

Prescott NF Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

Introduction

The 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR §219) requires that all forest plans follow the monitoring requirements of the 2012 Rule, regardless of which rule they were developed under. The 2015 revision of the Prescott Forest Plan was developed under the 1982 Rule provisions and as a result, must be brought in-line with the 2012 Rule monitoring requirements. To achieve this, an administrative change is needed to Chapter 6, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Prescott NF Forest Plan.

The changes include a shift from Management Indicator Species to focal species, additions to and minor modifications of the plan monitoring questions to better address the effects of climate change and the social and economic sustainability of communities in the plan area, and the removal of questions specific to the 1982 Rule provisions. Each of these is discussed in further detail beginning on page 8 of this document. The necessary changes are being kept to a minimum as the original monitoring section in the revised plan incorporates many of the new planning rule concepts and has already gone through a period of public review and comment.

These proposed revised monitoring questions will be posted to the web and notification will be sent to key stakeholders who expressed interest during the Prescott NF Forest Plan revision process. Following a period of review and consideration of comments received, the Prescott NF will make an administrative change to the plan. In accordance with the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR §219.13(c) (2)), changes to content that are not plan amendments or revisions may be made following public notice.

Plan Monitoring Program

The 2012 Planning Rule provides direction for a set of monitoring questions and associated indicators that must be part of every plan monitoring program. The responsible official may consider additional factors and add questions and indicators. The unit's plan monitoring program is to contain, at a minimum, one or more monitoring questions and associated indicators addressing each of the following eight categories listed below (36 CFR §219.12(a)(5)).

1. The status of select watershed conditions (219.12(a)(5)(i))
2. The status of select ecological conditions (including key characteristics of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems) (219.12(a)(5)(ii))
3. The status of focal species to assess ecological conditions (219.12(a)(5)(iii))
4. The status of select ecological conditions that contribute to the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species, conserve proposed & candidate species, and maintain a viable population of species of conservation concern (219.12(a)(5)(iv))
5. The status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives (219.12(a)(5)(v))

Prescott NF Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

6. Measureable changes on the plan area related to climate change and other stressors (219.12(a)(5)(vi))
7. Progress toward meeting desired conditions and objectives (including those for multiple uses) (219.12(a)(5)(vii))
8. The effects of management systems so that they do not substantially and permanently impair the productivity of the land (219.12(a)(5)(viii) and 16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(C) – NFMA)

One additional requirement was included in the Forest Service Handbook (FSH) to address plan contributions to the social and economic sustainability of communities:

9. Indicators addressing the plan contributions to communities, social and economic sustainability of communities, multiple use management in the plan area, or progress toward meeting the desired conditions and objectives related to social and economic sustainability (FSH 1909.12 sec 32.13(f))

Below is a table of the proposed monitoring questions. Many address more than one factor (e.g. watershed conditions and desired conditions or ecological conditions and climate change effects).

Monitoring Questions

Table 1. Monitoring Questions

Action, Effect, or Resource to be Measured	Monitoring Question	Performance Measure	Monitoring Frequency	Monitoring Category
Theme 1 – Legally Required Monitoring				
Progress toward meeting the desired conditions and objectives in the plan. (Section 219.12(a)(5)(vii))	Are we achieving plan objectives within the estimated ranges?	Proportion of objectives accomplished	Annually	7. Plan Components
The effects of each management system to determine that they do not substantially and permanently impair the productivity of the land. (Section 219.12(a)(5)(viii), FSH 1909.12 sec 32.13(f))	Are the effects of forest management resulting in significant changes to the productivity of the land?	Changes in watershed condition class (6 th level hydrologic units)	Annually	8. Productivity 9. Sustainability

