

Preface

Understanding the 2005 Forest Plan



Cover photo: Canoeists on a crystal clear Ozark River, Missouri Department of Conservation
Photographer: Jim Rathert

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Purpose of the Forest Plan

The Mark Twain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) was prepared in accordance with the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 as amended by the 1976 National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other laws and associated regulations. This is a revision of the Mark Twain Forest Plan released in 1986.

The Forest Plan provides guidance for all resource management activities on the Mark Twain National Forest. It establishes: forestwide multiple-use goals and implementing objectives; forestwide management requirements (known as Forestwide Standards and Guidelines); Management Area direction, including area-specific standards and guidelines, desired future conditions and management practices; identification of lands suited/not suited for timber management; monitoring and evaluation requirements, and recommendations to Congress for additional Wilderness.

Relationship of the Forest Plan to Other Documents

The planning process and analysis procedures used to develop the Forest Plan are described in Appendix B of the accompanying Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Several alternatives were developed as the 1986 Forest Plan was revised, in accordance with NFMA and NEPA. The Forest Plan represents the Selected Alternative, Alternative 3 in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and is identified as the Selected Alternative in the FEIS. An extensive analysis of the alternatives is described in the FEIS.

Based on the analysis in the DEIS, public comments, and FEIS, the Regional Forester selected Alternative 3 as the 2005 Forest Plan. The Regional Forester documented the rationale for the selection in a Record of Decision accompanying the Final EIS.

Site-specific project environmental analyses that implement the Forest Plan will be tiered to the FEIS. That is, the broader analysis and conclusions from the Final EIS for the Selected Alternative can be used as a starting point for site-specific project planning. Each projects' environmental effects analysis document will incorporate, by reference, the information found in the Final EIS without the need to repeat it.

A Reader's Guide to the 2005 Forest Plan

The Forest Plan is organized as follows:

- Preface
- Chapter 1—Forestwide Goals and Objectives
- Chapter 2—Forestwide Standards and Guidelines
- Chapter 3—Management Prescriptions
- Chapter 4—Monitoring and Evaluation
- Appendices

Chapter 1—Forestwide Goals and Objectives

Provides overall management direction for the Forest. Goals describe desired future conditions and are normally expressed in general terms. Forest Plan goals link broad agency goals as set forth in law, executive orders, regulations, agency directives, and the Resources Planning Act (RPA) program. Achievement of goals is not mandatory, and there is no established timeframe for accomplishment. Objectives are statements of measurable desired results intended to promote the achievement of Forest Plan goals. Objectives include, for the next planning decade (or longer): (1) desired resource conditions within the planning area; and (2) desired goods and services that the planning area is expected to produce.

Chapter 2—Forestwide Standards and Guidelines

Provides resource management direction and guidance that is applicable (for the most part) across the Forest. Standards are required courses of action or levels of attainment that promote the achievement of Forest Plan goals and objectives. Standards are developed when: (1) unacceptable impacts are expected (without the standard); (2) they are critical to Forest Plan objectives; and/or (3) laws or policies do not address a proposed course of action, or when they need further clarification. Standards are mandatory. A Forest Plan amendment is required if proposed management would deviate from an established standard.

Guidelines are also required courses of action or levels of attainment that promote the achievement of Forest Plan goals and objectives, but they can be adjusted or modified if site-specific project conditions warrant a deviation. Guidelines are developed when: (1) professional expertise is needed to address resource management questions; (2) site conditions are variable; and (3) they contribute to the achievement of goals. A project-level analysis and a signed decision (by the responsible official) are required if proposed management activities would deviate from an established guideline.

Management direction in the Forest Service Directive System, including the Forest Service Manual (FSM), and the Forest Service Handbook (FSH) is part of forest plan management direction and is not repeated in the Forest Plan document. Management Direction also includes applicable laws, regulations and policies, although they are not necessarily restated in the plan.

Chapter 3—Management Prescriptions

Provides direction that applies to individual Forest Management Areas (see Management Area Maps). Taken together, the following items comprise each management area prescription:

- Theme
- Goals
- Desired Condition
- Management Area Standards and Guidelines

Chapter 4—Monitoring and Evaluation

Provides a strategy for answering three monitoring questions:

- Is Forest Plan direction being put into action?
- Is the direction included in the Plan effective?
- Were our assumptions valid when we prepared Forest Plan direction?

Based on monitoring activities answering those questions, amendments to the Forest Plan will be completed to adapt Plan direction to new information and changed conditions. Forest Plan goals and objectives are used to develop specific monitoring questions, which in turn, will be used to develop annual forestwide monitoring plans in the future.

Appendices

The following appendices are included with the Forest Plan:

Appendix A – Terrestrial Natural Communities

Appendix B – Soils

Appendix C – Minerals Management

Appendix D – Harvest Methods

Appendix E – Goods, Services, and Probable Management Practices

Appendix F – Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Appendix G – Visual Management System

Appendix H – District Management Area Maps

