

File Code: 1920
Date: April 28, 2016

Dear Interested Party,

The Chippewa National Forest made changes to the Forest Plan monitoring program to comply with the Forest Service's 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.12) and to update our existing monitoring program. These changes have been incorporated into a revised Chapter 4 Monitoring and Evaluation of the Forest Plan and posted on our internet site as:

[Administrative Change #11 Chapter 4 Monitoring and Evaluation.](#)

The proposed changes were available for public comment for 30 days (February 5 through March 7, 2016). Three comments were received that warranted clarification of the monitoring intent or identified some opportunities for collaboration and cooperation. The comments did not result in any changes to the proposed monitoring program.

Background

Briefly, the monitoring program changes occur in two areas:

- Changes to our monitoring program to comply with a new planning rule
- A review of our existing monitoring program to evaluate if we need to modify or drop some of the existing questions.

The new Planning Rule (PR), which provides direction for the development and revision of Forest Plans, went into effect in March 2012. The 2012 Planning Rule requires as a minimum our monitoring program contain monitoring questions and indicators that address the following eight areas:

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 ecological conditions required for diverse plant and animal communities.
4. The status of a select set of ecological conditions that contribute to the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species, conserve proposed and candidate species, and maintains a viable population of each species of conservation concern.
5. The status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives.



6. Measureable 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 providing for 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.

Of the eight elements, our existing monitoring program addressed most of these. Three new monitoring questions have been added to address: ecological conditions (3), visitor use and satisfaction (5), and climate change (6).

In addition, the 2012 PR changes the publication of the Monitoring and Evaluation Report from an annual to biennial publication. Our first monitoring evaluation biennial report is expected by May 2018.

Second, Forest staff reviewed our existing monitoring program, modified several monitoring questions, and dropped others.

Tribal Consultation

Provided Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Division of Resource Management (DRM) with a listing of proposed changes to the monitoring program and a cover letter dated December 21, 2015. An overview of the changes was shared in a meeting between the Forest and DRM on January 21, 2016.

Public Involvement and Notification

In accordance with direction (36 CFR 219.16(c)(6), changes to the monitoring program can be made through an administrative change but only after the public has had an opportunity to comment on the intended changes. The following opportunities have been provided for the public:

- A public notification letter (dated August 3, 2015) was posted on the Forest internet site on August 4, 2015. The letter identified the Forest's intent to address 8 monitoring elements and modify our existing program. No comments or interest from the public was received.
- 30 day public notification (February 5 through March 7, 2016)
 - Internet posting to Forest homepage on February 5, 2016 of the following:
 - Invitation Letter to Comment dated February 5, 2016
 - Summary of Monitoring Changes

- Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan, “Monitoring and Evaluation” updated to incorporate the proposed changes.
- Letters to 25 partners, other agencies, and LLBO DRM (mailing list in project file)
 - Invitation Letter to Comment dated February 5, 2016 (sent out Feb. 9)
 - Summary of Monitoring Changes
- Comments were received from three respondents. Their comments were considered but did not result in any changes to the proposed monitoring questions, indicators, or monitoring program. Refer to the “30 day Comments Responses” document.

Implementation

This action is not subject to administrative review as it is considered an administrative change to the Forest Plan (36 CFR 219.13(c)) rather than a Plan Amendment.

Administrative Change #11, Chapter 4 Monitoring and Evaluation (Revised March 2016), goes into effect immediately upon posting this notification on the Forest internet website.

Should you have any questions about the Monitoring Program changes or the process, please contact Sharon Klinkhammer at sklinkhammer@fs.fed.us or 218-335-8660.

Thank you for your interest in the Chippewa National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Darla Lenz

DARLA LENZ
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures (2)