



**File Code:** 1950

**Date:** April 6, 2016

Dear Stakeholder:

The 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219) requires the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest to establish a land management plan monitoring program by May 9, 2016, or as soon as practicable, that is consistent with the new Planning Rule's monitoring requirements. We have reviewed our existing Rogue River and Siskiyou Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans) monitoring program to determine what modifications are needed to conform to the new monitoring requirements. We want to take this opportunity to share our new monitoring program with you and request your input.

### **2012 Planning Rule**

As defined by the Planning Rule, monitoring is continuous and provides feedback for the planning cycle by testing relevant assumptions, tracking relevant conditions over time, and measuring management effectiveness (36 CFR 219.12). The Planning Rule includes eight monitoring requirements.

- 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 assess the ecological conditions required under §219.9.
- iv. 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, 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. Measureable 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)).

The Rogue River-Siskiyou's new Forest Plan monitoring program must contain one or more monitoring questions and associated indicators addressing each of the monitoring requirements. The monitoring questions are tied to specific Forest Plan components, which include desired future conditions, plan objectives, and standards and guidelines. They must focus on providing the information necessary to evaluate whether Forest Plan components



are effective and appropriate, and whether management is being effective in maintaining or achieving progress toward the desired conditions and objectives for the Forest.

The monitoring plan in the Forest Plan was used as a starting point for developing the new Forest Plan monitoring program. Indicators are quantitative or qualitative variables that can be measured or described and, when observed periodically, show trends in conditions that are relevant to the associated monitoring questions.

### Focal Species

Every Forest Plan monitoring program must identify focal species along with monitoring questions and associated indicators to track the status of the identified focal species, in order to comply with monitoring requirement. Focal species are “a small subset of species whose status permits inference to the integrity of the larger ecological system to which it belongs and provides meaningful information regarding the effectiveness of the plan in maintaining or restoring the ecological conditions to maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities in the plan area. Focal species would be commonly selected on the basis of their functional role in ecosystems.” (36 CFR 219.19)

Management indicator species (MIS) in the Forest Plans were used as a starting point for identifying focal species. Currently, the Forest has eleven wildlife and plant species/guilds listed as management indicator species. These species are listed in following table.

**Table 1. Proposed Changes from Management Indicator Species to Interim Focal Species and Rationale**

Rogue River Forest Plan	Siskiyou Forest Plan	Interim Focal Species	Rationale
Northern Spotted Owl	Northern Spotted Owl	Drop-track under (iv) recovery of T&E species	T&E species that is key component of Northwest Forest Plan
Pileated Woodpecker	Pileated Woodpecker	Drop	Covered by the Primary Cavity Nester guild below.
Pacific Marten	Pacific Marten	Pacific Marten	Species of mature and late successional forests; indicator of down wood habitat.
Bald Eagle	Bald Eagle	Drop	Recovered; habitat condition will be tracked with fish focal species and riparian/stream ecological condition monitoring; protect at the project level by evaluation as sensitive species and Biological Evaluations.
Woodpeckers	Primary Cavity Nesters	Primary Cavity Nesters	Broad indicator of the health of snag habitat.
	Osprey	Drop	This species niche is covered by other riparian and aquatic dependent species.
Peregrine falcon		Drop	Too narrow of an ecological niche to be used as a focal species.

Rogue River Forest Plan	Siskiyou Forest Plan	Interim Focal Species	Rationale
Black tail Deer	Black tail Deer	Black tail Deer	Needed to track the amount and function of early seral habitat where elk are not present on the Forest.
Roosevelt Elk	Roosevelt Elk	Roosevelt Elk	Providing elk habitat and hunting opportunities is an important public issue; also indicator of amount of early seral habitat and elk is sensitive to road management.
Sensitive Plants		Drop Sensitive plants; substitute Serpentine Endemic Plants	All sensitive plants is too wide a spread of habitats to be a meaningful focal species guild. Serpentine endemics is narrower and focuses on habitats of regional significance.
	Port Orford Cedar	Drop	Other species were added that are better indicators of broad scale ecological integrity, primarily oaks.
		Oaks	Important family of plants for wildlife and transition habitats. Affected by fire suppression and susceptible to sudden oak death.
		KMP and OC Steelhead	Indicators of high quality stream and riparian habitat and aquatic ecosystem health; the range of KMP steelhead coincides with SONCC Coho critical habitat.
		Beaver	Contribute to watershed function and natural storage and release of water, especially given expected climate change.
		Invertebrate Pollinators	Critical declines have occurred; foundational guild for ecosystem health and function; associated with biological diversity on the landscape.
		Caves and Bats	The presence of white nose syndrome now in the Pacific Northwest elevates the importance of integrity of habitats and populations.

