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Los Padres National Forest

Land Management Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Report for 2014



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Los Padres National Forest Stakeholders

I am pleased to present the Los Padres National Forest's fiscal year 2014 Monitoring and Evaluation Report. Included within the report is a summary of specific program accomplishments for the year, and evaluation of whether plans, projects and activities are implemented as designed and in compliance with the 2006 Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan (LMP), as amended.

The LMP emphasizes and identifies monitoring as a key element in all programs to assure the achievement of desired conditions over time. Recently implemented projects are monitored as well as ongoing activities, programs, and resource status. Through monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management, we aim to further increase management effectiveness and resource protection.

It is important to me to keep you informed of the results of our monitoring. If you are interested in becoming involved in a project or other planning activity, please see our national website <http://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/>. Additional information and opportunities on the Los Padres National Forest may be found on our Forest website <http://www.fs.usda.gov/lpnf/>.

Sincerely,

/s/ Kenneth E. Heffner

for _____

February 26, 2018

Kevin B. Elliott
Forest Supervisor
Los Padres National Forest

Date

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Introduction

Monitoring is a means for confirming the sufficiency and adequacy of guidance in the Land Management Plan (LMP), and for tracking the status of and trends in changing resource conditions. It facilitates the process for adapting to change and documents the need to update, amend and eventually revise land management plans in order to achieve desired conditions while ensuring healthy National Forests exist for future generations. Monitoring requirements are found in all three parts of the LMP, and a summary of these requirements is located in Appendix C in Part 3 of the LMP.

Part 1 monitoring assesses resource conditions and movement towards desired conditions over the long-term. This is completed by measuring the change over time to environmental indicators and outcome evaluation questions identified in the LMP. The status of the trend relative to the desired resource condition serves as the basis for determining when a need for change in land management planning is indicated. Part 1 monitoring is completed at 5-year intervals, with the last assessment reported on June 15, 2012 for fiscal years (FY) 2006-2010.

Part 2 monitoring focuses on program implementation through accomplishments tracked in Forest Service corporate databases. The annual accomplishment indicators determine if the program areas are implementing the objectives and strategies established in Part 2 of the LMP.

Part 3 monitoring is conducted at the project or activity level in order to evaluate the effectiveness and application of design criteria established in the LMP. Projects that were completed or were in ongoing implementation in FY 2014 were selected for monitoring from representative functional areas and districts. Selected projects were then visited by an interdisciplinary monitoring team to review the application and effectiveness of the design criteria.

The FY 2014 LMP Monitoring and Evaluation Report documents the evaluation of selected projects and programs where activities occurred during October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014.

Part 2 Monitoring

Monitoring identified in Part 2 of the Southern California Land Management Plans is focused on program implementation including inventory activities. The National Forests currently use attainment reporting for tracking program accomplishments as discussed in Part 2 of the LMP. The attainment measures are linked to the National Strategic Plan and report accomplishments through a national reporting system. Although the system will evolve over time as management needs change, Table 1 represents the type of measures that are currently reported on an annual basis. These attainments are a reflection of current budget and staffing.

Table 1: FY2014 Accomplishments

Indicator	Units	2014 Accomplishment
Acres of Terrestrial Habitat Enhanced	Acres	1411
Miles of Aquatic Habitat Enhanced	Miles	18
Acres of Noxious Weeds Treated	Acres	40
Acres of Vegetation Improved (also see Hazardous Fuels Reduction)	Acres	684
Acres of Watershed Improved	Acres	N/A*
Acres of Land Ownership Adjusted	Acres	572
Number of Heritage Resources Managed to Standard	Number	N/A*
Products Provided to Standard (Interpretation and Education)	Number	N/A*
Recreation Special Use Authorizations Administered to Standard	Number	79
PAOT Days Managed to Standard (Developed Sites)	PAOT Days	259,990
Recreation Days Managed to Standard (General Forest Areas)	Days	N/A*
Land Use Authorizations Administered to Standard	Number	225
Number of Mineral Operations Administered to Standard	Number	N/A*
Manage Grazing Allotments	Acres	108,391
Acres of Hazardous Fuel Reduction	Acres	2,314
Miles of Passenger Car Roads Maintained to Objective Maintenance Level	Miles	N/A*
Miles of High Clearance & Back Country Roads Maintained to Objective Maintenance Level	Miles	N/A*
Miles of Road Decommissioned	Miles	0

* Accomplishment indicator was not tracked for fiscal year 2014.

