



United States Department of Agriculture

2020 Biennial Monitoring Evaluation Report for the Apache- Sitgreaves National Forests



Forest Service

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

April 2020

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About our Plan Monitoring Program

Purpose

The purpose of the biennial monitoring evaluation report is to help the responsible official determine whether a change is needed in forest plan direction, such as plan components or other plan content that guide management of resources in the plan area. The biennial monitoring evaluation report represents one part of the Forest Service's overall monitoring program for this national forest unit. The biennial monitoring evaluation report is not a decision document—it evaluates monitoring questions and indicators presented in the "Monitoring Strategy" chapter of the forest plan, in relation to management actions carried out in the plan area. The most recent US Forest Service priorities as of when this report was completed is included in Appendix A.

Our monitoring plan covers these eight topics required under Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12, in addition to social, economic and cultural sustainability. You'll find each of these topics addressed in this report.

1. The status of select watershed conditions.
2. The status of select ecological conditions including key characteristics of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.
3. The status of focal species to assess the ecological conditions required under § 219.9.
4. The status of a select set of the ecological conditions required under § 219.9 to contribute to the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species, conserve proposed and candidate species, and maintain a viable population of each species of conservation concern.
5. The status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives.
6. Measurable changes on the plan area related to climate change and other stressors that may be affecting the plan area.
7. Progress toward meeting the desired conditions and objectives in the plan, including for providing multiple use opportunities.
8. The effects of each management system to determine that they do not substantially and permanently impair the productivity of the land (16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(C)). (36 CFR 219.12(a))

How Our Plan Monitoring Program Works

Monitoring and evaluation requirements have been established through the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) at 36 CFR 219. Additional direction is provided by the Forest Service in Chapter 30 – Monitoring – of the Land Management Handbook (FSH 1909.12).

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests monitoring program was updated in May 2017 for consistency with the 2012 planning regulations [36 CFR 219.12 (c)(1)]. The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land Management Plan (Forest Plan) was administratively changed to include the updated Monitoring Strategy (Chapter 5). Monitoring questions and indicators were selected to inform the management of resources on the plan area and “measuring management effectiveness and progress toward achieving or maintaining the plan's desired conditions or objectives”. [36 CFR 219.12(a)(2)].

A monitoring implementation guide (monitoring guide) is part of the overall plan monitoring program and provides specific direction for implementing the strategic plan monitoring program and details monitoring methods, protocols, and roles and responsibilities. The monitoring guide is not part of the plan decision and is subject to change as new science and methods emerge. The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests monitoring guide is available at [here](#).

Providing timely, accurate monitoring information to the responsible official and the public is a key requirement of the plan monitoring program. This biennial monitoring evaluation report is the vehicle for disseminating this information.

Monitoring Objectives

The objectives of our plan monitoring plan include:

- Assess the current condition and trend of selected forest resources.
- Document implementation of the plan monitoring program
- Evaluate relevant assumptions, changed conditions, management effectiveness, and progress towards achieving the selected desired conditions, objectives, and goals described in the Forest Plan.
- Present any new information not outlined in the current plan monitoring program that is relevant to the evaluation of the selected monitoring questions.
- Present recommended change opportunities to the responsible official.



Panoramic view from Blue Vista on the Clifton Ranger District

Monitoring Results Summary

Monitoring from 2018-2019 revealed that for the two monitoring questions (Q1 and Q2) evaluated for this pilot reporting project no Forest Plan revision should be considered.

Tables 1-3 below summarize current adaptive management recommendations for line officer consideration, as well as providing a status for recommendations from past reports.

Table 1. Quantitative summary of adaptive management recommendations for all monitoring questions addressed in this report (33 total)

Recommendation	Yes, need for change	Unsure	No
Results inconsistent with Forest Plan direction	0	0	2
Change to Forest Plan warranted	0	0	2
Change to management activities warranted	0	0	2
Change to Plan monitoring program warranted	0	0	1
Focused assessment needed	0	0	2

Table 2. Summary of findings for each plan monitoring item (questions and indicators)

