



File Code: 1920

Date: AUG 22 2016

Dear Interested Party,

This letter documents the decision to make administrative changes to the 1986 Lolo National Forest Plan and 1987 Bitterroot National Forest Plan Monitoring Programs to comply with the 2012 Planning Rule at 36 CFR 219.12. To conform to the Rule, monitoring items found in both Forest Plans have been reviewed and changed to address information that is critical for informed management of resources in the plan areas and within the financial and technical capabilities of the two Forests. The updated Forest Plan Monitoring Programs are posted on the following Forest websites (see Forest Plan Monitoring Program Transition, August 2016):

Lolo National Forest

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/land/lolo/landmanagement/planning>

Bitterroot National Forest

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/bitterroot/landmanagement/planning>

These administrative changes are not subject to the objections process (36 CFR 219.50) and are effective immediately.

Public comment has been considered in adopting these administrative changes as required by 36 CFR 219.13(c) (1). A draft document entitled *Forest Plan Monitoring Item Transition, May 2016* reflecting potential changes to both the Lolo and Bitterroot National Forest's monitoring programs was released for a 30-day public comment period on May 11, 2016. Four comments were received on the Lolo monitoring program. One public comment was received on the Bitterroot monitoring program. These comments have been considered and where appropriate, changes have been made to each Forest's final plan monitoring program (see enclosure).

As part of this administrative change, bull trout will be designated as a Focal Species on both the Lolo and Bitterroot National Forests. In addition, the Lolo National Forest will continue to monitor pileated woodpecker, goshawk, elk, threatened and endangered species including grizzly bear and Canada lynx, and invertebrates. The Bitterroot National Forest will continue to monitor pileated woodpecker, pine marten, cutthroat trout, and elk.

Biennial (every 2-year) monitoring evaluation reports will be used to help determine if and when additional changes are needed (36 CFR 219.12(d) (2)). The first biennial monitoring evaluation is expected to be prepared in 2018. This evaluation will indicate whether or not a change to the plan, management activities, or monitoring program is warranted.



These adjustments should not be interpreted as a change to other parts of the existing plans. Both the Lolo (1986) and Bitterroot (1987) Forest Plans will remain in effect until revised. The Lolo and Bitterroot National Forests are proposing to revise their forest plans simultaneously given that the two forests share a common boundary and can use a joint team of specialists to complete both plans at the same time. Revision is expected to begin in the near future, depending on the availability of funding. Monitoring programs for both Forests will be reviewed again as part of plan revision.

Questions on this administrative change may be directed to the following individuals:

Lolo National Forest

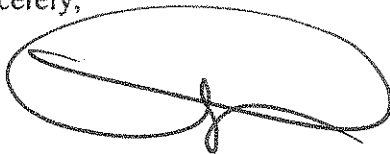
Chris Partyka, cpartyka@fs.fed.us, or phone (406) 826-4355

Bitterroot National Forest

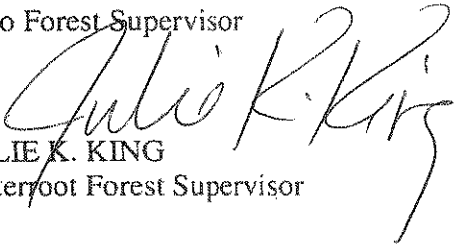
Amy Fox, amyvfox@fs.fed.us, or phone (406) 363-7120

We thank the public for their involvement in developing and reviewing these changes to our monitoring programs.

Sincerely,



TIMOTHY GARCIA
Lolo Forest Supervisor



JULIE K. KING
Bitterroot Forest Supervisor

Enclosure (1)

Response to Public Comments Received on Forest Plan Monitoring Transition

August, 2016

Lolo National Forest

Name	Date	Comment	Forest Service Response
James D. Arney, Ph.D	05/20/2016	The "Lolo Forest Monitoring Program Transition" is suggesting modifying and/or removing any goal to harvest at sustainable levels (pages 19-22).	<p>The administrative change to the Lolo National Forest monitoring program does not modify or remove Forest Plan Goal 1 (LNF FP, p II-1) to harvest at sustainable levels.</p> <p>As stated on page I of the transition document; "These adjustments should not be interpreted as a change to other parts of the existing plans. Both the Lolo (1986) and Bitterroot (1987) Forest Plans will remain in effect until revised."</p> <p>MON-VEG-03 considers whether timber harvest is conducted at sustainable levels as follows: "Is the volume of timber sold within the 10-year allowable sale quantity?"</p> <p>Both timber volume sold, and firewood volume sold will be assessed under this monitoring item to determine progress toward achieving Forest Plan goals and desired future conditions for timber harvest.</p> <p>No additional changes were made to the monitoring program to address this public comment.</p>
Carol Young, Trustee, St. Regis Schools	05/25/2016	The forest plan in effect since February 1986 says... provide a sustained yield of timber... FAILED... provide habitat for viable populations of all indigenous wildlife... FAILED... provide for a broad spectrum of disperse recreation... FAILED... provide a pleasing and healthy environment... FAILED... emphasize conservation of energy... FAILED... encourage a good host concept when dealing with the public... FAILED...	<p>The monitoring items address timber volume sold, wildlife, recreation, and general environmental attributes.</p> <p>MON-SOC-01 considers "[w]hat effects do forest management activities have on the local economy, recreation opportunities, downstream water uses, visual quality, and local air quality?" This monitoring item, along with others also considers the effects of Forest Activities on timber yield, wildlife habitat, recreation, and the socio-economic and environmental setting.</p>