Prescott NF Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

Action, Effect, or Resource to be Measured	Monitoring Question	Performance Measure	Monitoring Frequency	Monitoring Category
Status of focal species ¹ to assess ecological conditions due to management actions (Section 219.12(a)(5) (iii)).	What is the habitat occupancy of focal species in response to management actions within the plan area?	Focal species habitat attributes; focal species occurrence and distribution	Every 1-5 years, depending on species	3. Focal Species
Theme 2 – Conserving Biological Diversity				
Vegetation diversity (Obj-1, Obj-2, Obj-3, Obj-4, Obj-5, Obj-6, DC-Veg-1, FSH 1909.12 sec 32.13(f))	<p>What are the current condition and trend of key characteristics for vegetation identified in the desired conditions for the plan area?</p> <hr/> <p>How effective are management actions at maintaining or making progress toward desired conditions for the key characteristics of vegetation within the plan area?</p>	Vegetation size class, percent canopy cover, and composition; carbon stored in vegetation; acres of treatment by treatment type	Every 4 years	2. Terrestrial & Aquatic Ecosystems 3. Focal Species 7. Plan Components 9. Sustainability
Species diversity (Obj-1, Obj-2, Obj-3, Obj-4, Obj-5, Obj-6, Obj-25, Obj-26, Obj-27, Obj-28, DC-Ecosystem Resilience-1, DC-Wildlife-1 to 2)	To what extent are management activities providing ecological conditions to maintain habitat for populations of terrestrial native and desired nonnative species?	Habitat acres treated; miles of fence modified; number of water developments improved; species surveys (e.g., fish, reptiles and amphibians, breeding birds, bats)	Every 2-4 years, depending on species	2. Terrestrial & Aquatic Ecosystems 7. Plan Components
Aquatic species (Obj-24, DC-Aquatic-1, DC-Aquatic-3)	Are management actions maintaining or making progress toward desired habitat conditions for native fish, amphibian, and aquatic reptile species?	Aquatic habitat quality; stream miles improved	Every 2-4 years, depending on species	2. Terrestrial & Aquatic Ecosystems 7. Plan Components

¹ The transition to the new monitoring requirements at 36 CFR 219.12(a)(5) resulted in some changes to this plan monitoring program. The Management Indicator Species (MIS) used to compare and evaluate the plan alternatives were replaced and supplemented with four focal species: northern goshawk, western scrub-jay, western meadowlark, and aquatic macroinvertebrates.

Prescott NF Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

Action, Effect, or Resource to be Measured	Monitoring Question	Performance Measure	Monitoring Frequency	Monitoring Category
Species Conservation (DC-Ecosystem Resilience-1)	Have recovery actions for federally listed species or conservation strategies for regionally sensitive species ² been implemented?	Number of actions completed	Every 2-4 years, depending on species	2. Terrestrial & Aquatic Ecosystems 4. Species Viability 7. Plan Components
	What are the habitat trends for federally listed species on the Prescott NF?	Habitat attributes (e.g. acres of habitat, critical habitat improved)		
Theme 3 – Retaining Ecosystem Resilience				
Nonnative invasive plant species (Obj-6, DC-Ecosystem Resilience-1, DC-Veg-1)	What are the status and trend of areas infested by invasive plant species?	Acres of invasive species surveyed; acres of infestation treated	Annually	6. Climate Change
Destructive insects and disease (DC-Ecosystem Resilience-1)	To what extent are undesirable outbreaks of insects and pathogens occurring within the plan area?	Acres of infestation and tree mortality	Annually	6. Climate Change
Fire (Obj-1, Obj-2, Obj-3, Obj-4, Obj-5, DC-Airshed-1, DC-Ecosystem Resilience-1, FSH 1909.12 sec 32.13(f))	Are management actions moving fire regimes toward desired conditions?	Acres treated by fire severity level and frequency	Annually	7. Plan Components
	To what extent is wildland fire used to maintain desired fuel levels and vegetation characteristics?	Acres of fire managed for multiple objectives; acres of unwanted fire suppressed; postfire fuel loadings	Annually	7. Plan Components
	To what extent is unwanted wildfire on the landscape suppressed?			6. Climate Change 9. Sustainability
	To what extent is prescribed fire used to maintain desired fuel levels, mirror natural processes, and/or restore desired vegetation characteristics?	Acres of prescribed fire by fuel type; postfire fuel loadings; vegetation species structure and density	Annually	7. Plan Components

