

Reader's Guide to Understanding the Francis Marion Revised Plan

On the Francis Marion Planning Website, you will see the following five documents that include the revised plan and associated documentation:

- [Draft Record of Decision](#)
- [Revised Forest Plan](#)
- [Final Environmental Impact Statement](#)
- [FEIS Appendices](#)
- [Summary of Public Comments](#)

The Draft Record of Decision documents the decision. The selected alternative is Alternative 2 in the FEIS. It includes the Responsible Official's Rationale for selecting Alternative 2

The Revised Forest Plan will guide management of the Francis Marion National Forest for the next decade and beyond. The revised plan is divided into 5 chapters and appendices A-H, as follows: **Chapter 1** provides an overview of the Francis Marion Revised Plan. **Chapter 2** outlines the desired conditions for ecosystems and management areas and for geographic areas (Resource Integration Zones). These terms are defined later in this document. **Chapter 3** includes Objectives. **Chapter 4** lists standards and guidelines that establish sideboards for framing management activities and ensure resource protection. **Chapter 4** describes the plan's adaptive management strategy and monitoring program to determine whether projects meet the management direction in the forest plan. **Chapter 5** is the forest monitoring program and how that relates to the broad-scale monitoring strategy. **Appendices A-H** provide supporting information. **Appendix G** is a glossary of terms.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) describes the 3 alternatives considered in detail:

- **Alternative 1** represents the 1996 plan and is used as a baseline.
- **Alternative 2** is the alternative preferred by the Forest Service and is the foundation for the revised plan.
- **Alternative 3** is a variation of Alternative 2 developed to address concerns about potential impacts to human health and safety from smoke management on the national forest.

The FEIS is broken down into 4 chapters: **Chapter 1** describes why we are updating management direction, **Chapter 2** describes the alternatives, **Chapter 3** describes environmental consequences of implementing each of the alternatives, and **Chapter 4** includes a list of preparers and mailing lists. An index follows Chapter 4. A good way to become familiar with the alternatives is to compare how they address each issue and vary by allocations (management areas and resource integration zone maps) in Chapter 2.

FEIS Appendices include additional detail on specific topics: Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness Inventory and Evaluations, SocioEconomic Information, The Biological Assessment and Biological Evaluations and The Response to Public Comments.

Summary of Public Comments is a supplemental process paper that details the content analysis process used to develop concern statements and how public comments are addressed. This

summary is a companion document to **Appendix H The Response to Comments** in the FEIS Appendices.

Common Terms and Labeling Used in the Revised Plan

It will also be helpful if you become familiar with common terms used in the revised plan. The required forest plan direction is labeled to help readers locate information within the forest plan. For this forest plan, three “layers” of direction are used: Ecosystems, Management Areas and Resource Integration Zones.

An **Ecosystem** is a land area that is covered by the same set of plants and animals. For example, think of an area that has mostly longleaf pine and all the other plants and animals that prefer to live in a longleaf pine forest, then consider the waterways and different soil in that same area. It is the interactions of all these plants, animals, soil and water together that describes a particular ecosystem. We looked at 9 ecosystems in this forest plan. Some of these ecosystems are fire-adapted and need frequent (1-3 years), low-intensity fire to mimic historic conditions.

Management Areas are similar to “zones” in county plans with management direction specific to that “zone”. A management area does not have to be spatially contiguous.

- **Two Management Areas** - Management Area 1 (MA1) and Management Area 2 (MA2) - are mapped by our ability to safely apply landscape-level, low-intensity, frequent prescribed fire, which is critical to maintaining fire-adapted ecosystems. Embedded in each management area is the forest plan direction for the different ecosystems found on the Francis Marion. Desired conditions and objectives for the fire-adapted ecosystems vary by our ability to maintain frequent, low-intensity fire, so forest plan direction varies by MA1 or MA2 for the fire-adapted ecosystems.

Resource Integration Zones are contiguous geographic areas differentiated by how people use the area and how people benefit from national forest land in that particular RIZ.

- **Four Resource Integration Zones (RIZ)** in this revised plan, are Coastal, Wando, Wambaw and Santee.

Within these three “layers” of direction the following forest plan components are identified:

Desired condition (DC) is the vision for the future. It is a narrative description of the future conditions and changes expected to occur as the revised plan is implemented. Sometimes we may already be close to achieving the desired conditions, other times, it may take several years to achieve the desired conditions. Desired Conditions can apply forest-wide or at different scales and reflect what can actually be achieved over the next 10 to 15 years. Each desired condition is labeled with a “DC” followed by a three letter identifier to indicate resource topic and then a number used for tracking purposes.

- **Management Area 1** is the portion of the Francis Marion where frequent, low-intensity fire can be used at the desired fire return interval for various ecosystems including the fire-adapted ecosystems. These desired conditions are labeled as DC-ECO. An example of labeling for a Desired Condition in MA1. **DC-ECO-1. Old Growth Conditions.**
- **Management Area 2** is the portion of the Francis Marion where management efforts will have to focus on providing wildlife habitats using herbicides, mechanical methods, etc and not on prescribed burning. Since the desired conditions need to reflect what we think that we can achieve, the desired conditions for the fire-adapted ecosystems in this portion of the Francis Marion are labeled DC-MA2.
- **Resource Integration Zones** consider the human interaction with the natural environment. An example of the label for the Coastal RIZ is **DC-RIZ-Coastal-0. Desired Conditions for the Coastal RIZ. Goals** are unnumbered optional plan components that we are using in the Resource Integration Zones. Goals are broad statements of intent usually related to process or interaction with the public.

Embedded within each RIZ are the desired conditions for designated or special areas. These are labeled for each RIZ, but include an “S” in the label. An example of a desired condition for a designated or special area is: **DC-RIZ-Wambaw-S-3. Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers.**

- **Designated areas** are lands designated by Congress or other authorities and include such areas as designated critical habitat for Frosted Flatwoods Salamander, national historic districts, wildernesses or wild and scenic rivers.
- **Special areas** are unique areas with its own specific desired conditions in the forest plan and include rare plant communities.

Objectives (OBJ) are stepping stones of achievement in Chapter 3. They are a statement of a desired rate of progress toward achieving a desired condition. Each objective is applicable to a particular scale similar to the different scales for the desired conditions. Each objective is labeled with a “OBJ”, followed by a three letter identifier to indicate resource topic and then a number used for tracking purposes. For instance a label for an objective for Management Area 1 is **OBJ-ECO-6. Oak, Mesic Hardwood, and Maritime Forests.** When necessary and immediately following the objective a management strategy is developed to describe how we will achieve the objective. Not every objective has a management strategy. Together, the objectives and management strategies describe how we will achieve our desired conditions.

Standards (S) and Guidelines (G) are limitations and restrictions on resource management practices in Chapter 4. Standards are mandatory constraints. A guideline, on the other hand, is a constraint that allows for a departure, as long as the purpose of the guideline is met. Each guideline and standard is individually numbered. An example of a standard is **S6. Do not exceed the sustained yield limit of 113.8 million cubic feet (MMCF) of the quantity of timber sold in a decade. This amount does not including salvage or sanitation harvest.**