The indicators for interpretation and education products provided to standard, general forest areas recreation days managed to standard, and heritage resources managed to standard were not tracked in fiscal year 2014.

Part 3 Monitoring

Implementation and effectiveness monitoring for Part 3 of the LMP is conducted at the project level, and is completed for new projects and ongoing activities and sites. A sample of projects and ongoing activities are selected, evaluated for compliance with the LMP, and visited by an interdisciplinary team (IDT) to review the application and effectiveness of design criteria. If the LMP design criteria are determined to be ineffective, then the IDT recommends possible corrective actions, and any required adjustments to the design criteria are documented in this report and updated in the LMP in accordance with Forest Service procedures.

The following questions are investigated for each reviewed project or ongoing activity:

- Is the project consistent with the LMP, and were LMP goals, desired conditions, and standards incorporated into the decision document?
- Were mitigations or design criteria identified from the LMP, consultations, and public input included in the decision, and implementation documents?
- Was the project implemented effectively?
- Were mitigations or design criteria effective?

- Were monitoring requirements identified and followed?

The following projects were chosen from a stratified sample of projects representing program areas and districts on the Los Padres National Forest. The LMP monitoring appendix calls for a 10% random sample of new and ongoing projects. Technically, an ongoing project is one that is either implemented over a long span of time, a routine ongoing activity, or is part of a long-term permitted activity such as livestock grazing on a range allotment, but which still requires NEPA-compliant environmental review for reauthorization. A new project is one which is planned, implemented, and completed within a recent period. Projects that are a simple renewal of a permit with no change in condition or permittee typically do not present the kinds of planning and implementation issues Part 3 monitoring is trying to monitor. Therefore, these kinds of projects are not included in the sample unless there is some kind of overriding resource issue that compels examination. The LPF typically has approximately 50 ongoing and new projects in any year, so the strategy is to select projects covering a range of program areas geographically distributed over the Forest. Hence, at least one project per District is selected while striving to have several major program areas represented.

Table 2: Projects Selected for Review

Ranger District	Project Name	Program Area	Documentation Reviewed
Santa Barbara	Los Prietos USFS Trailer Park Sewer Line	Facilities Management	Environmental Assessment; Decision Notice/FONSI
Ojai	Seneca Pipeline Relocation	Special Uses	Decision Memo; CE Checklist; Special Use Permit
Monterey	Monroe Grazing Allotment Project	Grazing Management	Decision Notice ; Environmental Assessment and related reports; resource monitoring data
Santa Lucia	Navajo Flat Staging Area Campground Redesign	Recreation Management	Decision Notice; Special Use Permit; Communication Site Plan; Biological and Archaeological Evaluation
Mount Pinos	AT&T Telephone Line Extension on Mil Potrero Highway	Special Uses	Decision Memo; CE Checklist; Special Use Permit; Communication Site Plan

Los Prietos USFS Trailer Park Sewer Line**Project Description**

The Los Prietos employee trailer park is part of the Los Prietos Ranger District administrative site. It is located west of the Ranger Station offices and south of (and up the hill from) the compound containing the warehouses, barracks and other facilities. The Forest Service provides trailer hookups including water and sewer to the site. The sewer system was partially replaced and repaired several years ago. Since then it has been repaired again in several places – so much so that it is deemed best to totally replace the previous work. The section of sewer line in question is approximately 1,400 feet long with a 4" diameter. It is made of an asphalt-based fiber product called 'Orangeburg' which has a life expectancy of 25 years. It was installed in the 1970's.

Monitoring

This action was analyzed and documented in a Decision Memo. The Decision Memo included mitigations for archeological monitoring and best management practices (BMPs) to mitigate erosion and water quality impacts. These included avoiding the potential of the original pipeline collapse during construction of the new line.

