. On a scale of 1-10, how aware are you of upcoming projects to the Forest?
5. On a scale of 1-10, how well-prepared do you feel you are to participate in environmental assessments under the National Environmental Policy Act (i.e., do you have the information needed to form an opinion, do you know how to write a comment)?
6. How do you find out about upcoming projects, decisions, and notices for the Forest (i.e., social media, word of mouth)?
  - a. What's your opinion on using social media to engage with the forest?
7. When it comes to providing feedback on notices, revisions, and decisions on projects, do you feel that your opinions/concerns are heard?
8. How do you engage in the environmental assessment and decision-making process (i.e., submit comments via email or federal registry, attend advisory committee meeting)?
  - a. If so, how was that experience?
  - b. Did you feel heard? How so?

- c. Did you receive confirmation? How so?
9. How would you describe the level of effort involved in engaging in environmental assessments? Why?
10. When it comes to providing feedback on notices, revisions, and decisions on projects, do you feel that your opinions/concerns are heard?
11. How would you like to see the environmental assessment and decision-making process improved?
  - a. What about the process works well?
  - b. What about the process doesn't work well?
12. *Further questioning that relates specifically to the forest in question*

## Follow Up

- Send a follow up email to interview participants one week after the interview. Include contact information, any additional questions, and follow-up on any answers.
- File away all consent forms
- Optional: Give paper thank you notes to people who were extra helpful

## The Project Team

### USDA/Forest Service Stakeholders

- Brad Kinder, Program Specialist, Ecosystem Management Coordination EMC Public Engagement
- Deb Beighley, Assistant Director, Public Engagement, Economics, Administrative Review, and Social Science, EMC Public Engagement
- Catherine Doyle-Capitman, Social Scientist, EMC
- Keith Lannom, Forest Supervisor, Payette National Forest
- Brian Harris, Public Affairs Officer, Payette National Forest
- Stephen Kimball, National Resources Staff Officer, Payette National Forest

### CX CoE Stakeholders

- Simchah Suvekye-Bogin, GSA Customer Experience CoE Lead
- Tamiaca Hamlin, GSA Customer Experience CoE Senior Advisor
- Cameron Hanson, Booz Allen Contractor
- Emily Moore, Booz Allen Contractor
- Jamie Bowerman, Booz Allen Contractor
- Nora Johnson, Booz Allen Contractor
- Becca Barad, Booz Allen Contractor