² Under current direction, the Prescott NF has chosen to treat regionally sensitive species as species of conservation concern

Prescott NF Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

Action, Effect, or Resource to be Measured	Monitoring Question	Performance Measure	Monitoring Frequency	Monitoring Category
	Has the risk for active crown fire been sufficiently reduced in fire-adapted ecosystems where crown fires were not frequent occurrences historically?	Predicted fire behavior by fuel type/loading	Annually	6. Climate Change
	To what extent are extreme weather patterns (e.g., precipitation and air temperature) affecting fire season length and severity?	Monthly/daily energy release component (ERC) estimates by fuel type	Annually	6. Climate Change
Ecosystem resilience (DC-Ecosystem Resilience-1)	What management actions, measures, or decisions is the Forest Service taking to enhance ecosystem resilience or adaptation in response to changing environmental conditions?	Project level design features or mitigations	Every 2 years	7. Plan Components
	What interacting stressors ³ are impacting the plan area? How are these stressors trending, and how are these trends affecting the plan area?	Project level identification of measurable changes resulting from climate change Monthly energy release component (ERC) estimates by fuel type Acres of unwanted wildfire Acres of infestation and tree mortality Acres of invasive species surveyed Visitor use trends	Annually	6. Climate Change
Theme 4 – Maintaining Watershed, Soil, and Air Quality				
High priority watersheds (Obj-18)	Are management actions being implemented to improve watershed conditions?	Number of projects implemented	Annually	1. Watershed Conditions 7. Plan Components

³ Interacting stressors may include fire, insects, invasive species, loss of spatial connectivity, disruption of natural disturbance regimes, geologic hazards, water withdrawals and diversions, and changes in social, economic, and cultural conditions, among others.

Prescott NF Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

Action, Effect, or Resource to be Measured	Monitoring Question	Performance Measure	Monitoring Frequency	Monitoring Category
Watershed features (Obj-19, Obj-23)	Are management actions being implemented to improve conditions of at-risk riparian areas, seeps, and springs?	Number of projects implemented	Annually	1. Watershed Conditions 2. Terrestrial & Aquatic Ecosystems 3. Focal Species 7. Plan Components
Watershed Conditions (Obj-20, Obj-21, Obj-22, Obj-31)	Are management actions being implemented to reduce negative impacts to watershed conditions?	Miles of repaired or improved roads, routes, or trails Number of improved drainage crossings, stream channels, and floodplains.	Annually	1. Watershed Conditions 7. Plan Components
Airshed conditions (DC-Airshed-1, FSH 1909.12 sec 32.13(f))	Are management activities contributing or responding to air quality effects on human health or human enjoyment? Are air quality related values (e.g., visibility) of the Sycamore Canyon and Pine Mountain Wilderness areas being maintained?	Particulate matter (PM _{2.5}) recorded at smoke sensitive sites Visibility using Interagency Monitoring of Protected Visual Environments (IMPROVE) program	Annually	7. Plan Components 9. Sustainability
Theme 5 – Sustaining Recreational and Social Benefits				
Diverse recreation opportunities (Obj-8, Obj-10, Obj-13, Obj-14, Obj-16, DC-Ecosystem Resilience-1, DC-Rec-1, DC-Rec-Trails-2, FSH 1909.12 sec 32.13(f))	How many new recreation opportunities have been added to the system? How many recreation sites or locations have been improved, relocated, or decommissioned in response to known resource damage?	Number of facilities or dispersed sites	Every 2 years	5. Recreation 7. Plan Components