Monitoring Item	Last Year Updated	Consistency with Plan Intent¹ <i>Do results demonstrate intended progress of the plan components associated with this monitoring item?</i>	Recommendation² <i>Based on the evaluation of monitoring results, may changes be warranted?</i>	Type of Change(s) under consideration² <i>Where may the change be needed?</i>
Wildlife				
MON - Soil Health -01 Are long-term soil health and productivity desired conditions? All indicators.	NA	Yes	No	N/A
MON - Watershed Health -02 How well are management activities contributing to desired conditions or maintaining watersheds in a healthy state and meeting Arizona water quality standards? Watershed condition indicators.	NA	Yes	No	N/A
MON - Watershed Health -02 How well are management activities contributing to desired conditions or maintaining watersheds in a healthy state and meeting Arizona water quality standards? Water Quality indicators.	NA	Yes	No	N/A

¹Plan intent:

(A) Uncertain – Interval of data collection beyond this reporting cycle (indicate date of next time this monitoring item will be evaluated);

(B) Uncertain – More time/data are needed to understand status or progress of the Plan Component(s);

(C) Uncertain – Methods inadequate to answer monitoring question.

²Refer to pages below for more details regarding any specific recommendations for change.

Table 3. Past monitoring recommendation status summary

	Year of Recommendation	Recommended Change	Agency Decision <i>After line officer consideration & any other engagement, how did the agency decide to respond?</i>	Status <i>If the decision was to make a change, what is the status of that change?</i>
NA				

Forest Supervisor's Certification

This report documents the results of monitoring activities that occurred from 2018 to 2019 on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. Monitoring on some topics is long-term and evaluation of those data will occur later in time.

I have evaluated the monitoring and evaluation results presented in this report. I have found that there are no recommended changes to the 2016 revised Land Management Plan, as amended at this time. I therefore consider the 2016 revised Land Management Plan sufficient to continue to guide land and resource management of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest for the near future and plan a deeper examination of the recommended changes through engagement with resource specialists and the public. Information about public engagement sessions will be posted [here](#).

Rob Lever

Forest Supervisor

Status of Soil Health

Summary

Soil condition is defined as a descriptive indicator of general soil health (USDA-FS, 2013). It is the primary soil resource indicator as identified in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNF) Land Management Plan (LMP) (USDA-FS, 2015). The intent of the monitoring question related to soil health and productivity is to determine how Forest management activities are contributing to meeting the desired conditions of having soils in satisfactory condition. A soil condition category of satisfactory indicates that past and current management activities have allowed the soil to function properly and retain its inherent productivity. Soil condition is based on an interpretation of attributes which affect four functions vital to a properly functioning soil system: biological, climate regulation, hydrologic and stability, all of which are interrelated. Thresholds for potentially triggering adaptive management action include: 1) soil disturbance monitoring suggests that forest guidelines are not being met and 2) overall long-term soil condition monitoring data indicates that a management activity may be contributing to a downward trend in soil condition on one or more projects.

This report includes data available from 2018 and 2019. The Forest Soil Disturbance Monitoring Protocol (FSDMP) was used to examine soil and ground cover conditions for legacy ground disturbance impacts within areas where new management activities are proposed. These areas with legacy ground impacts were evaluated to provide information on soil conditions prior to land treatment, shortly after treatment implementation, and multiple years after treatment completion. Treatment is some type of forest management activity, such as a timber sale or a prescribed burn, including implementation of post management activity reclamation. Usage of the protocol is also helpful as a measure for assessing Best Management Practice (BMP) effectiveness in conserving soil and water resources. The FSDMP describes how to monitor a site's response to ground disturbing management activities, like mechanical vegetation treatments and prescribed fire, through examination of attributes that influence site resilience and long-term sustainability.

Monitoring ground cover distribution, rutting, compaction, alteration of soil surface structure, erosion, topsoil displacement, soil burn severity and the overall site response to ground disturbing activities can be useful in generating, informing, and revising best management practices for soil / water conservation (Page-Dumroese, et al., 2009). Ultimately, the desired result of using the FSDMP on the ASNF is to: a) determine if forest management activities may be reducing long-term soil productivity through modification of soil function and to b) assess the degree / extent in which it may be occurring to ensure forest plan soil resource guidelines are being adhered to and if progress towards or maintenance of desired conditions is being achieved by management activities. Is there a specific trigger point for adaptive management to address soil conditions?

Monitoring Question

Are long-term soil health and productivity desired conditions being maintained or met?

