



Alaska Roadless Rule

Cooperating Agency Responsibilities

The Forest Service is the lead agency for the development of the Alaska Roadless Rule. Cooperating agencies may be Federal, State, local, or Tribal agencies that have jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to an environmental issue that should be addressed in an environmental impact statement (EIS). The State of Alaska is a cooperating agency in this rulemaking effort because of its expertise on the economic development concerns related to roadless area management within Alaska. Alaska Native Tribes have been invited to be a cooperating agency due to their expertise on subsistence and potential impacts to specific communities within Alaska.

How are Tribal Governments designated as a cooperating agency?

If a Tribal Government decides to accept the Regional Forester's invitation to participate in the Alaska roadless rulemaking process, they should provide a written reply to the Regional Forester accepting the invitation. A memorandum of understanding will then be developed to establish specific responsibilities of the Forest Service and Tribal Government.

What are the responsibilities of a cooperating agency?

- Assist in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process at the earliest possible time.
- Participate in the public involvement processes, which help define and frame the issues to be addressed in the EIS.
- Review information and analyses (upon request from the Forest Service) for which the Tribal Government has special expertise.
- Contribute staff support and other resources at the Forest Service's request to enhance the NEPA team's capability.
- Share freely any information and data relevant to the NEPA analysis.
- Rely on its own funds to support its participation in the NEPA process.
- What authority does a cooperating agency provide?
- Becoming a cooperating agency does not provide any new authority to a Tribal Government. The
- U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service retain exclusive authority over the decisions related to the Alaska Roadless Rule.

When would this rulemaking take place and how much time would it take?

This rulemaking effort would begin as soon as possible and is estimated to be completed by June 2020. Meetings with cooperating agencies would be concentrated around milestones in the rulemaking/analysis process, which are likely to include: pre-scoping (August 2018); issue identification/alternative development (November 2018 to January 2019); post-comment period (November 2019 to January 2020); and final rule roll-out (May 2020). These times are initial estimates just to provide a sense of time commitment and could vary widely.



Where can I get additional information on cooperating agencies' responsibilities?

<https://ceq.doe.gov/laws-regulations/regulations.html> - 40 C.F.R. §§1501.6, 1508.5 - Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations that describe the responsibilities of a cooperating agencies.

<https://ceq.doe.gov/guidance/guidance.html> - The CEQ guidance on cooperating agencies and 40 Most Asked Questions (14a-d, 22) describing the rights and responsibilities of lead and cooperating agencies, dispute resolution, and devotion of resources to a particular proposal.