Prescott NF Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

Action, Effect, or Resource to be Measured	Monitoring Question	Performance Measure	Monitoring Frequency	Monitoring Category
	<p>Does the number of recreation opportunities limit overcrowding, reduce user conflicts, and minimize resource damage?</p> <p>Does the range of recreation opportunities consider population demographic characteristics and desires of the local communities?</p>	<p>Visitor use trends, recreation impact assessments, user satisfaction surveys (e.g., National Visitor Use Monitoring)</p>	<p>Every 4-6 years</p>	<p>5. Recreation</p> <p>6. Climate Change</p> <p>7. Plan Components</p> <p>9. Sustainability</p>
	<p>To what extent are visitor information opportunities/ education activities being provided to the public?</p>	<p>Number and type of visitor information and education activities</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>5. Recreation</p> <p>7. Plan Components</p>
<p>Wild and scenic rivers (DC-Wild & Scenic-1)</p>	<p>Has there been adequate protection of outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) of wild and scenic river segments that are eligible or designated?</p>	<p>Changes to ORVs</p>	<p>Every 4-6 years</p>	<p>5. Recreation</p> <p>7. Plan Components</p>
<p>Wilderness areas (DC-Wilderness-1)</p>	<p>Has there been adequate protection of wilderness characteristics of areas that are existing wilderness or recommended for wilderness designation?</p>	<p>Changes to wilderness character</p>	<p>Every 4-6 years</p>	<p>5. Recreation</p> <p>7. Plan Components</p>
<p>Land adjustment (DC-Open Space-1, DC-Lands-1, Obj-29, Obj-31, FSH 1909.12 sec 32.13(f))</p>	<p>To what extent is the Prescott NF land adjustment program supporting or enhancing plan desired conditions (e.g., open space, scenery values, historic access)?</p>	<p>Area of land adjustment that meets community open space needs and provides for natural resource values</p>	<p>Every 4-6 years</p>	<p>5. Recreation</p> <p>7. Plan Components</p> <p>9. Sustainability</p>

Prescott NF Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

Action, Effect, or Resource to be Measured	Monitoring Question	Performance Measure	Monitoring Frequency	Monitoring Category
Theme 6 – Maintaining Infrastructure Capacity				
Roads, trails, and facilities (Obj-9, Obj-11, Obj-12, Obj-15, Obj-17) (DC-Rec-Trails-2, DC-Transportation & Facilities-1)	How many miles of the designated roads and trails are maintained to standard?	Miles of roads and trails	Annually	1. Watershed Conditions 5. Recreation 7. Plan Components
	How many developed and designated recreation sites are being maintained?	Percentage of sites maintained	Annually	5. Recreation 7. Plan Components
	What proportion of trailheads and wilderness boundaries are adequately signed or marked?	Percentage of total trailheads; miles of wilderness boundary	Annually	5. Recreation 7. Plan Components

Focal Species

When the Prescott National Forest revised its plan in 2015, it identified three Management Indicator Species (MIS) that were used in the analysis and comparison of plan alternatives in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). They were chosen to represent those habitats where the species occur and would reflect changes in vegetative conditions associated with management actions. In the 2012 Planning Rule, MIS monitoring has been replaced with monitoring of focal species. Focal species are defined as:

A small subset of species whose status permits inference to the integrity of the larger system to which it belongs and provides meaningful information regarding the effectiveness of the plan in maintaining or restoring ecological conditions to maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities... commonly selected based on their functional role in ecosystems (36 CFR §219.19)

When making the shift to focal species, the final rule considered the challenges the Forest Service faced in monitoring MIS under the 1982 rule. MIS monitoring has been the subject of much of the legal debate around the species provisions of the 1982 rule. The 2012 Rule does not include requirements to designate MIS or monitor their population trends. The concept of MIS as a surrogate for the status of other species is not supported by current science, and population trends are difficult and sometimes impossible to determine within the lifespan of a plan.

