

Sumter National Forest
Revised Land and Resource Management Plan
Administrative Change
2012 Planning Rule Monitoring Program Transition
April 27, 2016

This Administrative Change – 2012 Planning Rule Monitoring Program Transition – to the 2004 *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan Sumter National Forest* (Forest Plan), brings the plan monitoring program into conformance with the requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule. The 2012 Planning Rule allows for corrections or adjustments to the Forest Plan using a process called “Administrative Changes”. “Administrative Changes” as defined by 36 CFR 219.13(c) in the 2012 Planning Rule is “...any change to a plan that is not a plan amendment or 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 other content in the plan (219.7(f)).

Administrative Change

The administrative changes to the Forest Plan monitoring program are as follows:

Evaluation Reports

Monitoring Evaluation Reports will be produced on a biennial schedule. It is anticipated that the first biennial Monitoring Evaluation Report will be available by October/2018.

Climate Change/Carbon Storage and Greenhouse Gasses

In meeting the requirement to monitor “measurable changes on the plan area related to climate change and other stressors that may be affecting the plan area” (36 CFR 219.12(a) (5) (VI)), the following monitoring questions and indicators will be added to the Forest’s Monitoring Program:

Monitoring Question 22 – **How has climate variability changed and how is it projected to change across the region?**

Monitoring Question 23 – **How is climate variability and change influencing the ecological, social, and economic conditions and contributions provided by plan areas in the region?**

Monitoring Question 24 – **What effects do national forests in the region have on a changing climate?**

Indicators and Procedures for these three Monitoring Questions:

These three monitoring questions will be addressed and evaluated through the Region 8 Broader-Scale Monitoring Strategy, which the Forest will incorporate into the Forest Monitoring Evaluation Reports. To see the indicators and

procedures that will be used at the broader-scale for these monitoring questions, see the Region 8's Broader-Scale Monitoring Strategy at www.fs.usda.gov/main/r8/landmanagement/planning.

In addition to including Monitoring Questions 22, 23, and 24, the following Monitoring Questions from the current monitoring program in the Forest Plan provide information to evaluate "other stressors that may be affecting the plan area." These monitoring questions and their indicators are:

Monitoring Question 6 – What are status and trends of forest health threats on the Sumter?

Indicators:

- Air Quality
 - Acid Deposition
 - Ozone
 - Particulate Matter
- Fire Regime Condition Class
- Forest Density
- Hazardous Fuels Treatment
 - Mechanical Treatments
 - Prescribed Fire Treatments
- Non-native Invasive Species
- Smoke and Prescribed Burning
- Timber Harvest – Commercial Thinning
- Wildfire

Focal Species¹

New questions and indicators on the status of focal species (see 36 CFR 219.12(a) (5) (iii)) will be added to the monitoring plan. Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12, 32.13c states, "Every plan monitoring program must identify at least one focal species and one or more monitoring questions and associated indicators to track the status of the identified focal species."

The following tables display selected focal species and the ecosystem that they represent. Table 1 represents the mountain geographic region and Table 2 represents the piedmont geographic region.

¹ A "focal species" is defined as a "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" (36 CFR 219.19).

Table 1. Focal Species and Ecosystem (Mountain)

Andrew Pickens Ranger District	
Focal Species	Ecosystem
Pileated woodpecker	Rich cove forests
White oak	Dry-mesic oak hickory forests
Shortleaf pine	Southern Appalachian shortleaf pine-oak forest and woodlands

Table 2. Focal Species and Ecosystem (Piedmont)

Enoree and Long Cane Ranger Districts	
Focal Species	Ecosystem
Hooded warbler	Mesic forests and Mesic slope forest
White oak	Dry-mesic oak forests
Post oak	Dry-xeric oak-pine woodland and savanna
Shortleaf pine	Shortleaf pine-oak forest and woodland

Some of these species were already being monitored in the existing monitoring program as management indicator species. They will continue to be monitored to the protocols already established. However, the evaluation of the information gathered from the monitoring of these species will now be used within the context of evaluating the integrity of the ecological system the species is a part of, along with the effectiveness of the plan in maintaining or restoring those ecological conditions.

The following is a list of existing monitoring questions that will also be used to track and report on “focal species”:

Monitoring Question 1 - Are rare ecological communities being protected, maintained, and restored?

Indicators:

- Distribution of rare communities on the Forest (Management Prescription 9.F.)

Monitoring Question 2 - Are landscape-level and stand-level composition and structure of major forest communities within desirable ranges of variability?

Indicators:

- Restored native communities on sites formerly occupied by loblolly pine forest on the Andrew Pickens
- Rare communities on dry-xeric sites in the piedmont and mountains
- Restored dry-mesic oak, oak-pine, and pine-oak communities on the piedmont
- Shortleaf pine and shortleaf pine/oak communities on the piedmont
- Restored native communities on sites currently occupied by white pine stands

- Trends and frequency of focal species (some currently being tracked as MIS) on the forest in relationship to specific ecosystems

Monitoring Question 3 - Are key successional stage habitats being provided?

Indicators:

- Trends and frequency of focal species (some currently being tracked as MIS) on the forest in relationship to specific ecosystems

Monitoring Question 4 - How well are key terrestrial habitat attributes being provided?

Indicators:

- Trends and frequency of focal species (some currently being tracked as MIS) on the forest in relationship to specific ecosystems

Status of Select Watershed Conditions

This monitoring item is related to the *Watershed Condition Framework* (2011) and *Watershed Condition Technical Guide* (2011). Indicators for selected monitoring items are defined and further explained in the technical guide.

Current priority watersheds are Lower Indian Creek-Enoree River and Coxs Creek. In meeting the requirement to monitor “the status of select watershed conditions” (36 CFR 219.12(a) (5) (i)), the following monitoring questions and indicators will be added to the Forest’s Monitoring Program:

Monitoring Question 26 - What are the trends for physical and biological conditions on priority watersheds?

