

File Code: 1940

Date: February 29, 2016

Dear Interested Party:

If you are interested in changes to the monitoring program that accompanies the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), please read on.

On October 26, 2015, we shared with you that the ANF was planning to review and propose changes to our Forest Plan monitoring program (pp. 37-51; <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/allegheny/landmanagement/planning>) using the administrative change process ((36 CFR §219.13(c))).

The first objective of our review was to bring our monitoring program into compliance with new planning regulations. The new planning regulations, referred to as the 2012 Planning Rule, require our monitoring program to address the following:

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.
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 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. 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 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 USA 1604(g)(3)c)).

The second objective of our review was to identify monitoring questions and indicators that test assumptions underpinning management decisions, track conditions relevant to management of resources on the ANF, and measure management effectiveness and progress toward achieving desired conditions and objectives.

Three new monitoring questions were added to bring our monitoring program into compliance with the 2012 Planning Rule. Specifically, questions were developed to measure changes on the ANF related to climate change (length and timing of the growing season) and monitor the status of focal species to assess select ecological conditions (brook trout-quality cold-water ecosystems and pileated woodpecker-large dead, damaged, and disease trees across the landscape). In addition, to ensure our monitoring program is effective and targeted to inform and improve our management, we modified how some of the monitoring questions were asked and removed other



monitoring questions. Those monitoring questions removed are no longer relevant to the management of resources on the ANF, result in redundancy in our monitoring and evaluation efforts, or will be addressed through other efforts.

We would like to invite you to review and comment on the draft updated monitoring program posted here: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/alleggheny/landmanagement/planning>. Comments need to be received by April 4, 2016, to be considered in the development of the final updated monitoring program. They can either be sent electronically to Collin Shephard at collinmshephard@fs.fed.us, or in hard copy via hand-delivery between 8am and 4:30pm Monday through Friday or mailed to:

Allegheny National Forest – Supervisor’s Office
4 Farm Colony Drive
Warren, PA 16365

If you have any questions or would like to receive a hard copy of the draft updated monitoring program, please contact Collin Shephard at (814) 728-6142 or collinmshephard@fs.fed.us.

Thank you for your interest in the ANF.

Sincerely,

/s/ Sherry A. Tune

SHERRY A. TUNE
Forest Supervisor