Indicators

- Soil Disturbance Class
- Soil Condition Class

Key Results

Soil disturbance indicator data was used to interpret overall soil condition for the area evaluated. Soil condition is categorized by three classes: Satisfactory, Impaired, and Unsatisfactory. The following definitions describe each class (USDA-FS, 2013):

- Satisfactory: Indicators signify that soil function is being sustained and the soil is functioning properly and normally. The ability of the soil to maintain resource values and sustain outputs is high.
- Impaired: Indicators signify a reduction in soil function. The ability of the soil to function properly and normally has been reduced and/or there exists an increased vulnerability to degradation. An impaired category indicates there is a need to investigate the ecosystem to determine the cause and degree of decline in soil function. Changes in land management practices or other preventative measures may be appropriate.
- Unsatisfactory: Indicators signify that a loss of soil function has occurred. Degradation of vital soil functions result in the inability of the soil to maintain resource values, sustain outputs or recover from impacts. Unsatisfactory soils are candidates for improved management practices or restoration designed to recover soil function.

Transects were selected using the Forest Activities Tracking System (FACTS) database. One treatment unit was randomly selected within a timber sale or prescribed burn area. Forty-four total transects were completed in this monitoring period, sixteen of which were pre-disturbance transects and the remaining twenty-eight post-disturbance.

Of the pre-disturbance transects completed fourteen of twenty-one or 84 % exhibited Satisfactory soil conditions (figure 1). Generally speaking, this indicates that detrimental soil disturbance was documented on no more than 16% of any individual transect that were completed. This illustrates a large majority of the treatment areas examined showed that previous disturbances (timber harvests, recreation impacts, fire

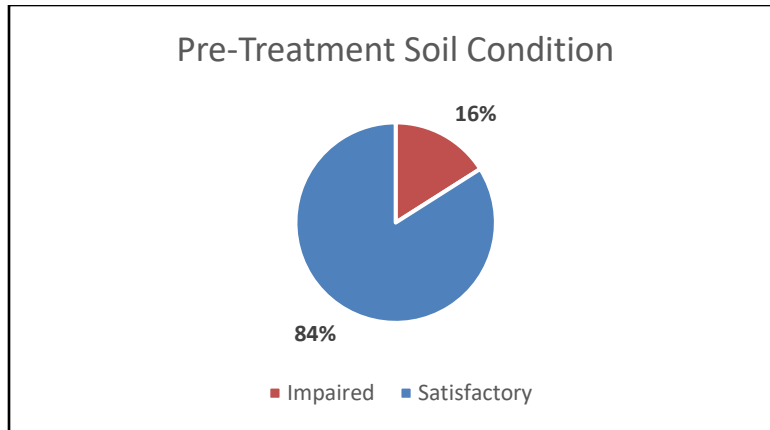


Figure 1 Pre-treatment soil condition monitoring results.

activity, etc.) were not detrimentally (long-term sustainability reduced compared to reference conditions) affecting proper soil function and ultimately long-term soil productivity. This is noteworthy as it indicates these particular locations are in a good state to be able to respond well to the proposed management activities taking place in the near future. It also highlights that a large proportion of the areas surveyed are recovering well from past disturbances with regards to soil and vegetation productivity response, aligning well with soil resource desired conditions and guidelines.

Post-treatment soil condition monitoring results are displayed in Figure 2. Considering all post-treatment results, twenty-one out of twenty-eight transects or 75% were reported to have maintained Satisfactory soil conditions with the remaining transects exhibiting Unsatisfactory soil conditions. For those transects completed approximately one-year post-treatment, eleven of eighteen or 61 % indicated Satisfactory soil conditions. For transects conducted three or more years' post-treatment all ten post disturbance transects showed Satisfactory soil conditions. This data suggests that while there are some instances of excessive soil disturbance over the short-term there is not enough of an impact spatially preventing the larger treatment area from recovery and improvement towards desired conditions in the long-term.

