



File Code: 1920
Date: June 1, 2016

Interested Party:

I am approving administrative changes to the forest plan monitoring program associated with the 2012 Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) to comply with the Forest Service's 2012 planning rule.

1. Background

The 2012 planning rule, codified at 36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 219 (36 CFR 219), guides forest plan monitoring across the Forest Service. All forest plan monitoring programs are required to conform to the planning rule by May 9, 2016. The strategy we used to identify the modifications focused on addressing the purpose of the forest plan monitoring program as described in 36 CFR 219.12(a)(1), which includes the need for monitoring information that will enable the responsible official to determine if a change in plan components is necessary.

As required by 36 CFR 219.12(a)(5), each forest plan monitoring program must contain one or more monitoring questions and associated indicators addressing each of the following eight requirements:

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 the ecological conditions required under 36 CFR 219.9.
4. 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, conservation of proposed and candidate species, and maintenance of a viable population of each species of conservation concern
5. The status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives.
6. Measurable 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 for providing 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 (16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(C)).

This administrative change is a modification to monitoring elements found in Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan. We retained those elements of the original monitoring program that addressed the eight requirements listed above, developed new elements where needed to address the eight requirements, and deleted elements that did not address the eight requirements.

The Forest Plan monitoring program sets plan monitoring questions and associated indicators. Monitoring questions and associated indicators are designed to inform management of resources in the plan area, including testing assumptions, tracking changes and measuring management effectiveness and progress toward achieving or maintaining the plan's desired conditions or objectives. Questions and indicators are based on one or more desired conditions or objectives or other components in the plan. Not every plan component needs to have a corresponding monitoring question.

Under the 2012 planning rule, the Forest Plan monitoring program consists of monitoring questions and associated indicators to evaluate if plan components are effective and appropriate, and if management is effective in maintaining or achieving progress toward desired conditions and objectives for the plan area. Additional information for implementing the Forest Plan monitoring program may be documented in a separate monitoring guide that would, for example, identify methods for data collection, how the data are stored, and responsibilities for managing monitoring information. The monitoring guide would not be part of the Forest Plan and could be changed as needed.

Forest plan monitoring information will be evaluated every two years. The monitoring evaluation report must indicate whether or not a change to the plan, management activities, the monitoring program, or a new assessment, may be warranted based on the new information. The monitoring evaluation report must be used to inform adaptive management of the plan area. The expected publication date of the first biennial monitoring evaluation report is expected to be no later than two years from the date of this letter of approval.

2. Public Comment and Forest Service Responses

The 30-day public comment period began on March 24, 2016 with posting a public notice and comment letter describing the proposed monitoring realignment plan on the Sawtooth National Forest website. Additional information provided on the website included the draft Chapter IV Monitoring Plan.

No comments were received in response to the request for public comment.

3. Approval of Monitoring Realignment

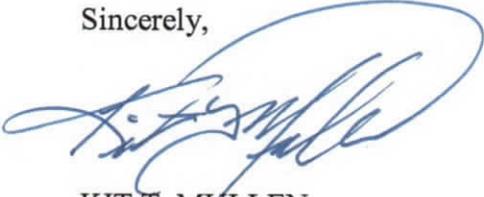
Based on the proposed realignment discussed in my March 24, 2016 letter requesting public comment and, incorporating changes suggested by Sawtooth National Forest resource specialists, I approve the administrative change for the monitoring plan modification, effective as of the date this letter is posted on the Sawtooth National Forest website at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/sawtooth/landmanagement/projects>

The attached, modified plan monitoring program is now included in Chapter IV of the Forest Plan, and is consistent with the 2012 planning rule.

If you have questions about the administrative change or would like more information, please contact Carol Brown (cpbrown@fs.fed.us or (208) 622-0098). Thank you for your interest in the management of the Sawtooth National Forest.

Sincerely,



KIT T. MULLEN
Forest Supervisor