



## U.S. Forest Service National Resources and Environment National Saw Policy

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**Topic:** Publication in the *Federal Register* of a notice of a final directive governing use of saws on National Forest System (NFS) lands

**Background:** On June 17, 2015, the Forest Service published notice of a proposed directive in the *Federal Register* (80 FR 34610) that would establish guidance for the Forest Service's national saw policy (RIN 0596-AC82). Comments were solicited for 60 days, and the comment period ended August 17, 2015. The Agency received 59 comments on the proposed directive, including comments from trail partner organizations, equestrian groups, motorized trail organizations, Youth Conservation Corps, environmental groups, a state agency, and individuals. The overwhelming majority of public comments were supportive of development of a comprehensive Forest Service saw policy. Major trail partner organizations, including the Pacific Crest Trail Association and Back Country Horsemen of America, expressed support for the proposed directive.

The final directive will allow the Forest Service to facilitate the safe use of chain saws and crosscut saws on NFS lands while optimizing the critical skills and cooperative opportunities for trail maintenance and other projects on those lands. The final directive will be codified in Forest Service Manual 2358 and will supersede duplicative text in the Health and Safety Code Handbook, Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 6709.11, chapter 20, and all Forest Service Regional Supplements to that Handbook. The final directive was developed in coordination with several Agency staffs, including Recreation, Heritage, and Volunteer Resources; Fire and Aviation Management; Office of Safety and Occupational Health; and Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

### Key Points

- The final directive will establish nationally consistent training, evaluation, and certification requirements for the use of chain saws and crosscut saws by Forest Service and other governmental employees, volunteers, training consultants, and cooperators on NFS lands.
- The Agency will supplement the final directive with a Forest Service Saw Operators Guide that will include additional guidance on safety procedures and situation awareness for felling, bucking, limbing, and fire line operations.
- Implementation of the final directive will include:
  - A 1-year transition period to provide time for volunteers and cooperators to be trained, evaluated, and certified under the final directive;
  - Establishing a new position of National Saw Program Manager, who will be responsible for coordinating and managing the National Saw Program; and
  - Creation of a new national Sawyer Qualifications Database for tracking all Agency, volunteer, and cooperator sawyer qualifications.

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