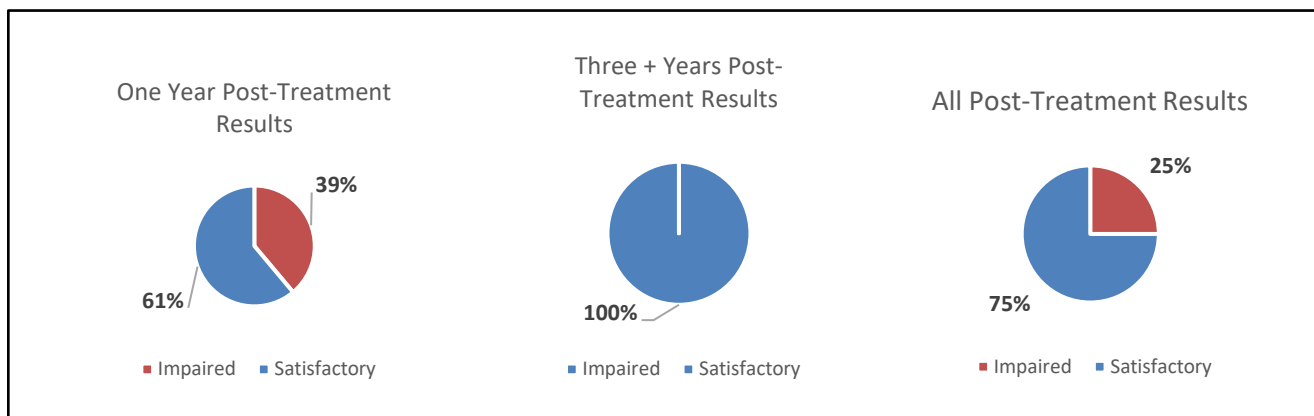


Figure 2 Post-treatment soil condition monitoring results.

Although management activity administration, and implementation including employing soil and water

conservation Best Management Practices (BMPs) appear to be adequate given a year of recovery, improvements would further increase progress towards desired conditions. When design features including soil disturbance guidelines and related BMPs were implemented effectively the response resulted in maintenance of Satisfactory conditions. It can be difficult to determine the primary cause of detrimental soil disturbance on a given site. However, for recently treated areas that include the Potential improvements to management activities include: better operations layout (including distribution and extent of major skid trails, landings, temporary roads, containment lines, etc.), better project administration and better implementation of effective project design features including BMPs.

Recommended Changes

Overall, monitoring results were favorable over the monitoring period. There are no recommended changes to the Forest Plan including plan components or the monitoring guide. In order to improve implementation of effective soil and water conservation design BMPs we intend to host a Forest-wide workshop geared toward mechanical harvesting operations.

References

Page-Dumroese, Deborah S., Ann M. Abbott and Thomas M. Forest. 2009. Soil Disturbance Monitoring Protocol Volume I: Rapid Assessment, United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service Gen. Tech. Report WO-82a.

USDA Forest Service. 2013. Technical Guidance of Soil Quality in the Southwestern Region (R3, Letter dated January 16, 2013).

USDA Forest Service, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. 2015. Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. Southwestern Region. MB-R3-01-10. U.S. Gov. Print. Office. Washington, D.C. 304 pp.

Status of Watershed Health and Water Quality

Summary

The intent of these forest plan monitoring elements and associated question is to determine how management activities are contributing to meeting Forest Plan desired conditions relating to watershed health and water quality. This is the first time this element and selected indicators have been included in a biennial report for the revised 2016 Forest Plan. This report includes data available from 2018 and 2019.

Watershed Health

Watersheds meeting desired conditions are those that exhibit high geomorphic, hydrologic, and biotic integrity to their natural potential condition. The Watershed Condition Framework (USDA 2011a) and Watershed Condition Classification Technical Guide (USDA 2011b) describe the process by which the Forest Service classifies watershed condition. Watershed condition classification is defined as the process of describing watershed condition in terms of discrete categories (or classes) that reflect the level of watershed health or integrity (Regier 1993). The Watershed Condition Classification (WCC) update process is generally completed every 5 years. For the purposes of this biennial report, an analysis is completed to determine changes in the number of watersheds in the three condition classes compared to baseline conditions. Watershed Condition Classification data is available [here](#). The trigger point for consideration of possible adaptive management actions occurs when biennial reporting shows multiple watersheds with a downward trend in condition.

Water Quality

Desired conditions for water quality include maintaining or improving water quality to meet designated uses such as consumptive needs, recreation activities, and support of aquatic and wildlife species, thereby meeting or exceeding state regulatory standards and complying with the Clean Water Act. In order to measure success of how the Forest is doing with regards to this element, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) 303 (d) impaired waterbodies listing reports are reviewed. These reports are generally released on a triennial basis and are available from the ADEQ website located [here](#). For this monitoring period the 2016 ADEQ report (ADEQ, 2016) was used as a baseline and compared to the 2018 data (ADEQ, 2020).