Name	Date	Comment	Forest Service Response
		<p>And why? Because of every word Dr. Arney says below. I would also like to point out that the largest property holder (FEDS) in our county doesn't pay their fair share of the property tax needed to sustain our schools and county services, this has created an economic catastrophe for our kids and taxpayers. Local control, including our local USFS staff, would turn all this around so any action that doesn't start with local control will fail too.</p>	<p>No additional changes were made to the monitoring program to address this public comment.</p>
Mike Lilly	06/09/2016	<p>After studying all the forest plan goals and associated monitoring items, there [is] one clear monitoring item that is missing and truly needs to be considered as a new item. The questions needs to be asked: "is the forest providing a sustained yield of timber and other outputs that is concurrent with local processing capacities and needs?"</p>	<p>MON-VEG-03 considers whether timber harvest is conducted at sustainable levels as follows; "Is the volume of timber sold within the 10-year allowable sale quantity?"</p> <p>In addition, MON-SOC-01 considers; "[w]hat effects do forest management activities have on the local economy, recreation opportunities, downstream water uses, visual quality, and local air quality?"</p> <p>Indicators and sources identified for MON-SOC-01 were intended to consider information regarding local processing facilities. However, this monitoring item did not clearly state that local processing capacities and needs would be evaluated.</p> <p>Local processing capacities and needs were added to the modified indicators for MON-SOC-01 to address this public comment.</p> <p>Data from the Montana Department of Commerce, UM Bureau of Business and Economic Research -- Forest Industry Research Program, and Headwater Economics Tools will be used to determine local processing capacities and needs.</p>
Kali Becher, Missoula County Parks, Trails, and Open Lands	06/07/2016	<p>Using monitoring indicators that help identify areas of success or improvement due to management action, separate from or in addition to tracking management actions completed, would help track</p>	<p>Best available science is used to determine the appropriate treatment and potential for efficacy prior to treatment selection. Treatment efficacy monitoring is then conducted at the project scale.</p>

Name	Date	Comment	Forest Service Response
		<p>For example, for MON-RNG-02 the current indicators track treatments, but may not provide sufficient information to answer the questions of whether or not the weed species are being controlled.</p>	<p>MON-RNG-02 considers the establishment and spread of invasive aquatic and terrestrial plant weed species being controlled (prevented or reduced) through use of integrated weed treatment practices.</p> <p>The indicators for this monitoring item include consideration of treatment efficacy as tracked in the Natural Resource Information System (NRIS).</p> <p>No additional changes were made to the monitoring program to address this public comment.</p>
Kali Becher, Missoula County Parks, Trails, and Open Lands	06/07/2016	<p>In addition, an indicator for land use change beyond subdivision or construction activity on adjacent land would be tracking conservation easements as well.</p>	<p>MON-SOC-02 considers what effects adjacent land uses and activities have on management of the Forest.</p> <p>The indicators for this monitoring item were intended to track other land uses. However, this monitoring item did not clearly state that conservation easements would be considered.</p> <p>Conservation easements were added to the indicators for MON-SOC-02 to address this public comment.</p> <p>Data from the National Conservation Easement Database (NCED) will be used identify conservation easement that potentially effect Forest Service land management activities.</p>

Bitterroot National Forest

Name	Date	Comment	Forest Service Response
Tricon Timber, LLC	No Date	<p>Tricon Timber LLC, would like to see monitoring occur that insures wood product are being supplied both locally and to adjacent mills. Additionally, the wood products being supplied are affordable, maximum volumes are being harvested, and the work[ing] being done on the ground makes sense for the applications chosen. We cannot stress the importance on an adequate timber supply being available. Monitoring this and having accountability to ensure supply levels exist are of utmost importance.</p>	<p>MON-ECON-01 considers project feasibility, marketability and whether sales are purchased when offered.</p> <p>Data collected for this monitoring item include project feasibility and economic analysis. This information is displayed in environmental analysis documentation.</p> <p>No additional changes were made to the monitoring program to address this public comment.</p>
Tricon Timber, LLC	No Date	<p>Similarly, we would like to see monitoring occur which would confirm that wood products are being supplied to support a viable economy, timber sales have the opportunity to be affordable, and represent and conform to timber market conditions when they are advertised for bid. Having a timber supply is important [and] but also having an economically viable sale to bid on is too.</p>	<p>MON-ECON-01 considers project feasibility, marketability and whether sales are purchased when offered.</p> <p>Data collected for this monitoring item include project feasibility and economic analysis. This information is displayed in environmental analysis documentation.</p> <p>No additional changes were made to the monitoring program to address this public comment.</p>