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**File Code:** 1920  
**Date:** March 24, 2016

#### Interested Party

The Sawtooth National Forest is providing this opportunity to comment on an intended administrative change to the plan monitoring program in the Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Sawtooth Forest Plan). The intended change will modify the current plan monitoring program to be consistent with the plan monitoring program requirements in the 2012 Planning Rule found in Title 36 CFR Section 219.12(a). As required by Title 36 CFR Section 219.12(c), all forest plan monitoring programs must conform to the requirements of the 2012 planning rule by May 9, 2016. We would like to hear your comments and concerns about the proposed modifications to Chapter IV of the 2012 Sawtooth Forest Plan.

The 2012 Planning Rule at 36 CFR 219.12(a)(5), requires each forest plan monitoring program to contain one or more monitoring questions and associated indicators addressing each of the following eight requirements:

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 the ecological conditions required under 36 CFR 219.9.
4. The status of a select set of the ecological conditions required under § 219.9 to contribute to the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species, conservation of proposed and candidate species, and maintenance of 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.
8. 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 propose to supplement, rather than replace, the monitoring elements found in Chapter IV of the Sawtooth Forest Plan. The modified plan monitoring program should provide information that is most critical for the Forest Supervisor to determine if a change in Sawtooth Forest Plan direction may be needed. Our strategy is to retain those monitoring elements in our current monitoring program that address one or more of the eight requirements, develop new monitoring elements as needed to ensure all eight requirements are addressed, and delete monitoring elements that do not address the eight requirements. Under the 2012 planning rule, the modified plan monitoring program will contain only monitoring questions and associated indicators that focus on resource conditions and uses or services provided by the resources in the area managed under the Sawtooth Forest Plan.



Once the plan monitoring program is modified to be consistent with the requirements, the Forest Supervisor will conduct a biennial evaluation, as required under Title 36 CFR 219.12(d). The new information from the biennial evaluation will be documented in a written monitoring and evaluation report that will be made available to the public. The report will indicate whether or not a change to direction in the Sawtooth Forest Plan, Forest management activities, or the plan monitoring program is needed, or if an assessment may be warranted, based on the new information.

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

The monitoring plan for the Sawtooth Forest Plan was developed to evaluate the potential for changes to the management direction for the Forest, including goals, objectives, and standards and guidelines. The monitoring plan identifies monitoring questions and indicators that would be used to evaluate key components of the Forest Plan within an adaptive management framework. Current forest plan monitoring requirements for the Sawtooth National Forest can be found at:

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

### **Modifications to the Plan Monitoring Program**

An interdisciplinary team for the Sawtooth National Forest has developed a modified plan monitoring program for the Sawtooth Forest Plan that will meet the requirements of the 2012 planning rule. This modified monitoring plan can be found at the following website:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/sawtooth/landmanagement/projects>

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

The modifications to the Sawtooth Forest Plan monitoring program is being conducted under the administrative change procedures of 36 CFR 219.13(c). The public is provided an opportunity to provide comment on the intended modifications. During this comment process, the public may identify other monitoring needs and additional information.

As the responsible official for the proposal, I will review public comments to identify new information for consideration in bringing the current monitoring programs into compliance with the 2012 planning rule. I will work with the Forest interdisciplinary team to determine which elements will be included in the program and which elements will be deleted. Under 36 CFR 219.13(c)(1), after considering comments submitted in response to this notice, I will notify the public of my decision to approve, approve with modifications, or not approve the administrative change to modify the monitoring program of the Sawtooth Forest Plan.

### **How You Can Comment**

This letter begins the period for public participation in this process and it is important that anyone who is interested in this process participate by providing comment or new information for my consideration. It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by

the end of the 30-day comment period. You may mail or hand-deliver your comments between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays, or mail them to:

Kit Mullen  
Forest Supervisor  
Sawtooth National Forest  
2647 Kimberly Road East  
Twin Falls, ID 83301

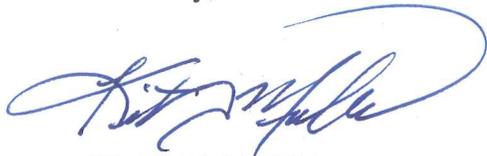
Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, rich text format (.rtf) or Word (.doc) to:

[comments-intermtn-sawtooth@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-intermtn-sawtooth@fs.fed.us).

Please refer to the "Proposed forest plan monitoring modifications" in the subject line of your email.

To be considered, your comments must be postmarked or received by the close of the comment period. For more information about this project, please contact Sharon LaBrecque at (208) 737-3200. Thank you for your interest in the management of the Sawtooth National Forest.

Sincerely,



KIT T. MULLEN  
Forest Supervisor