In order to maintain compliance with the Clean Water Act for forest activities, all national forests in Arizona including the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, have entered into a memorandum of understanding with the state of Arizona, whereby each Forest is responsible for developing a non-point source management program. This program includes development of project specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) and conducting BMP implementation and effectiveness monitoring. The results of monitoring are compiled and presented at an annual coordination meeting with ADEQ. A threshold of over 30% of completed evaluations with National BMP Composite ratings that are "Poor" would trigger a process to identify opportunities to improve forest operations and prioritize management attention for better implementation of water quality protection BMPs.

Monitoring Question

How well are management activities contributing to desired conditions or maintaining watersheds in a healthy state and meeting Arizona surface water quality standards?

Indicators

Watershed Health - The number of 6th Level Hydrologic Unit Code watersheds on the forest with an improved or deteriorated condition classification using the national Watershed Condition Framework.

Water Quality - Changes in Arizona Department of Environmental (ADEQ) water quality status and trends for water bodies within the Forest.

Water Quality -National Best Management Practices (BMP) implementation and effectiveness ratings.

Key Results

Watershed Health

Table 4. displays the number of watersheds in each of the three watershed condition classes; Functioning at Risk, Functioning Properly, and Impaired Function. There were no changes during the monitoring period.

Table 4 Comparison of Watershed Condition Classes before and at the end of the monitoring period

Watershed Condition Class	Number of subwatersheds	Number of subwatersheds
YEAR	2016	2018
Functioning at Risk	105	105
Functioning Properly	34	34
Impaired Function	13	13

Water Quality

Impaired Waterbodies

Comparing listings from 2016 to 2018 (Table 5), there were no additional listings or changes in overall extent of

non-attaining impaired waterbody listings within the Apache-Stigreaves National Forests. Two previously listed lakes, Telephone and Pintail, were delisted because United States Army Corp of Engineers made a jurisdictional determination that these waterbodies did not fit the definition of Waters of the United States.

Table 5 Comparison of 303d listed (non-attaining) waterbodies on the forests in 2016 and 2018.

ADEQ Code	Waterbody	Size	Category	Impairment	2016	2018
AZ15040004-025B	Blue River	25.4 miles	Category 5	e. coli	✓	✓
AZ15020001-011	Little Colorado River	8.1 miles	Category 4A	suspended sediment	✓	✓
AZ15020001-017B	Nutrios Creek	5.9 miles	Category 4A	suspended sediment	✓	✓
AZ15040004-003	San Francisco River	9.9 miles	Category 5	e. coli	✓	✓
AZL15020010-0180	Black Canyon Lake	37.4 acres	Category 5	ammonia	✓	✓
AZL15060101-0420	Crescent Lake	157 acres	Category 5	ph (EPA)	✓	✓
AZL15040004-0840	Luna Lake		Category 4A	ammonia	✓	✓
AZL15020005-5000	Pintail Lake	25.7 Acres	Category 5	ammonia	✓	
AZL15020005-1170	Rainbow Lake	110 Acres	Category 4A	narrative nutrients, dissolved oxygen, ph	✓	✓
AZL15020005-1500	Telephone Lake	22.3 acres	Category 5	ammonia	✓	

Best Management Practices

The National BMP Program assessment protocols were used to completed BMP monitoring. This program was developed to improve management of water quality consistent with the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) and State water quality programs. For more information see link [here](#).

A total of thirteen National BMP assessments were completed in the 2018 – 2019 monitoring period (Figure 3). The distribution of assessment protocols completed were as follows: three “Ground-Based Skidding and Harvesting” (Vegetation “A”), and four mechanical site treatment (Vegetation “C”) evaluations, two “Use of

Prescribed Fire” (Fire “A”), and two “Operation and Maintenance of Spring Source Facilities (Water Uses “B”) evaluations. There were one each Motorized or Nonmotorized Trail Operation and Maintenance” (Recreation “D”) and one “Chemical Use for Dust Abatement” (Chemical “C”) evaluations completed. The two Water Uses “B” assessed activities did not have prescribed BMPs. The charts in Figure 4 display the results of the implementation, effectiveness, and composite ratings.