Focal species are not surrogates for the status of other species. Focal species monitoring provides information regarding the effectiveness of the plan in providing the ecological conditions necessary to maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities and the persistence of native species in the plan area. Forest Service handbook direction for the selection of focal species can be found in FSH 1909.12 chapter 30 § 32.13c. The criteria for selection may include: the number and extent of relevant ecosystems in the plan area; the primary threats or stressors to those ecosystems, especially those related to

Prescott NF Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

predominant management activities on the plan area; the sensitivity of the species to changing conditions or their utility in confirming the existence of desired ecological conditions; the broad monitoring questions to be answered; factors that may limit viability of species; and others. This does not preclude the use of an invasive species as a focal species, whose presence is a major stressor to an ecosystem.

The 2012 Rule allows the use of any existing or emerging approaches for monitoring the status of focal species that are supported by current science, giving managers greater flexibility for monitoring focal species than was afforded MIS under the 1982 rule requirements. Further, it facilitates better and more meaningful data that will allow for improved efficiencies and more responsive management within plan time frames. Monitoring methods for evaluating the status of focal species may include measures of abundance, distribution, reproduction, presence/ absence, area occupied, survival rates, or others.

The objective is not to choose monitoring techniques that will provide the most information about the focal species, but to choose monitoring techniques that will provide useful information with regard to the purpose for which the species is being monitored. The expectation is that monitoring key ecosystem and watershed conditions along with monitoring the status of a set of well-chosen focal species will provide timely information regarding the effectiveness of plan components related to plant and animal diversity.

Focal species are selected because they are believed to be responsive to ecological conditions in a way that can inform future plan decisions. Forest Service handbook direction (§ 31.13c) for focal species further specifies that every plan monitoring program must identify one or more focal species and one or more monitoring questions and associated indicators addressing the status of the focal species. The purpose for monitoring the status of focal species over time is to provide insight into the following:

1. Integrity of ecological systems on which focal species depend,
2. Effects of management on those ecological conditions,
3. Effectiveness of the plan components to provide for ecological integrity and maintain or restore ecological conditions, and
4. Progress towards achieving desired conditions and objectives for the plan area. It is not expected that a focal species be selected for every element of ecological conditions.

Focal species are expected to provide more useful information or to be more efficiently monitored than other potential indicators. There may be situations where key ecological indicators could be monitored directly, but monitoring focal species as an overall measure of composition, structure, function, and connectivity may be a more appropriate indicator of integrity.

The requirement for the responsible official to monitor focal species allows discretion to determine the most appropriate method and geographic scale for monitoring, within the financial and technical capabilities of the unit. Some focal species may be monitored at scales beyond the plan area boundary, while others may be more appropriately monitored and assessed within the plan area. Monitoring focal species is intended to address situations where they provide more value than monitoring other potential indicators.

Key Considerations for selecting focal species:

- Can the species be effectively monitored?
- Is it difficult (e.g., cryptic or rare species) to detect?

Prescott NF Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

- Is it within financial capability of the Forest to monitor the species?
- Do standardized monitoring approaches exist?
- Does the species provide feedback that is necessary to inform management?
- Are focal species abundant enough to measure change in status?
- Are species responses to management activities and other stressors well known?
- Are there 'off-site' stressors that would mask the response to activities / conditions on NFS lands?
- Is there potential to monitor the focal species across multiple units?
- Are there opportunities for multi-party monitoring?

In review of the considerations for selecting focal species, it was determined that two of the three MIS chosen under the 1982 Rule provisions would serve as good focal species (northern goshawk and aquatic macroinvertebrates) and one would not (American pronghorn).

Focal Species Overview

The following section describes the Prescott NF's focal species and how they will inform management in terms of maintaining ecological integrity and ecosystem diversity. Four species were identified as focal species for the Prescott NF: northern goshawk, western meadowlark, western scrub-jay, and aquatic macroinvertebrates.

Northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*)

The northern goshawk was selected as a focal species for the ponderosa pine PNVTs. They are known to occur on all three of the Ranger Districts of the Prescott NF, including areas near Mingus Mountain, Camp Wood, Prescott Basin, and Crown King. Selection was based on its association with ponderosa pine and tree features for every aspect of its life history from nesting, to roosting, to foraging. Northern goshawk nesting habitat consists of mature and old growth forest stands with relatively high canopy closure. Foraging habitat for the northern goshawk would primarily consist of early, more open seral stages that provide habitat for key prey species including small mammals and passerine birds.