Based on how well the species serve as indicators of ecological integrity and existing Forest Plan components, along with the anticipated time until the completion of Forest Plan revision, the following is proposed for the transition period.

- Continue to monitor primary cavity nesters, Pacific marten, and elk as interim focal species.
  1. Primary cavity nesters are indicators of dead and down wood habitat;

2. Pacific marten are indicators of mature and late successional habitat above 4,000 feet; and
  3. Elk are indicators of early seral habitat.
- Remove spotted owl, osprey, peregrine falcon, bald eagle, Port Orford cedar, and pileated woodpecker given they are monitored under Endangered Species Act (ESA), are covered by other focal species, or are no longer at risk. The spotted owl is monitored as part of the Northwest Forest Plan and Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan.
  - Add oaks and serpentine endemic plants for their importance as ecological indicators of biodiversity and for serpentine fen and upland habitats.
  - Add Klamath Mountain Province (KMP) and Oregon Coast (OC) steelhead as indicators of high quality stream and riparian habitat and aquatic ecosystem health. The range of KMP steelhead defines SONCC coho critical habitat, except where natural barriers preclude coho access.
  - Add beaver as indicators of biodiversity, watershed health, and the capacity of natural systems for sustainable storage and release of water. This capacity is critical in the face of climate change.
  - Add insect pollinators as indicators of biological diversity in habitats, sensitivity to contaminants and ecosystem health.
  - Add caves and bats, due to the presence of white nose syndrome now in the Pacific Northwest and the heightened concern for habitat integrity and bat populations.

The interim focal species for the Forest will be re-evaluated during the Forest Plan revision process and will likely change through that process, based on the corresponding changes to Forest Plan components (e.g., standards and guidelines).

### **Administrative Changes**

In order to implement the new Forest Plan monitoring program, the Forest will be making the following change. First, the new Forest Plan monitoring program would replace the existing monitoring program described in the current Forest Plans.

The changes will be made using an administrative change under the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219). An administrative change (36 CFR 219.13(c)) is any change to a plan that is not a plan amendment or plan revision. Administrative changes include corrections of clerical errors to any part of the plan, conformance of the plan to new statutory or regulatory requirements, or changes to other content in the plan, including the monitoring program (§ 219.7(f)(iii)).

### **Forest Plan Monitoring Program**

The Forest will prepare its first monitoring report under this new program in fiscal year 2018. The biennial monitoring evaluation report will use the indicators to answer the monitoring questions and evaluate the trends. The report will document whether a change to the Forest Plan or change to the monitoring program is warranted based on new information or whether there is no need for change at that time as required by the Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.5).

### **Public Input**

As required by the 2012 Planning Rule, a substantive change to the monitoring program made outside of the process for plan revision or amendment may be made only after notice to the public of the intended change and consideration of public comment (§ 219.16(c)(6)). We invite your comments on these proposed administrative changes and the specific monitoring questions and indicators. These documents are available electronically at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/rogue-siskiyou/landmanagement/planning> or by contacting us, as specified below.

We would like your comments by May 8, 2016. Comments may be submitted by email to [comments-pacificnorthwest-rogue-rogue-siskiyou@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificnorthwest-rogue-rogue-siskiyou@fs.fed.us). Please put "**FP Monitoring Transition**" into the subject line.

Please send your written comments to:

Shannon Downey, Environmental Coordinator  
Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest  
3040 Biddle Road  
Medford, OR 97504  
Or FAX: (541) 618-2146

You may obtain a copy of the draft monitoring plan or hand-deliver your comments to the above address during normal business hours which are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. All those who comment will remain on our mailing list and receive future updates on this proposal.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project, available for public inspection, and released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

If you have any questions concerning this proposal, please contact Shannon Downey at [shannondowney@fs.fed.us](mailto:shannondowney@fs.fed.us) or 541-618-2074.

Sincerely,



ROBERT G. MACWHORTER  
Forest Supervisor