Indicators and Procedures:

- Riparian/wetland vegetation condition
- Road/trail maintenance
- Open road density
- Soil erosion
- Fire Regime Condition Class
- Insects/Diseases
- Large Woody Debris

Effects of Management Systems to Determine that they do not Substantially and Permanently Impair Productivity of the Land

This requirement is directly identified in the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and was addressed in the 1982 rule. The *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan Sumter National Forest* (Forest Plan) complies with the 1982 rule. Productivity is defined as the capacity of National Forest System lands and their ecosystems to provide various renewable resources in certain amounts in perpetuity. For the purposes of this subpart, productivity is an ecological term, not an economic term (36 CFR 219.19).

The term “management system” must be understood in the context of the NFMA guidance on timber management. The planning rule at 36 CFR 219.19 defines the term as a timber management system, such as even-aged management or uneven-aged management. Research and evaluation will be done on a sample basis to address effects on productivity.

Best Management Practices² (BMPs)

The agency utilizes methods, measures or practices that are both structural and non-structural to control nonpoint pollution from entering bodies of water. Approved BMPs are applied to management activities to control water pollution and for compliance with established State and national water quality goals.

BMP implementation and effectiveness are monitored using National Core BMP monitoring protocols and reporting systems. Field evaluations are used to monitor BMP implementation to determine whether appropriate site-specific BMP prescriptions were planned and implemented as intended. BMP monitoring data is managed in the established corporate data system and analyzed at national, regional, and forest or grassland levels (from *National Best Management Practices for Water Quality Management on National Forest System Lands, Volume 1: National Core BMP Technical Guide*, April 2012).

The following monitoring questions and indicator will be added to the Sumter National Forest Monitoring Program:

Monitoring Question 27 - Are BMPs for water quality being planned and implemented properly?

Indicators and Procedures:

- Qualitative observations (following National Core BMP monitoring protocols and reporting systems) to determine if BMPs are being planned and carried out and effective in mitigating nonpoint source pollution

² The Forest Service utilizes BMPs to meet its nonpoint pollution source control needs under the Clean Water Act. The Forest Plan contains specific standards including the use of *South Carolina Best Management Practices for Forestry* (2003) during implementation of project activities.

Soil Productivity

Soil quality monitoring guidance is found in Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2551.6 and soil disturbance monitoring protocols are identified in *Soil-Disturbance Field Guide* (2009). Field monitoring requires identifying specific soil attributes to determine the percentage of each soil-disturbance class impacted by project activities.

Monitoring Question 28 – Are management activities being implemented that do not lead to substantial soil impairment³ on 15 percent or greater of an activity area?

Indicators and Procedures:

Soil quality monitoring protocols will determine percentage soil-disturbances classes for:

- Compaction
- Displacement
- Erosion
- Rutting
- Organic matter

Social, Cultural, and Economic Sustainability of Communities

In meeting the requirement to monitor plan contributions to the social, cultural, and economic sustainability of communities, which is a part of monitoring the progress toward meeting the desired conditions and objectives, including providing multiple use opportunities (see 36 CFR 219.12(a)(5)(vii)), the following monitoring questions and indicators will be added to the Forest's Monitoring Program.

Monitoring Question 25 – What changes are occurring in the social, cultural, and economic conditions in the areas influenced by national forests in the region?

Indicators and Procedures:

This monitoring question will be addressed and evaluated through the Region 8 Broader-Scale Monitoring Strategy, which the Forest will incorporate into the Forest Evaluation Reports. To see the indicators and procedures that will be used at the broader-scale for this monitoring question, see the Region 8's Broader-Scale Monitoring Strategy at www.fs.usda.gov/main/r8/landmanagement/planning.

The following monitoring questions and indicators from the current Forest Plan provide information needed to evaluate ecosystem service benefits that are relevant to plan implementation:

³ FSM 2550.5 Definitions: Substantial soil impairment – Detrimental changes in soil properties (physical, chemical, or biological) that result in the loss of the inherent ecological capacity or hydrologic function of the soil resource that lasts beyond the scope, scale, or duration of the project causing the change.

Monitoring Question 6 - What are status and trends of forest health threats on the Sumter?

Indicators:

- Same as those listed under climate change for question 6

Monitoring Question 8 - What are the trends for demand species and their use?

Indicators:

- Black bear
- Bobwhite quail
- Eastern wild turkey
- White-tailed deer
- Hunting permits/tags
- Recreational fisheries management

Monitoring Question 9 - Are high quality, nature-based recreational experiences being provided, and what are the trends?

Indicators:

- Recreation use and satisfaction

Monitoring Question 11 - What is the status and trend of wilderness character?

Indicators:

- Wilderness qualities

Monitoring Question 12 - What are the status and trend of Wild and Scenic River conditions?

Indicators:

- National Wild and Scenic Rivers, Outstandingly Remarkable Values
- Water Quality

Monitoring Question 13 - Are the scenery and recreational settings changing and why?

Indicators:

- Recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS)
- Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs)

Monitoring Question 14 - Are heritage sites protected?

Indicators:

- Heritage protection effectiveness

Monitoring Question 17 - How do actual outputs and services compare with projected levels?

Indicators:

- Estimated and actual costs of plan implementation
- Forest products production
- Payments to States and Counties
- Transportation infrastructure

Approval and Effective Date

This Administrative Change becomes effective upon signature below, and being posted online at the Forest's website. Administrative changes are not subject to the objection process (36 CFR 219.50). This Administrative change will remain in effect until the Forest Plan is revised.

/s/ Tony L. White
Acting Forest Supervisor
Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests

04/29/2016
Date