Western scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma californica*)

Western scrub-jay was selected as a focal species for the interior chaparral PNVT. It is commonly found in brushy habitat across foothills, piñon-juniper woodlands, and oak chaparral. It prefers to build its cup nests low to the ground in small trees or shrubs, and some evidence suggests that it prefers early successional growth habitat that provides cover. The western scrub-jay does not migrate; therefore, this species is expected to be found year-round.

Originally, an indicator species was not chosen for the interior chaparral PNVT. After considering the number of acres of chaparral treated, it was decided that a focal species for this PNVT would be appropriate. Because the scrub-jay is expected to be found in the vegetation type year-round, its presence or absence could be considered an indication of the quality of the habitat.

Prescott NF Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

Western meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)

Western meadowlark was selected as a focal species for the grassland PNVTs. It is a grassland obligate species that occurs year-round, generally preferring open, treeless areas with intermediate grass height and moderate levels of litter. The meadowlark is sensitive to the encroachment of woody vegetation, and population density has been shown to be positively influenced by vertical grass cover and vegetation density. Meadowlark presence has been noted in moderately grazed pastures, however, abundance has shown a negative response to heavy grazing.

American pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) was originally chosen as a Management Indicator Species (MIS) for the grassland PNVTs. Pronghorn was dropped from consideration as a focal species for two reasons: 1) as a managed game species, pronghorn population numbers may not accurately reflect the species' response to Forest Service habitat management actions, and 2) changes and impacts to the majority of the pronghorn habitat that occurs off of NFS lands may influence population levels more strongly than habitat improvements on the Prescott NF limited habitat.

Aquatic macroinvertebrates

For the forest plan revision process under the 1982 Rule provisions, macroinvertebrates were the MIS associated with aquatic habitat and late seral riparian habitat. They were selected as an MIS as an indicator of water quality based on their responsiveness to changes in water quality and physical features of stream channels essential for quality aquatic and riparian habitat.

It was determined that as a class, aquatic macroinvertebrates were also suitable as a focal species to assess the ecological condition of the aquatic and riparian habitats on the forest. Aquatic macro-invertebrates include mayflies, stoneflies, caddis flies, black flies, beetles, midges, freshwater earthworms, snails, and many others. Each species has specific habitat needs and so they respond differently to changes in either the chemical, physical, or biological components of their habitat. Monitoring of aquatic macroinvertebrate communities will provide information on management actions occurring alongside the aquatic/riparian zone as well as actions within the watershed.

Strategy for Monitoring Focal Species

Northern goshawks have been monitored for the past two to three decades on NFS lands with solid distribution and occupancy information to use as the basis for future project area assessments. The survey protocol is established and securely in place.

Songbirds are relatively easy to survey because data can be collected on many species at one time without additional effort. The existing breeding bird survey data maps show less than 1.5 percent change in the population trends for both western scrub-jay and western meadowlark in Arizona from 1966-2013 (<http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/tr2013/tr05011.htm>). This suggests at least a stable trend for both small bird species across the state. This data would serve as a solid baseline for future analyses.

Prescott NF Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

Monitoring of aquatic macroinvertebrates will employ methods and data sources from the USDA Forest Service, US Environmental Protection Agency, Arizona Department of Environment Quality, and best available science to assess the status of the focal species.

Climate Change

The plan monitoring program must contain one or more monitoring questions associated with indicators to determine whether there are measurable changes on the plan area related to climate change and other stressors that may be affecting the plan area. Taken together, the planning framework and these requirements will ensure that information related to climate change will be addressed in a consistent and strategic fashion. This monitoring requirement may relate to other monitoring requirements or to interacting stressors that individually or collectively may be affecting the plan area. Interacting stressors may include fire, insects, invasive species, loss of spatial connectivity, disruption of natural disturbance regimes, geologic hazards, water withdrawals and diversions, and changes in social, economic, and cultural conditions, among others.

