



File Code: 1920

Date: May 6, 2016

Dear Interested Party,

The Superior National Forest made changes to the 2004 Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) monitoring program to comply with the Forest Service's 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.12) and to update our existing monitoring program. These changes have been incorporated into the Superior National Forest Administrative Change - Chapter 4 Monitoring and Evaluation that is and posted on our internet site, [Monitoring Program Transition](#). This action is not be subject to administrative review as it is considered an administrative change to the Forest Plan (36 CFR 219.13(c)) rather than a Plan Amendment.

The proposed changes were available for public comment for 30 days from February 16 through March 16, 2016. Three comments were received. Two of those warranted clarification of the monitoring intent and identified some opportunities for collaboration and cooperation: The first set of comments focused on the trust responsibility to the bands and the related facilitation of the exercise of Treaty Rights and Interests. This comment did result in the rewording of one of the Treaty Rights and Interests questions, and the addition of indicators in all three questions concerning Treaty Rights and Interests. The second set of comments focused on climate change, and all of the suggestions are currently monitored across our different resource areas. This comment did not result in any changes to the monitoring program.

Background

The monitoring program changes comply with the new Planning Rule, which provides direction for the development and revision of Forest Plans, went into effect in March 2012. The 2012 Planning Rule requires our monitoring program contain monitoring questions and indicators that address the following eight areas:

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 ecological conditions required for diverse plant and animal communities.
4. The status of a select set of ecological conditions that contribute to the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species, conserve proposed and candidate species, and maintains a viable population of each species of conservation concern.
5. The status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives.



6. Measureable 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 providing for 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.

Of the eight elements, our existing monitoring program addressed all of these except for number 6. Two monitoring questions have been added to address this climate change requirement. Additionally, Forest staff reviewed our existing monitoring program, and deleted five questions. The justification for those deletions can be found in this [notification letter](#) posted on our website.

Finally, the 2012 Planning Rule changes the publication of the Monitoring and Evaluation Report from an annual to biennial publication. Our first monitoring evaluation biennial report is expected by May 2017.

Public Involvement and Notification

In accordance with direction (36 CFR 219.16(c)(6)), changes to the monitoring program can be made through an administrative change but only after the public has had an opportunity to comment on the intended changes. The following opportunities have been provided for the public:

- A public notification letter (dated September 4, 2015) was sent to the Tribes in the area and posted to the web on September 25, 2015. The letter identified the Forest's intent to address 8 monitoring elements and modify our existing program. No comments or interest from the public was received.
- 30-day public notification (February 16 through March 16, 2016)
 - Internet posting to Forest homepage on February 14, 2016 of the following
 - Invitation Letter to Comment dated February 12, 2016 including the summary of monitoring changes
 - Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan, "Monitoring and Evaluation" updated to incorporate the proposed changes
 - Hard copy letters sent to 59 partners, other agencies, and LLBO DRM (mailing list in project file)
 - Invitation Letter to Comment dated February 12, 2016 (sent out Feb. 16) including the summary of monitoring changes

- Comments were received from three respondents during our 30-day notification and comment period. Of the three comments considered, one set of comments resulted in slight changes to the proposed monitoring questions, indicators, or monitoring program.

Implementation

The updated Superior National Forest Administrative Change - Chapter 4 Monitoring and Evaluation posted at the Superior National Forest website, Monitoring Program Transition, on May 6, 2016, goes into effect immediately.

Sincerely,


for BRENDA HALTER
Forest Supervisor