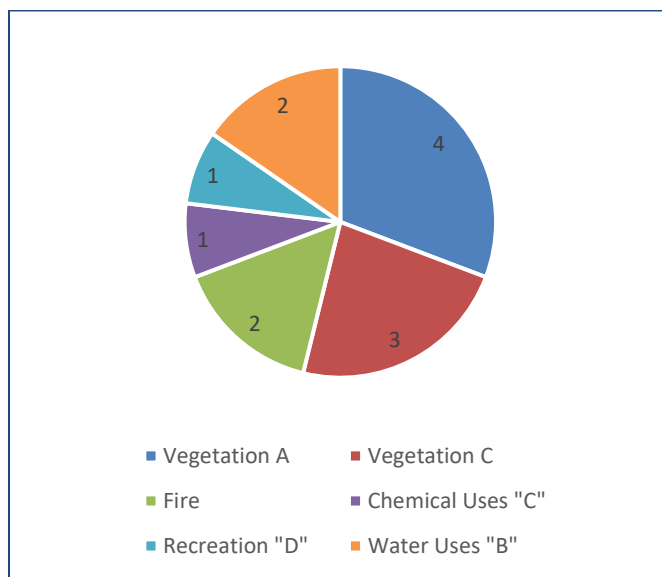


Figure 3 Distribution of the various National BMP assessment protocols completed.

The evaluation is intended to answer the overall question of “Did we do what we said we’d do?” relative to protecting water resources and meeting CWA objectives. Of the 9 BMP assessment with prescribed BMPs, a total of 54% were rated as either “fully” or “mostly” implemented. Forty-five percent of the assessment were rated as “marginal”, whereas 9% were “not implemented”. The effectiveness part of the evaluation is intended to answer the question “Were we effective at controlling nonpoint source pollution?” Implementation ratings were mostly found to be “effective” 82% of the evaluations, and the remainder rated “not” effective. Composite ratings aggregate both the implementation and effectiveness ratings.

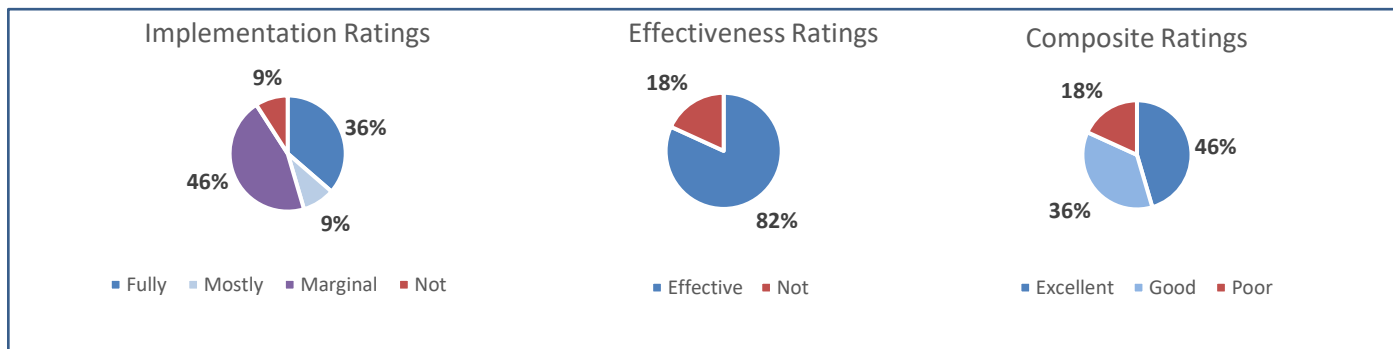


Figure 4 Distribution of Implementation, Effectiveness, and Composite Ratings.

The combination of “excellent” or “good” composite ratings comprised 82% percent of all evaluations, with the remaining 18% rated as “poor”. Overall, the results of the National BMP monitoring including effectiveness, implementation, and composite ratings were below the threshold (less than 70%) triggering possible adaptive management actions.

Recommended Changes

There are no recommended changes to the Forest Plan or the monitoring guide with regards watershed condition and water quality indicators for the current monitoring period. Regarding water quality, in order to improve implementation of effective soil and water protection during management activities, we intend to host a Forest-wide workshop geared toward mechanical harvesting operations.

