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**File Code:** 1920  
**Date:** March 10, 2016

Dear Interested Party:

The Hoosier National Forest intends to modify its Forest Plan monitoring program to comply with the Forest Service's 2012 planning rule. The current monitoring program can be found in Chapter 4 of the Hoosier 2006 Land and Resource Management Plan. We would like to hear your comments and concerns about the modification.

The 2012 planning rule, which is found in the Code of Federal Regulation at 36 CFR 219, guides Forest Plan monitoring across the Forest Service. All Forest Plan monitoring programs must conform to the requirements (219.12) of the 2012 Planning Rule by May 9, 2016. This modification is an administrative change to the Plan not a Plan amendment or revision.

The Hoosier National Forest's conformance strategy focuses on addressing the purpose of the Forest Plan monitoring program as described in 36 CFR 219.12(a)(1). Our Forest Plan monitoring program is geared toward assessing the quality of forest plan implementation and the plan contains one or more monitoring questions and associated indicators addressing each of the following eight requirements as noted at 36CFR 219.12(a)(5):

- i. The status of select watershed conditions.
- ii. The status of select ecological conditions including key characteristics of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.
- iii. The status of focal species to access the ecological conditions required under 36 CFR 219.9
- iv. The status of a select set of ecological conditions required under 36 CFR 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.
- v. The status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives.
- vi. Measurable changes on the plan area related to climate change and other stressors that may be affecting the plan area.
- vii. Progress toward meeting the desired conditions and objectives in the plan, including for providing multiple use opportunities.
- viii. 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)).

We formed an interdisciplinary team to review the monitoring questions found in the current Forest Plan monitoring program. Our strategy was to retain those monitoring questions of the current plan that address our monitoring purpose and the eight requirements, then develop new



monitoring questions if needed to insure all eight requirements were met and delete elements that do not address either the purpose or the eight requirements.

The Forest Plan monitoring program set out the plan monitoring questions and associated indicators. Monitoring questions and associated indicators must be designed to inform the management of resources on the plan area, including by testing relevant assumptions, tracking relevant changes and measuring management effectiveness and progress toward achieving the forest plan goals. Questions and indicators should be based on one or more Forest Plan goal or objective, but not every Plan component needs to have a corresponding monitoring question.

Under the 2012 planning rule, the Forest Plan monitoring program will consist of only monitoring questions and associated indicators to evaluate if Forest Plan components are effective and appropriate and if management is effective in maintaining or achieving progress toward the goals and objectives for the Plan area. Additional information for implementing the Forest Plan monitoring program may be documented in a separate monitoring guide that would for example, identify methods for data collection, how the data is stored, and responsibility for managing monitoring information. The monitoring guide is not part of the forest plan and can be changed as needed.

The Forest Plan monitoring information will be evaluated every two years. The monitoring evaluation report must indicate whether or not a change to the Plan, management activities, or the monitoring program is warranted based on the new information. The monitoring evaluation report must be used to inform adaptive management of the plan area. The expected publication date of the first biennial monitoring evaluation report is expected to be no later than two years from the date of approval of the administrative change for the modified Forest Plan monitoring programs.

### **Current Forest Plan Monitoring Program**

The current monitoring program can be found in Chapter 4 of the Hoosier 2006 Land and Resource Management Plan. It can be viewed online at:

[http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/hoosier/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fsbdev3\\_017440](http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/hoosier/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fsbdev3_017440).

### **Modification to the Forest Plan Monitoring Program**

The modified monitoring program for the Hoosier National Forest, developed by the interdisciplinary team, which meets the requirements of the 2012 planning rule can be found at:

[http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fseprd494201.pdf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd494201.pdf)

### **New Information and Approval Framework**

The modifications to the Forest Plan monitoring programs are being conducted under the administrative changes procedures of 36 CFR 219.13(c). I am inviting you to comment on the

proposed changes. During this comment process, you may identify other monitoring needs and additional information.

As the Responsible Official for the proposal, I will work with the Forest interdisciplinary team to review and incorporate public comments. I will then notify those who comment of my decision on the administrative change to modify the Forest Plan monitoring program. The decision on the administrative change is not subject to objection or appeal procedures.

### **How You Can Comment**

This letter initiates the period for public participation in this process. Your comments will provide useful information as we determine what changes need to be made to the Forest Plan monitoring program.

You may submit comments to Michael Chaveas, Forest Supervisor, by one of the following methods: mail: 811 Constitution Avenue, Bedford, IN 47421, telephone: 812-275-5987, facsimile: 812-279-3423 or email: [comments-eastern-hoosier@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-eastern-hoosier@fs.fed.us) with subject: Plan Administrative Correction 12. Office hours for those wishing to hand deliver their comments are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday (except Federal holidays). Acceptable formats for electronic comments are text or html e-mail, adobe portable document format, and formats viewable in Microsoft Office applications. Comments concerning this proposal would be most useful if received before April 9, 2016. Names and contact information submitted with comments will become part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

For further information, please contact Gary Dinkel at [gdinkel@fs.fed.us](mailto:gdinkel@fs.fed.us) or (812) 547-9237.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Michael Chaveas*

MICHAEL CHAVEAS  
Forest Supervisor