



File Code: 1920
Date: March 10, 2016

Dear Interested Forest User:

The Ouachita National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) was revised in December 2005. Non-substantive corrections or adjustments to the Forest Plan may be made under the 2012 Planning Rule (April 2012), using "Administrative Changes," defined as "any change to a plan that is not a plan amendment or revision." Administrative changes allow a Forest to make changes to the Forest Plan to bring it into conformance with new statutory or regulatory requirements. The 2012 Planning Rule and associated directives are available for review online at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/planningrule/home/?cid=stelprd3828310>.

Required Monitoring Elements

The 2012 Planning Rule requires that each forest plan monitoring program must contain, or be revised to contain, by May 9, 2016, one or more monitoring questions and associated indicators addressing each of the eight requirements from 36 CFR 219.12(a)(5). These elements and changes to the current Monitoring Plan to address those elements are listed below.

Proposed Changes to the Monitoring Plan

Monitoring Evaluation Reports will be produced on a biennial schedule unless there is information that should be reported annually. It is anticipated that the next Monitoring Evaluation Report with the additions noted in the following numbered items will be available by September 2017. A review of the eight monitoring elements required by 36 CFR 219.12(a)(5) was conducted by Forest specialists with significant knowledge of the elements under review. The review resulted in few recommended changes to the Monitoring Plan:

1. Status of select watershed conditions: No Change
2. Status of select ecological conditions including key characteristics of terrestrial and aquatic systems: No Change
3. Status of focal species to assess the ecological conditions required: Recommendation by specialists that:
 - a. The current monitoring of Management Indicator Species (MIS) continue because that monitoring addresses all species likely to be named Focal Species and;
 - b. A list of potential list Focal Species has been identified from within the current MIS, but no changes to monitoring will be instituted until the proposed Focal Species are subjected to assessment and public review, and the Forest Plan is next revised.

This recommendation was supported by specialists because Management Indicator Species have been monitored on the Forest for over 25 years and there is valuable trend information that would be lost if certain species were eliminated from monitoring.

4. Status of a select set of the ecological conditions to contribute to the recovery of federally listed T&E species, conserve proposed/candidate species and maintain a viable population of each species of conservation concern: No Change
5. Status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives: Minor Change – the monitoring question, "How many PAOT (persons at one time) days have been utilized?" is proposed for removal from the Monitoring Plan because PAOTs merely measure capacity and do not provide a measure of visitor use, visitor satisfaction or insight into progress made toward meeting recreation objectives.



6. Measureable changes within the plan area related to climate change and other stressors that may be affecting the plan area: This is a new requirement, but sufficient monitoring questions that monitor the health or terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems exist in the Monitoring Plan that only the following were suggested to be added:
 - a. The following question will be added to the Forest monitoring plan:
 - What are the status and trends of forest health threats on the forest?
 - b. The Forest will also utilize the regional office broad-scale monitoring strategy for climate change and the following associated questions:
 - During this monitoring cycle, where any stressors observed that affected natural resources?
 - What events occurred during the monitoring period (periods of drought; insect or disease infestations)?
 - Is there any measurable evidence that events were related to climate changes?
7. Progress toward meeting the desired conditions and objectives in the plan, including for providing multiple use opportunities: No Change
8. Effects of each management system to determine that they do not substantially and permanently impair the productivity of the land: No Change

Administrative Change

The Monitoring Plan is considered a component of the 2005 Forest Plan. The proposed administrative change will update the Monitoring Plan to satisfy the requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule.

Background

Worksheets that document the review of each of the required monitoring elements are available on the Forest website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/ouachita/landmanagement/planning>. The Regional Office is responsible for broad-scale monitoring that will include information on Social and Economic monitoring and climate change. Additional information from the R8 broad-scale monitoring strategy may be found at this website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/r8/landmanagement/planning>. No changes are anticipated to the Forest's Monitoring Plan as a result of Regional Office broad-scale monitoring, although any conclusive results may be referenced in subsequent monitoring reports.

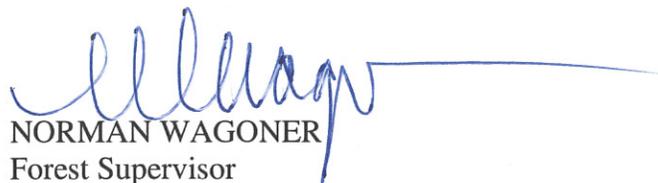
When will the Administrative Change become effective?

This administrative change will become effective after consideration of comments received during public review and upon the signature of the Forest Supervisor. Administrative changes are not subject to the objection process (36 CFR 219.50).

Why am I getting this letter?

This letter is to invite you, should you have any comments or questions concerning this proposed change, to email or call Alett Little, Forest Planner, at alittle@fs.fed.us or 501-321-5372. Comments may also be mailed to, *Ouachita National Forest, Attn: Alett Little, PO Box 1270, Hot Springs, AR 71902*. Comments will be accepted until **April 12, 2016**. This letter will also be posted on the Ouachita National Forest website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/ouachita/landmanagement/planning>.

Sincerely,



NORMAN WAGONER
Forest Supervisor