



File Code: 1940
Date: March 11, 2016

Dear Forest Neighbor:

In 2012, the USDA Forest Service adopted a new Planning Rule that directs the revision of forest plans, which are the documents that guide the management of National Forests. The current Ottawa Forest Plan was approved in 2006 (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/ottawa/forestplan>.) Input from other agencies, partners and the public was an important part of the entire Forest Plan revision process. The 2012 Planning Rule states every forest must update their monitoring program by May 9, 2016.

You are receiving this letter because our records show that you are interested in commenting on proposals on the Ottawa. We are requesting a review of the enclosed document, "*Draft Monitoring Questions and Indicators*", which outlines the draft changes to our monitoring program.

In accordance with the 2012 Planning Rule requirements (36 CFR 219.16(c)(6)), a 30-day public review and comment period has been established for this review. Comments must be received or postmarked by April 11, 2016. A legal notice describing this process will also be published in the Ironwood, Michigan's *Daily Globe*.

Forest Plan Monitoring

The current monitoring program consists of 44 questions, which are outlined in Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan. Answering these questions help to determine whether the activities implemented are resulting in desired conditions stated in Forest Plan direction or if adjustments need to be made.

Proposed Updates to the Monitoring Program

The 2012 Planning Rule requires the following eight elements to be monitored by each National Forest:

1. Status of select watershed conditions.
2. Status of select ecological conditions including key characteristics of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.
3. Status of focal species to assess ecological conditions
4. Status of a select set of ecological conditions required to contribute to the recovery of Federally-listed threatened and endangered species, conserve proposed and candidate species, and maintain viable populations of each species of conservation.



5. Status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives.
6. Measurable changes on the plan are 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 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.

We propose to retain the majority of the existing monitoring questions; introduce four new questions; and delete some questions for reasons outlined in Appendix 1. The resulting monitoring program would consist of a total of 37 questions.

Request for Your Review of the Monitoring Program

The 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.4) outlines that the Forest Service engage with agencies and partners to assist in the development of questions and indicators for this process.

To be most helpful, we are requesting that your comments include the following:

- Provide recommended changes for any content changes to ensure that questions and/or indicators provide information for the stated resource as outlined in the attachment.
- Identify opportunities to refine our information to be more consistent or complementary with other monitoring approaches or options to carry out multi-party monitoring.

Input received from this outreach will be reviewed for incorporation into the proposed monitoring program.

Additional Administrative Change

We would like to take the opportunity to make you aware of an additional administrative change to the Forest Plan.

During the 2006 Forest Plan revision process, a candidate Research Natural Area (RNA) was identified within the Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness Area. On December 7, 2012, the Regional Forester designated this area, comprising 351 acres as a RNA. The updated Forest Plan direction for this RNA is outlined in Appendix 2.

Next Steps

In April 2016, we will publish a legal notice to announce that the Forest Plan's monitoring program and RNA direction is updated. These documents will be posted to the Ottawa's internet site (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/ottawa/home>).

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If you are interested in learning more about this process, or require a paper copy of the monitoring program, please contact Marlanea French-Pombier, Forest Planner, at 906-932-1330, extension 303, or e-mail: mfrenchpombier@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Linda L Jackson".

LINDA L JACKSON
Forest Supervisor