There is a recorded archeological site within the trailer park (Site No. 0507-54-128, recorded in 1972). The site consists of scattered lithics and some shell. It was determined to be non-significant due to the huge amount of disturbance caused by the trailer park.

Project implementation was initiated on January 2013. The contract specifications included BMPs pertinent to the type of activity, and a Forest Service engineer was onsite monitoring the repair work.

The contractor implemented erosion control measures consistent with BMP requirements, such as straw-filled 'waddles' in order to mitigate sediment release. No erosion was noted during the project.

**Conclusion**

This project upgraded an existing outdated 4" diameter orangeburg pipe with a superior quality 6" diameter PVC pipe. The project outcome is a more reliable sanitary sewer collection system that is easier to service and maintain. Since installation of the new section there have been no sewer/sanitation issues in the trailer park.

This project follows with Forest Goals 5.1 and 7.1 to maintain public safety and environmental stability.

Project Description

To greatly reduce the risk of a line failure, in 2012 Seneca Resources Corp. requested authorization for the removal of ten old pipelines crossing natural landscapes, watersheds, creeks and slopes subject to landslides. The ten old pipelines were proposed to be replaced by six new pipelines constructed along existing roads. Seneca Resources also requested authorization for the removal of five old swing tanks and replace them with four new tanks in a new location. In addition, authorization was requested for the construction of three new pipelines for the Oak Flat wells. All projects were located in the Sespe Oil Field (Sections 28, 29, 31, 32 & 33, T5N, R19W, SBM). All facilities are owned by Seneca Resources Corporation and used to transfer oil and water from producing wells to a treating facility.

By relocating the old lines along existing roads better monitoring of the lines would be achieved. By relocating the old swing tanks, a centralized treating facility would be in place with newer and safer tanks.

In total, old lines were removed from 9,240 feet of routes, while new lines were constructed on 13,260 feet of routes along existing roads. In all proposed projects, new pipelines were made of seamless steel. In places where the pipelines were buried within the road, the lines were externally coated steel. Above ground lines were attached to pipe supports.

Monitoring

This project was categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions was identified in agency procedures as “approval, modification, or continuation of a minor special use of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of lands” [36 CFR 220.6(e)(3)]. This category of action was applicable because the relocation and construction of the pipelines and tank foundation occupied 3.08 acres, and no extraordinary circumstances were identified that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. This project was documented in a decision memo completed on March 24, 2014.

A special use permit was issued to Seneca Resources Corp. on June 23, 2014 to complete the requested actions. The special use permit provided for the consolidation, relocation, operation, maintenance and removal of oil and gas pipelines in the Sespe Oil Field. All together ten pipelines were removed and replaced with four new pipelines located along existing roads. In addition, authorization was given to remove five old swing tanks located at Shale Ridge tank facility (2 tanks) and Hansen Whitestar tank facility (3 tanks) and replace with four new swing tanks at Hansen Whitestar tank facility on the Hansen lease. The new tanks for oil/water have a capacity of 3000 barrels (2 tanks) and 750 barrels (2 tanks), tank diameters are 29.75 feet (2 tanks) and 15.5 feet (2 tanks), occupy 0.05 acres, and are located in section 32, T. 5 N., R. 19 W., San Bernardino Meridian.

A field visit to inspect these facilities was complete on April 13, 2016. All new lines are located along roads and are subject to daily inspections. All lines are maintained to standard as stipulated in the operation and maintenance plan.



Conclusion

This project contributes to Forest Goal 4.1a - Administer Minerals and Energy Resource Development while protecting ecosystem health.

Monroe Grazing Allotment**Project Description**

Re-authorization of livestock grazing occurred September 2009. The allotment status is active and its use is considered an ongoing activity. The kind of livestock currently permitted to graze are domestic cattle during a year-round period of use. This allotment is situated within the Arroyo Seco Place described in the LMP. Several of the desired conditions of the allotment include maintenance of the area as a naturally evolving and natural appearing landscape, as well as landscape attributes to be preserved, including the mosaic patterns of the vegetation, the free-flow of streams, and aquatic species habitat.

