

**Appendix B**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION – NFMA, NFMA REGULATIONS, FOREST  
SERVICE POLICY**

Through the 1982 Regulations found in subpart A, 36 CFR 219 of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), Forests are charged with preserving and enhancing the diversity of plants and animals consistent with overall multiple-use objectives stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan (Plan) (36 CFR 219.27(a)(5)). Forests must also provide habitat capable of maintaining viable populations of selected species, and are directed to select MIS to help ensure species viability (36 CFR 219.19).

MIS are defined as “plant and animal species, communities, or special habitats selected for emphasis in planning, and which are monitored during Forest Plan implementation in order to assess the effects of management activities on their populations and the populations of other species with similar habitat needs which they may represent” (Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2620.5). The role of MIS and those criteria used to select MIS are described in 36 CFR 219.19(a)(1), as follows:

“In order to estimate the effects of each [Plan] alternative on fish and wildlife populations, certain vertebrate and/or invertebrate species present in the area shall be identified and selected as management indicator species and the reasons for their selection will be stated. These species shall be selected because their population changes are believed to indicate the effects of management activities. In the selection of management indicator species, the following categories shall be represented where appropriate: endangered and threatened plant and animal species identified on State and Federal lists for the planning area; species with special habitat needs that may be influenced significantly by planned management programs; species commonly hunted, fished or trapped; non-game species of special interest; and additional plant or animal species selected because their population changes are believed to indicate the effects of management activities on other species of selected major biological communities or on water quality.”

An important characteristic of MIS may be their narrow habitat associations and the ability to effectively monitor both the species and its habitat. Monitoring MIS and their habitats are used as part of a strategy to determine the effects of Plan implementation on selected plants, animals, communities, or special habitats.

The 1982 Planning Regulations allow the responsible official broad discretion in selecting MIS. The regulations specify that species are to be selected from various categories “where appropriate”, suggesting there is no requirement that all categories of species or habitats be represented. Using information provided by an interdisciplinary planning team, the responsible official determines whether population changes of certain species are “believed to indicate the effects of management activities.” Beliefs or opinions about the reliability of such relationships are subject to change resulting from increased scientific knowledge, and implementing and monitoring Plans. Therefore, it may be necessary to conduct periodic reviews of those MIS previously selected for a Plan and make appropriate adjustments.