References

Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ). 2016. Clean Water Act Assessment (July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2015) Assessment and 303(d) Listing Report.

Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ). 2020. Impaired Waters List for 2018 pulled from ADEQ website in April, 2020.

USDA-Forest Service. 2011a. Watershed Condition Framework. FS-977, 24 pp.

USDA-Forest Service. 2011b. Watershed Condition Classification Technical Guide. FS-978, 41 pp.



Example of well executed use of coarse woody debris for erosion control on a skid trail in Rim Top Timber Sale

Appendix A



Forest Service

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

30 South Chiricahua Drive
Springerville, AZ 85938

File Code: 1300

Date: December 16, 2019

Route To:

Subject: Forest Priorities for FY 20 - Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

To: All Employees

First let me extend my appreciation and gratitude to **everyone** for the incredible effort you each bring to the ASNFs. We continue to accomplish a great deal of excellent work across the forests and generally lead the Region in our restoration efforts. In FY 19, even with the Furlough the ASNFs accomplished over 6,000 acres of mechanical treatments using timber sales as our primary tool (we sold the volume vs paying for it to be removed). The ASNFs continues to accomplish the lion's share of the mechanical restoration actual acres treated and timber sales sold for the 4FRI arena. We accomplished over 56,000 acres of prescribed burning, and while it was a wet fire season we had 102 wildfires that were safely dealt with and in addition, we managed wildfires to accomplish ~ 16,152 acres of resource benefit.

Heritage, Wildlife/Fisheries, Range, Recreation, Planning, Watershed, PAO, ADM, Engineering, Lands, GIS, NEPA, Timber and Fuels have all contributed to this work and have made great accomplishments themselves within their specific areas such as moving forward with TMR and HWHT. I am extremely proud of the ASNFs and your ability to pull together, to overcome obstacles and make these accomplishments possible. Each of you should also be very proud of the work you do.

I wanted to share with each of you, Chief Christensen's Five Priorities, the Regional and Forest Priorities for FY 20.

Chief's Five Priorities.

Five Priorities for Our Work

These five national priorities do three things: They give urgency and focus to critical needs; help foster the work environment we want for our employees; and set expectations for the manner in which we accomplish our work with citizens, partners, volunteers, and each other.

1. Uplifting and empowering our employees through a respectful, safe working environment.

I have enormous respect and admiration for the work every employee does. I am committed to ensuring our work environment is safe, rewarding, respectful, free of harassment, and resilient—that every one of you works in an environment



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where you are recognized and valued for your contributions. I want every employee to be empowered to continuously improve our work.

2. Being good neighbors and providing excellent customer service.

We will work with efficiency and integrity with a focus on the people we serve. I envision a broad, diverse coalition for conservation, working across boundaries and using all authorities available to us. We have a backlog of special use permits, range allotment work and deferred maintenance and other needs to address. To increase customer service, we must understand customer requirements, expand our use of best practices, apply innovative tools, and address barriers that get in the way of doing good work. Each and every visitor, forest or grassland user, contractor, partner, cooperator, permittee, volunteer, and citizen deserves our very best service.

3. Promoting shared stewardship by increasing partnerships and volunteerism.

We can't do this alone and only on National Forest System lands. It takes others to help us make a difference on the whole landscape. We will work with all citizens—from rural and urban communities—as we pursue the work in front of us. Strengthening and expanding partner and volunteer programs around shared values is critical for a sustainable future.

4. Improving the condition of forests and grasslands.

About 80 million acres of the National Forest System are at risk from insect disease and wildfire. About one-third of these lands are at very high risk. Drinking water, homes, communities, wildlife habitat, historic places, sacred sites, recreation opportunities, and scenic vistas are among many of the values at risk of loss. Having sustainable, healthy, resilient forests and grasslands in the future depends on our ability to increase work on the ground and get increased outcomes. We will use all management tools and authorities available to us to improve the condition of our forests and rangelands. Improving the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental analysis and decision-making processes will help us increase our capacity and ability to improve the condition of forests and rangelands. This work will also restore ecosystem function, deliver dependable energy, provide jobs and economic benefits for rural communities, and be responsive to the American taxpayer.

