



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Mark Twain National Forest

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File Code: 1920/1950

Date: November 24, 2014

Dear Friends, Neighbors, and Interested Parties:

This is to inform you that I have signed the Decision Memo approving Mark Twain National Forest's Forest Plan amendment for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. The draft decision, which I shared with you in September 2014, was subject to a pre-decisional objection process as outlined in 36 CFR 219 Subpart B.

A Legal Notice was published in the Rolla Daily News on September 19, 2014, marking the beginning of the 45-day objection period that ended on November 10, 2014, the fifth business day following the objection filing period. No objections were received during that period. Pursuant to 36 CFR 219.58(c), I am approving this amendment.

The Final Decision Memo is available online for review at <http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda-pop.php/?project=42616>, or by calling Theresa Davidson at (573) 341-7499.

Thank you for your interest in the management of Mark Twain National Forest.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM B. NIGHTINGALE
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

cc:

Theresa Davidson
Laura Watts
Doug Chaltry



The specific language included this amendment is shown below.

Standards are displayed in bold text; Guidelines are in normal text. Text shown with a ~~strikethrough~~ would be deleted from the existing plan, and that shown in *italics* would be added. The page numbers shown indicate the first occurrence of the Standard or Guideline in the Forest Plan. The same Standards and Guidelines might also be repeated in other related sections of the Forest Plan (such as Timber Management or Rangeland Management.)

Beginning with the section titled “Indiana Bat” on page 2-6, changes are:

~~Indiana Bat~~ **All TES Bat Species**

Maintain trees with characteristics of suitable roosts (i.e., dead or dying with exfoliating bark or large living trees with flaking bark) wherever possible with regard for public safety and accomplishment of overall resource goals and objectives.

Identify and remove hazard trees between November 1 and April 1 whenever possible.

Using the current, accepted technology, determine the location of summer roost trees and foraging areas for female ~~Indiana~~ bats.

Hibernacula

Prohibit removal of suitable roost trees and prescribed burning within the 20 acres of old growth and 130 acres of forest or mature woodland surrounding an ~~Indiana~~ a threatened, endangered, candidate, proposed, or rare species of bat hibernacula during the swarming and staging periods. Determine dates individually for each cave (normally between September 1 and November 1 and between March 15 and April 30 respectively.)

The area around occupied ~~Indiana~~ or gray bat caves is a smoke-sensitive area. Develop prescribed burn plans to avoid or minimize smoke influences at or near these caves. Give the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service an opportunity to review and comment on prescribed burn plans within these areas.

Move the section titled “Other Roosting Structures” so that it immediately follows “Hibernacula” and change as shown below:

Other Roosting Structures

Conduct an evaluation for the presence of ~~Indiana~~ threatened, endangered, candidate, proposed, or rare species of bats prior to any decision to remove a building or bridge.

Bridges proposed for construction or reconstruction across streams that are 40 or more feet wide should be designed of concrete with girders or chambers to provide suitable bat roosting space underneath whenever possible.

Where populations of bats become a hazard or significant nuisance to human use of Forest Service facilities, exclusion techniques recommended by a biologist will be employed outside of the maternity season. If roost habitat is considered limiting in the area, bat boxes could be used to provide alternate habitat.

Indiana Bat

Add the heading “Indiana Bat” here to clarify that the next two sections, “Maternity Colonies” and “Male Roost Trees,” apply only to the Indiana bat. No changes are proposed for those two sections.