Monitoring

A review team monitored the grazing allotment areas with primary and secondary suitable rangeland to review the effectiveness of application of LMP design criteria. Resource protection measures were monitored for LMP Standards 52, 53, 54, 56, and compliance with grazing strategy as permitted. Additionally, best management practices for livestock grazing that incorporate range analysis and planning, permitting, and improvements to safeguard water quality were verified as being implemented annually. Each capable grazing area monitored was found to be moving toward desired conditions for vegetation management objectives and other resource (rangeland, soil, watershed, wildlife habitat and other potentially affected land use) objectives.

**Conclusion**

The livestock grazing is fully consistent with LMP direction. The Decision Notice of 2009 to re-authorize grazing incorporates a management system designed to meet LMP goals and desired conditions, suitable land use, applicable LMP standards, and resource protection measures. The implementation of grazing activities are within the scope of the decision which was within the scope of the environmental assessment conducted for the Sweetwater and Monroe Canyon Rangelands Analysis which preceded and informed the decision with public involvement as required. Upon implementation, monitoring shows the grazing use remains sustainable and the area suitable. Inspections for compliance with terms and conditions of the grazing permit indicate that annual operating instructions and LMP standards are met. Additionally, monitoring indicates that rangeland health remains sustainable, with rangeland desired conditions as stable or moving toward site-specific desired conditions. Recently monitored ecosystem functional indicators show that noxious weed occurrence remains absent or not problematic, plant community composition and structure remains desirable, and soil cover and integrity and water quality remain stable.

No problems in implementation were detected. Grazing in this allotment is an ongoing activity, as modified upon re-authorization, and was allowed annually since the re-authorization without violation of any operating instructions and with demonstrated compliance with best management practices and resource protection measures on National Forest System lands. All design criteria were monitored, followed, and determined effective and therefore no corrective actions are necessary. No new design criteria, laws or regulations were introduced that would necessitate change to the management of this allotment during the reporting period.

Project Description

Navajo Flat Staging Area is located in the Pozo/ La Panza area 26 miles from Santa Margarita, California, San Luis Obispo County in the Los Padres National Forest. This site lies on approximately 12 acres along Fernandez Road and McGinnis Creek and is mostly used by Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs) where they stage their vehicles while riding on surrounding OHV trails. The staging area did not provide for delineation of traffic, parking, day and overnight uses as well as a separation of beginner and advanced riders who practiced in the flat. The area had become a safety concern, as there had been serious injuries and a death at the staging area in the past.



In 2009, the Santa Lucia District applied for an OHV grant from the California Off-Highway Motorized Recreation Vehicle Division to fund the analysis of converting the staging area to accommodate and separate activities for overnight and day uses by redesigning the flat as a campground. When the Environmental Assessment was completed in 2012, another grant was submitted and awarded to begin implementation of the redesign, which was completed in 2015.

Monitoring

The Environmental Assessment was completed and stipulated that pipe fencing would be installed along McGinnis Creek to prevent OHVs from riding in the riparian area during wet weather. It is also used to protect trees along the creek from being damaged by campers parking underneath riparian areas for shade and from damaging vegetation. The pipe also created a trail through from McGinnis Creek Trail to Burnout Trail, which crosses Fernandez Road and keeps motorists separate from OHV riders utilizing the trail. Rock and wooden barriers created designated parking for large trailers in the flat and parallel parking along the six designated campsites. Americans with Disability Act (ADA) approved tables and fire rings were installed and shade structures were constructed to provide for umbrage under the sites. A beginner's riding loop was constructed for younger and inexperienced riders to practice, in order to separate them from advanced riders. Best Management Practices were followed for the construction of the new campground and to provide a sustainable OHV staging area. Interpretive and informational signs were installed describing local flora and fauna as well as recreation opportunities in the area.