The plan monitoring program incorporates provisions that should improve understanding of the relationships between key plan components and climate change. Information about aquatic habitat factors that may be associated with climate change, such as water temperature and flow rates, can be useful for tracking variability within ecosystem condition and trends observed over a prescribed evaluation period. Monitoring the frequency and spatial extent of unplanned wildfire occurrences and insect outbreaks would help to assess how well management is mitigating for hotter, drier, and more fire-prone conditions, and whether existing management is promoting resilient ecosystems. Changes in the climate could lead to increased recreation use resulting from more people seeking heat relief at higher elevations during a longer, hotter, and drier summer, or higher winter season visitation as warmer winters and reduced snowpack allow for greater accessibility to the high country and milder temperatures in the lower elevations.

Social and Economic Sustainability

Social, economic, and cultural sustainability must also be addressed in the monitoring program because sustainability is an inherent part of several of the required monitoring items in the 2012 Planning Rule. To carry out this intent, the plan monitoring program must contain one or more questions and associated indicators addressing the plan contributions to communities, social and economic sustainability, multiple use management in the plan area, or progress toward meeting the desired conditions and objectives related to social and economic sustainability (FSH 1909.12, chapter 30, section 13.13f).

There are multiple plan monitoring questions that address a range of ecosystem services upon which communities depend. These include questions related to productivity and vegetation diversity that affect the economy of local communities, sustainable recreation opportunities associated with social sustainability, and issues such as air quality and hazardous fuel reduction that contribute to quality of life in local communities. All of these factors are described in the Forest Plan desired conditions, and progress towards meeting these plan components is tracked through a number of monitoring questions.

Prescott NF Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

1982 Planning Rule Elements

Provisions of the 1982 Planning Rule were followed in developing the original monitoring program for the revised Forest Plan, however, the 2012 Planning Rule includes a requirement that monitoring strategies developed under the provisions of a prior planning regulation are to be modified to meet the 2012 Planning Rule's new monitoring requirements.

Theme 1 included three elements that were legally required under the 1982 Rule provisions, but not the 2012 Planning rule. They are:

- Comparison of actual and estimated costs of activities estimated in plan objectives
- Lands not suited for timber production
- Maximum size of openings from even-aged management

The first element was dropped to avoid the unnecessary burden of developing estimated costs for the plan objectives. The second two elements were dropped because they are based on outdated policies related to timber management.

Broad- scale Monitoring Coordination

Under the 2012 Planning Rule, the Prescott NF monitoring program is to be coordinated and integrated with the Broader scale Monitoring Strategy (BSBS) developed by the Region/Regional Forester (36 CFR §219.12(a)(3)). The Regional Broad-scale strategy being developed for the Rocky Mountain and Southwestern Regions of the USDA Forest Service will include the appropriate BSMS monitoring questions, indicators, and associated parameters (scale, databases, and potential governance approaches). The framework will be an initial outline of the BSMS for the two regions but will be adjusted over time as new priorities and information emerge. The Prescott NF has participated in and will continue to be engaged in dialogue that will shape the framework currently under development. As such, the unit monitoring will be coordinated and integrated with the Broader scale Monitoring Strategy when it comes on-line.

Next Steps

As noted in the introduction, the proposed changes will be posted to the web, and notification will be sent to key stakeholders who expressed interest during the Prescott NF Forest Plan revision process. Following a period of review and consideration of comments received, the Prescott NF will make an administrative change to the plan in accordance with the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR §219.13(c) (2)), whereby changes to content that are not plan amendments or revisions may be made following public notice.

The administrative change will bring the Prescott NF Forest Plan in line with the 2012 Rule monitoring requirements. The Forest Plan provides the overall monitoring strategy, and the results of the monitoring process will be published in the biannual Prescott NF Monitoring Report. This strategy provides a regular process for reviewing recent findings and evaluating the need for modifications in the plan, monitoring plan and practices.