5. Enhancing recreation opportunities, improving access, and sustaining infrastructure.

Most Americans experience the national forests and grasslands through recreation activities. Although these lands offer some of the most valued outdoor recreation settings in this country, the settings and visitor experiences are increasingly at risk. Deteriorating recreation facilities and roads, eroding trails, and increasing

user conflicts pose numerous challenges and a decline in the quality of the visitor experience. Currently, we can only maintain to standard half of our roads, trails, facilities, and other components of our infrastructure. Access to the National Forest System is more limited. We will take steps to address these challenges and create more enhanced, sustainable recreation opportunities, access, and infrastructure to better meet the needs of visitors, citizens, and users.

NEPA environmental analysis and decision-making improvements can help us achieve goals and objectives for enhanced recreation, improved access, and a more sustainable infrastructure.

This is the work before us. Please understand, I am not asking you to do more with less. To achieve this work, we will focus on the highest priority assignments. We will learn to work differently to accomplish our goals and ease the pressures on our workforce. I frequently hear about multiple, changing demands that put a strain on employees. I am aware of unnecessary processes that block your ability to do priority work. My aim and commitment is to lift burdens that weigh on employees and remove barriers that get in the way. I will work to better equip you and empower you. This is more essential than ever when we must optimize the diverse talents and skills of every employee, avail ourselves of every resource and authority, and make the most of every dollar.

The Region 3 Strategic Goals are: Landscape Scale Restoration, Sustainable Recreation, and Workforce Development and Relationships.

As you read through the ASNFs priorities please remember that these are given to help us focus on some of the top initiatives. All the work you do whether listed here or not is important to the mission. We provide priorities so we as a forest can work collaboratively and efficiently and focus our efforts to assure we can accomplish what needs to get done. With limited funds and staff it is important that we are working together to ensure we are meeting our Forest priorities first before we consider taking on additional work.

Forest fiscal year priorities are given to provide what needs to occur across the ASNFs in FY20 for meeting forest initiatives, obligations, and commitments.

ASNFs Fiscal Year 2020 Priorities

5-year Timber schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus is on meeting the timber schedule for FY20 and preparing for FY21 • Next would be to focus on get ahead work such as marking, surveys, and NEPA for FY22 and beyond • This schedule should be reviewed and kept up to date to meet the 14,000 acre/year treatment obligation (or as otherwise negotiated by the Forest Supervisor) • We want to continue to expand the 5-year planning to include other shops so that we are more inclusive and effective in our
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	planning.
5-year Rx burn schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus is on preparing for and executing the burn schedule for FY20 • This schedule should be reviewed and kept up to date to meet the target treatments obligations (or as otherwise negotiated by the Forest Supervisor) • Include the other shops in the planning process
5-year Comprehensive Restoration schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop and implement the 5-year comprehensive restoration project work-include high priority potential soils, water, rangeland, vegetation, riparian, aquatics, and habitat work that is being planned for, or has been planned for • Align and seek opportunities for funding a project or two for implementation in FY20 (i.e. tier III funding, ecosystem and watershed funding from the RO/WO, etc.) • Continue to seek partners based on the schedule for implementation • Plan for NEPA for out-year projects either to be incorporated into on-going landscape planning or other NEPA using what is most efficient toward implementation
Sustainable Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Sustainable Recreation Strategy for the ASNFs • Identify and implement the top priorities for FY20 • Continue to seek partners to assist with sustainable recreation priorities • Plan and prepare for priority work for FY21
Facility Master Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement the Facility Master Plan
Travel Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue toward completion the Travel Management Plan in accordance with NEPA schedule
NEPA schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue toward completion of these priority NEPA projects in accordance to their schedule
Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire vacant positions as approved • Provide needed training as the budget allows and support certifications for employees • Ensure performance, must do trainings, are accomplished and career growth opportunities are given to employees • Support one another

Second to these each department (program) and each Ranger District will also develop their top priorities to be incorporated into the FY20 program of work process.

The fiscal year priorities are designed to fall under the umbrella of the National strategy to sustain our Nation's forests and grasslands; to deliver benefits to the public; to apply knowledge and technology advancements globally; and to excel as a high performing agency and the Regional priorities essential to advancing the mission of the Forest Service through landscape scale restoration activities; sustainable recreation; and workforce development and relationships.

Our goal is to move the ASNFs forward in our mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

Again thanks for what you do.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Stephen Best". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "M." and last name "Best" being more prominent than the middle name "Stephen".

M. STEPHEN BEST
Forest Supervisor