

## ADDITIONAL FAQ's about the topic of SOCC

### **Q. What is a Species of Conservation Concern?**

*A. A species of conservation concern (SCC) is a plant or animal for which we have concerns about its ability to remain on a landscape for a long time. Each forest plan has its own SCC list, which is approved by the Regional Forester. The Regional Forester has not yet approved these draft proposed lists.*

### **Q. What is the difference between an “SCC” and a Threatened or Endangered species?**

*A. SCC is a Forest Service-specific term that comes from the 2012 Planning Rule and Forest Service Handbook. The regulations help us determine if there is a concern about a particular species' ability to persist within the forest. If there is a concern, we design elements of the forest plan to provide the habitat conditions that will enable the species to persist on the forest. An SCC is not a federally threatened, endangered, proposed or candidate species under the Endangered Species Act. We create an SCC list using the best available science in a proactive step intended to prevent species from becoming federally listed.*

*Threatened and endangered species are federally designated under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. This Act was created to protect critically imperiled species from extinction. Similarly to how we address SCCs, if species that are listed or candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act are present on the forest, then the forest plan must contain direction designed to prevent the species from further decline and contribute to their recovery. Even if the federally listed species is not currently present on the forest but habitat critical to their recovery has been identified on the forest, our forest plan must contain direction to maintain that habitat.*

**Q. How do SCCs influence forest plan revisions?**

A. Once we have an SCC list, we determine the habitat needs of each species. We then design forest plans to guide management that sustains habitat to support or restore secure SCC populations to the extent we are capable of doing so. Forest plans help us maintain a forest that provides SCCs with the habitat they need to survive. For instance, each forest plan will have certain components, including standards or guidelines, to sustain or restore ecosystem diversity and habitats. We consider these elements “coarse” filter plan components. If the coarse filter plan components do not provide the habitat conditions each SCC population requires to persist on the forest, then we include additional species-specific plan components to provide habitat conditions necessary for the species. These second components are “fine” filters.

**Q. What does “substantial concern” mean?**

A. Substantial concern means there is credible evidence that there is a concern about a particular species’ ability to persist within the forest. This evidence can include: The species has been identified as imperiled as a result of status reviews described in the scientific literature and listed in widely accepted databases such as NatureServe, a nonprofit organization that provides proprietary wildlife conservation-related data, tools, and services. Significant threats, such as climate change or competition from exotic species, threaten SCC populations or their habitat. Field surveys have documented declining SCC populations or habitat in the forest plan area. The species is known to have low population numbers or restricted habitat within the forest plan area.

**Q. How were SCC selected & is it a final decision? How do SCC work to help us manage the Forest?**

A. Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) is the term used for wildlife, fish, reptiles and plants that warrant a concern over the likelihood of long-term persistence in the planning area. They were selected using multiple criteria such as:

- Is the species native to the planning unit or not?
- What is the Global and State status of each species?
- In the past 20 years, how many occurrences and what year was the last occurrence for each species on the planning unit?
- Are the species occurrences accidental or transient on the planning unit?
- Is the species established or becoming established on the planning unit?
- What is the distribution, abundance, and trend of the species on the planning unit?
- What threats and risks does the species face on the planning unit?
- What habitat requirement does the species have?
- Finally, if present, is there substantial concern for this species to persist on the planning unit?

SCC will be monitored so that FS management does not contribute to a downward trend or federal listing. The Forest works with the RO to narrow down the SCC list, the RF and his/her staff make the final decision on SCC on which species are SCC. Species can be added or removed from the list when new information becomes available.

**Q. What is the difference between MIS (management indicator species) and SCC (species of conservation concern) and threatened and endangered species?**

A. Management Indicator Species are species that through monitoring can indicate a potential problem within the ecosystem. They will show the effects of management either positive or negative and represent other species in the same ecosystem. For example: A shift in stream dwelling insects from clean water to a more sediment tolerant environment may mean something is going on in the watershed that is causing increased erosion and sediment flow into a stream. Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) is the term being used for Forest Service to identify species where there is substantial concern over continued persistence. These species may be low in numbers, native to the planning area and there is concern for the species remaining in the area. T&E species are federally protected species because of their low numbers and at potential risk because of a trend or threat in the environment. These species are identified with different Endangered Species Act status and overseen by the USFWS working with the various other state and federal agencies.

**Q. What will we do with your input on the SCC list?**

*A. We will consider all the input we receive. When we review the feedback, we will ask ourselves if the input offers valid scientific information we have yet to consider. If so, we may remove or add species from the list based on the valid scientific information we receive. Such changes will be documented in the SCC list released in either the draft forest plans or the final forest plans.*

**Q. When does the Forest Service have to select SCC and why does it need to involve the public?**

*A. The 2012 Planning rule requires the Responsible USFS Official to identify potential species of conservation concern and to assess existing information for them in the assessment (36 CFR 219.6 (b)(5)). FSH 1909.12, Chapter 20, Section 21.22a requires the agency identify the SCC and to work with the public in doing so. The Directive currently states the USFS has the responsibility to identify SCC early enough to expedite the planning process. This should occur during the planning development phase but may occur at any time. Whenever SCC are identified the rationale must be given. The best available scientific information (BASI), will be used and made available to the public along with any supporting information before release of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) and early in the process (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 20, Section 21.22a). The intent is to allow the Forest Service to engage with the public about their concerns regarding the SCC before release of the DEIS. Early identification of SCC will also provide the public with critical information to better inform their participation in the development plan components.*