

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service  
Northern Region

**FOREST PLAN**  
**MONITORING AND EVALUATION REPORT**  
**Fiscal Years 2014-2015**  
**Bitterroot National Forest**



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## Introduction

The Bitterroot National Forest continued its monitoring program and research collaboration in the reporting period 2014-2015.

Forest Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans) are intended to provide long-range management direction for each National Forest. Forest Plans provide guidance for balancing the physical, biological and social components of forest management in the form of goals, objectives, standards and guidelines. The Bitterroot Forest Plan was approved by the Regional Forester in September 1987.

As required by the Forest Plan, monitoring and evaluation provide a control system for Forest management. The results provide Forest line officers and employees, Regional and Washington offices, Congress and the public information on the progress and results of implementing the Bitterroot Forest Plan. Forest Plan monitoring involves gathering information and observing management activities to document their effects on people and the environment. There are three types of Forest Plan monitoring:

- “ **Implementation monitoring** is used to determine if goals, objectives, standards and management practices are implemented as detailed in the Forest Plan. In other words, did we do what the Forest Plan said we were going to do?
- “ **Effectiveness monitoring** is used to determine if management practices, as designed and executed, are effective in meeting Forest Plan standards, goals and objectives. Did the management practice do what we wanted it to do?
- “ **Validation monitoring** is used to determine whether the data, assumptions and coefficients used in the development of the Forest Plan are correct. Are the goals and objectives set by the Forest Plan valid?

Two other types of monitoring are presented for some resources. **Base line monitoring** establishes a basis for assessing change from current conditions, making comparison to future conditions possible. **Tracking** is useful as a way to report on the additional activities we are engaged in, such as numbers of wildfire ignitions and law enforcement incidents.

The Forest Plan monitoring requirements still provide the basic framework for the monitoring today. However, the actual monitoring techniques have evolved and improved over time to provide a more realistic, accurate and efficient monitoring package to evaluate the effects of management. Some of the newer techniques do not fit the original framework as well as older techniques; with a few additions, the format of this report is similar to past reports and provides some continuity until the upcoming Forest Plan revision that is currently planned to begin late in FY2016.

The 2014-2015 is an abbreviated report, monitoring items that have updated information from earlier reports are presented here. For each resource discussed in this report we present the objective of the monitoring, the data source, frequency, acceptable level of variability, evaluation and the results for the fiscal year (i.e., FY2007). The item number following most resource titles refers back to the Forest Plan monitoring item, found in Table IV-1 of the Plan (pages IV-6 through IV-9). The sections without item numbers are additional information we provide, but are not required Forest Plan monitoring.

The 2014-2015 will be the last monitoring report that follows the format of the past 30 years. Beginning in FY2016 forest plan monitoring will have a different format as directed by the 2012 Planning Rule and the report will be published every two years. The details of the administrative changes to forest plan monitoring is described on the forest website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/bitterroot/landmanagement/planning>

The following is a partial glossary of acronyms found throughout this Monitoring Report:

- *BAR* Bitterroot Burned Area Recovery Project
- *BMP* Best Management Practices
- *BNF* Bitterroot National Forest
- *DEIS* Draft Environmental Impact Statement
- *EA* Environmental Assessment
- *EAWS* Ecosystem Analysis at the Watershed Scale
- *EIS* Environmental Impact Statement
- *ESA* Endangered Species Act
- *FP* Bitterroot National Forest’s Forest Plan
- *FSM* Forest Service Manual
- *FWP* Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
- *FWS* United States, Dept. of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
- *FY* Fiscal Year
- *GIS* Geographic Information System
- *HD* Hunting District
- *IRA* Integrated Resource Analysis
- *MA* Management Area
- *MBF* Thousand Board Feet
- *MMBF* Million Board Feet
- *NEPA* National Environmental Policy Act
- *NF* National Forest
- *NFMA* National Forest Management Act
- *RD* Ranger District
- *TMDL* Total Maximum Daily Load
- *TS* Timber Sale
- *USFWS* United States Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service

**Table 1 – List of Preparers**

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