



---

**File Code:** 1920  
**Date:** March 16, 2016

Dear Interested Party:

The Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland (MBRTB) are seeking comments as we transition our monitoring plans to be consistent with the requirements of the 2012 National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule (2012 Planning Rule). This monitoring transition effort affects *Chapter 4: Monitoring and Evaluation* of the 1997 Routt National Forest Plan (RNF Plan), the 2003 Medicine Bow National Forest Plan (MBNF Plan), and the 2001 Thunder Basin National Grassland Plan (TBNG Plan). Currently, each respective Forest and Grassland Plan contains its own Monitoring and Evaluation chapter; our proposal is to replace the three existing monitoring chapters with one to ensure consistent monitoring across all units.

The 2012 Planning Rule requires all National Forests to update their respective monitoring plans by May 9, 2016 and to provide opportunities for the public to participate in developing the plan monitoring program. Accordingly, a 30-day solicitation for public comments for the MBRTB's proposed Monitoring Plan will begin on Friday, March 18<sup>th</sup> and end on Monday, April 18, 2016. The proposed Monitoring Plan and supporting information can be found at:

**Monitoring Transition: 2012 Planning Rule:**

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/mbr/landmanagement/planning>

**2012 Planning Rule:**

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/planningrule/home/?cid=stelprdb5359471>

**RNF Plan, MBNF Plan, and TBNG Plan:**

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/mbr/landmanagement/planning>

The modifications to the forest plan monitoring plans are being conducted under the administrative change procedures of 36 CFR 219.13(c), and are not subject to appeal, objection, or other administrative review.

The 2012 Planning Rule requires that monitoring items appear in the form of a question and that monitoring indicators are developed to address each question posed. Monitoring items should incorporate best available scientific information, but need to remain within the fiscal and technical capabilities of the affected National Forest. The Planning Rule also requires that Forest Plan monitoring be reported biennially (every two years), starting from the date of the



monitoring plan transition. This is a deviation from the 1982 National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule which required annual monitoring and comprehensive monitoring at 5 and 10-year intervals.

Questions and indicators contained in the MBRTB's proposed Monitoring Plan were developed to inform the management of resources by 1) testing relevant assumptions; 2) tracking relevant changes; and 3) measuring management effectiveness and progress toward achieving desired conditions or objectives described in Routt, Medicine Bow, and Thunder Basin Forest and Grassland Plans. Monitoring questions and indicators were also developed to address the eight monitoring categories outlined in the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.12(a)(5)). Monitoring categories required by the 2012 Planning Rule are as follows:

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 the ecological conditions that contribute to the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered 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. Measurable 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 (including social and economic considerations); and
8. The effects of each management system to determine that they do not substantially and permanently impair the productivity of the land.

As we developed the proposed Monitoring Plan, we reevaluated existing monitoring items contained in the Forest Plans and considered new items that more efficiently or effectively address the desired conditions, objectives, and other components found in those plans. Many existing monitoring items are being recommended for removal because they are obsolete, ineffective, or too expensive to consistently implement. Some monitoring items have been retained with modification and others are newly added with the goal of more accurately and efficiently monitoring changes to National Forest System (NFS) lands.

Your comments on the proposed Monitoring Plan are very important and will help guide how future monitoring occurs on the MBRTB. As the responsible official, I will review your comments on the proposed plan and any new information that you may present. After reviewing and considering public comment, I will document my rationale for the final Monitoring Plan in a letter that will be posted on the *MBRTB Proposed Monitoring Plan* website (see link provided above).

Dear Interested Party

3

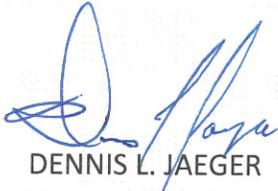
Comments may be mailed or hand-delivered between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays, to:

Forest Supervisor  
Medicine Bow-Routt NF & Thunder Basin NG  
2468 Jackson Street  
Laramie, WY 82070

Electronic comments must be submitted to [katharinemhaynes@fs.fed.us](mailto:katharinemhaynes@fs.fed.us). Please include "Proposed Monitoring Transition" in the subject of your email.

For more information regarding the monitoring transition effort, please contact Katie Haynes at [katharinemhaynes@fs.fed.us](mailto:katharinemhaynes@fs.fed.us) or 307.745.2419. Thank you for your interest in the management of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland.

Sincerely,



DENNIS L. JAEGER  
Forest Supervisor

cc: Monique Nelson, Katherine Haynes, Trey Schillie