Conclusion

The Navajo Flat Staging Area lies adjacent to McGinnis Creek, which was being continually disturbed owing to OHV operations taking place within the creekbed and across the stream channel in efforts to access Navajo Road. Additionally, prospectors would drive and park their vehicles in the stream channel, as well as campers who would park under the few trees in the staging area to take advantage of riparian shade. The staging area is located proximate to federally endangered Camatta Canyon amole habitat and is surrounded by multiple historic sites. Thus,

the need to keep OHVs and other recreation users confined within the staging area and provide for public safety was an imperative factor when implementing this project. This project was completed by extensive coordination with local OHV partners, Central Coast Motorcycle Association, who spent many hours of volunteer time and funding to match the two grants to complete this project.



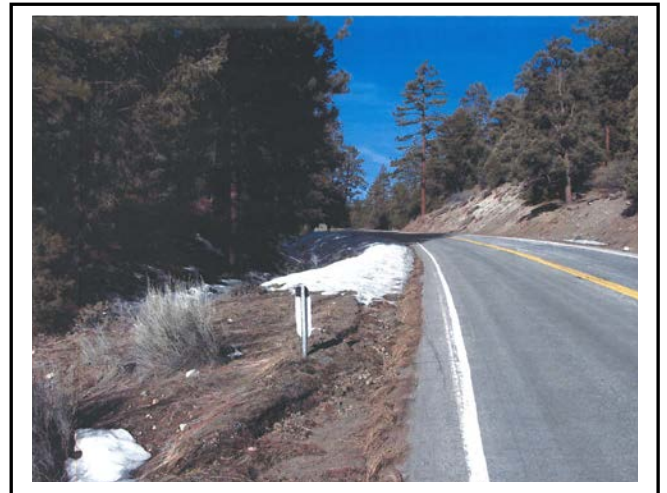
AT&T Telephone Line Extension on Mil Potrero Highway**Project Description**

The project includes the installation of a fiber optic line to the Pine Mountain Learning Center to provide needed internet and phone line services to rural schools and facilities. The school had received preliminary approval for a grant under the Rural Telecommunications Infrastructure program administered by the California Public Utilities Commission to support extending telephone service to the area. A permit was requested by AT&T to bury the new cable and inner duct along the highway for approximately 9,000 feet in order to provide crucial telecommunication service to the area. In addition to providing telecommunication services to the school, these services were also be provided to the US Forest Service fire station at Apache Saddle. Details including maps and figures are included in the Biological Assessment/Biological Evaluation completed for the proposed action (Rincon Consultants, Inc. 2011).

Monitoring

This action was categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as "Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land" [36 CFR 220.6(e)(3)]. This category of action is applicable because the action involves installation of a new cable route along an existing road and waterline utilizing existing cable and power sources impacting less than 2 acres of land and requiring approval from the Los Padres National Forest. This project was documented in a decision memo completed on October 5, 2011.

A special use permit was issued to AT&T on 10/21/2011 for the installation of the fiber optic line.



A field visit to inspect these facilities was complete on 11/20/2012. The new line is located along the existing utility corridor and roads and is subject to annual inspections. All lines are maintained to standard as stipulated in the operation and maintenance plan.

Conclusion

This project contributes to Forest Goal 7.1 – Retain Natural areas as a core for a regional network while focusing the built environment into the minimum land area needed to support growing public needs.

LMP Amendments

The LMP is a dynamic document that can be amended in response to:

- Errors and or discrepancies found during implementation;
- New information;
- Changes in physical conditions;
- New laws, regulations, or policies that affect National Forest management;
- New guidance indicated by application of adaptive management principles.

Significant LMP amendments change guidance or management zoning which, because the LMP is a NEPA document, requires NEPA. This is completed through a project-level NEPA decision that requires an LMP amendment to make the project consistent with the LMP, or directly in a supplemental EIS. Non-significant changes not requiring NEPA include corrections; clarification of intent; changes to monitoring questions; and refinements of management area boundaries to correct GIS inaccuracies. These are simply updates that are posted to the LMP and made public through such means as publishing on the Forest website, as is the case for this document. From the evaluation of monitoring results no amendments are needed.

Public Participation

The 2014 Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Report is posted on the Forest website.

List of Contributors

The following individuals participated in the completion of this report either as Part 2 contributors of program area assessments, or as team members in Part 3 project field reviews:

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