On page 2-8, beginning with the section titled “Mussels,” the changes are:

Mussels TES Aquatic Species

For all projects where in-stream or streambank work, including but not limited to construction or maintenance of low-water crossings, fords, boat launches, or river access structures are proposed:

- **Determine if suitable habitat for threatened, endangered, or rare mussel-aquatic species is present at or within 5 miles of the project site before initiating any in-stream work.**
- **If suitable habitat is present, conduct specific biological surveys to determine the presence or absence of threatened, endangered, or rare mussel aquatic species.**
- **If threatened, endangered, or rare mussel aquatic species are discovered during pre-work surveys, modify or re-locate the project to avoid or minimize impacts to mussels these species.**
- *If threatened, endangered, or rare aquatic species are discovered during pre-work surveys, implement projects outside of appropriate breeding seasons when necessary.*
- **Design fish management projects to minimize impacts on host species for threatened and endangered mussel species.**
- **Heavy equipment operation is prohibited at threatened, endangered, or rare aquatic species sites unless needed to implement a project approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.**

Immediately after the “TES Aquatic Species,” add the following:

Running Buffalo Clover

A running buffalo clover site is any area that contains one or more living RBC plants in close proximity to each other, and includes all the area within 50 feet of the outermost rooted crowns. Under consultation with the Forest botanist/ecologist, a site may be delineated with a radius other than 50 feet if site-specific conditions warrant.

Schedule prescribed burns at running buffalo clover sites to occur outside the season when plants are flowering and setting seed.

Prescribed burns at running buffalo clover sites should occur at intervals of 5 years or greater unless site specific monitoring by the Forest botanist indicates that a shorter burn interval may be needed to maintain running buffalo clover viability at the site.

Allow grazing on running buffalo clover sites only if needed to control vegetation competing with running buffalo clover.

The District or Forest wildlife biologist must approve the grazing schedule prior to any livestock use.

Allow mowing, plowing, disking, grazing, or other activities that disrupt running buffalo clover plants only after seed has set.

Timber harvests at running buffalo clover sites must use individual tree harvest methods.

Total basal area at a running buffalo clover site should not be reduced by more than 30 basal area in a single harvest.

Timber harvests at running buffalo clover sites should occur at least 10 years apart.

On page 2-10, beginning with the third item in the section titled “Streams and Rivers,” the changes are:

Fish or other aquatic organism passage in streams shall not be blocked or prevented unless done in conjunction with prescribed fish-management objectives. Design fish management projects to minimize impacts on host species for threatened and endangered ~~musset~~ aquatic species.

Remove large woody material from streams or streamsides only if it poses an immediate risk to water quality, degrades habitat for aquatic and riparian-associated wildlife species, or poses a public safety risk or a threat to private property or Forest Service infrastructures (i.e., bridges).

If suitable habitat is present, conduct specific biological surveys to determine the presence or absence of threatened, endangered, or rare ~~musset~~ aquatic species.

On page 2-12, beginning with the section titled “TES Management,” the changes are:

TES Management

Maintain, and replace as needed, existing gates at occupied ~~Indiana or gray~~ threatened, endangered, candidate, proposed, or rare species of bat caves.

Designate an area of at least 20 acres completely surrounding an ~~Indiana or gray~~ threatened, endangered, candidate, proposed, or rare species of bat cave entrance(s)—including the area above known or suspected cave or mine passages, foraging corridor(s), ridge tops, and side slopes around the cave for permanent old growth management. Within this area, only vegetation management activities needed to reach the desired condition are allowed.

Maintain an additional 130 acres of mature forest or mature woodland around each occupied ~~Indiana or gray~~ threatened, endangered, candidate, proposed, or rare species of bat cave.

Maintain or restore a mature forested corridor at least 100 feet wide and with at least 70% canopy closure between a cave used by gray bats and their foraging areas (streams and rivers). Within the corridor, allow only vegetation management activities needed to restore, enhance, or maintain mature forest or woodland natural communities.

The area around occupied ~~Indiana or gray~~ *threatened, endangered, candidate, proposed, or rare species of bat caves* is a smoke-sensitive area. Develop prescribed burn plans to avoid or minimize smoke influences at or near these caves. Give the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service an opportunity to review and comment on prescribed burn plans within these areas.

Periodically assess all occupied ~~Indiana and gray~~ *threatened, endangered, candidate, proposed, or rare species of bat caves* to determine needs for physical protection of the cave entrance.

Periodically monitor all cave gates and protective structures to detect trespass, vandalism, or other situations that render those structures ineffective.