



Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

MONITORING PROGRAM

2008 FOREST PLAN MONITORING

The Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) includes the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. Monitoring is a quality control process for implementing the Forest Plan. The Tongass Monitoring Plan incorporates three types of monitoring and evaluation approaches:

- 1) Implementation monitoring and evaluation is used to determine whether standards and guidelines are implemented.
- 2) Effectiveness monitoring and evaluation is used to determine whether standards and guidelines

- are achieving objectives, whether objectives are achieving goals, and ultimately whether there are significant changes in productivity of the land as a result of management.
- 3) Validation monitoring and evaluation is used to examine whether the assumptions and predicted effects used to formulate the plan are accurate.

Monitoring provides information on the progress and results of Tongass management. The evaluation of that

monitoring, provides a feedback mechanism within an adaptive management framework to keep the Forest Plan dynamic and responsive to changing conditions. The evaluation process also provides feedback that can trigger corrective action, adjustment of plans and budgets, or both, to facilitate feasible and meaningful action on the ground



Forest Plan Monitoring

WINTER 2015

Public Open House Meetings

- **Juneau Forest Plan Amendment Open House**, 5 to 8 p.m., Monday, January 26, 2015, Juneau Ranger District/ Admiralty National Monument Conference Room
- **Sitka Forest Plan Amendment Open House**, 5 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, January 28, 2015, Harrigan Centennial Hall Rousseau Room
- **Ketchikan Forest Plan Amendment Open House**, 5 to 8 p.m. Monday, February 2, 2015, Southeast Alaska Discovery Center

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ACTIVITIES

The Forest Plan monitoring program is not intended to describe all monitoring, inventory, and data gathering activities on the Tongass, nor is it intended to limit monitoring. Activities similar to monitoring are routinely conducted as part of site-specific project developed. Other routine monitoring activities include the

preparation of timber sale administrator and engineering reports, special uses administration reports, and in the case of large-scale mining activities, for example, monitoring is typically included in the site-specific Plan of Operations for each mine. Broader scale monitoring is also done through *management reviews* and

activity and program reviews by Forest Service officials at various levels of the organization. These reviews, which are normally documented and discussed often, provide insight into information needs and



MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROGRAM UNDER THE 2012 PLANNING RULE

In the past, the Forest Supervisor was responsible for coordinating the preparation of an annual monitoring and evaluation report. The 2012 Planning Rule requires a two-year evaluation report. The report will summarize the monitoring activities conducted during the prior

two years and the results obtained. It will address and evaluate conditions based on each of the 8 requirements (see *questions*, listed below). The evaluation report will focus on the information gathered during the two years and identification of issues requiring immediate

attention, while the more comprehensive evaluation process will take place during the fifth year. The monitoring & evaluation report must indicate whether or not a change to the plan, management activities, or the monitoring program, or a new assessment, may be

warranted based on new information. The monitoring evaluation report informs adaptive management of the plan area. As a result of the 2012 Planning Rule, there is also the opportunity to make modifications to the plan monitoring program

2015 REVISION OF FOREST MONITORING PROGRAM

The Requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule

The 2012 Planning Rule requires that an existing plan’s monitoring program conforms to the monitoring requirements of the Rule within 4 years of the Rule’s May 9, 2012 effective date (i.e. May 9, 2016, or as soon as practicable).

“Where a plan’s monitoring program has been developed under the provisions of a prior planning regulation and the unit has not initiated plan revision under this part, the responsible official shall modify the plan monitoring program within 4 years of the effective date of this part, or as soon as practicable, to meet the

requirements of this section.” (36 CFR 219.12 (c)(1)).



THE 8 REQUIREMENTS OF THE 2012 PLANNING RULE

The 2012 Planning Rule, in 36 CFR 219.12 (a)(5), included the following eight requirements. The paragraph below each requirement shows how the Tongass is responding:

(i) The status of select watershed conditions.

The existing plan monitoring question # 21 Soil and Water – Watershed Health, currently meets this requirement.

(ii) The status of select ecological conditions including key characteristics of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

Three existing plan monitoring questions, # 4 Biodiversity - Habitat for Old-Growth Associated Species, # 10 Biodiversity Ecosystem - Change in Old-Growth by Biogeographic Province, and # 11 Biodiversity Ecosystem – Old-Growth Matrix

currently meet this requirement for terrestrial ecosystems. In addition, the existing plan monitoring question # 14 Streams-Fish Habitat - Aquatic Habitat Condition currently meets this requirement for aquatic ecosystems.

(iii) The status of focal species to assess the ecological conditions required under § 219.9.

The Tongass NF is currently engaged in a Forest Plan amendment that will address Management Indicator Species and focal species. It is expected that focal species will be formally identified in the Record of Decision for that amendment. It is anticipated that within one year of the selection of focal species for the Tongass NF, or as soon as practicable, the responsible official shall modify the plan

monitoring program to meet the requirements of this section.

(iv) The status of a select set of the ecological conditions required under § 219.9 to contribute to the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species, conserve proposed and candidate species, and maintain a viable population of each species of conservation concern.

The existing plan monitoring question # 17 Wildlife Terrestrial Habitat - Federally Listed Threatened or Endangered & Region Sensitive Species

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DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVES

currently meet this requirement, especially if the inclusion of both plants and animals is more clearly described.

In the 2015 Revision the existing question is modified to specifically include both plants and animals and by adding Species of Conservation Concern in anticipation of those species being identified by the Regional Forester. It has also been moved and renumbered as question # 18.

(v) The status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives.

The existing plan monitoring question # 37 Recreation, currently meet the requirement regarding progress toward meeting recreation objectives.

Information regarding visitor use

and satisfaction is already being gathered as a component of the National Visitor Use Monitoring program. The existing plan monitoring question is modified to include visitor use and satisfaction.

(vi) Measurable changes on the plan area related to climate change and other stressors that may be affecting the plan area.

To meet this requirement better, monitoring question # 2 Climate Change is modified to utilize the tree-species-composition analysis that is performed and provided by PNW. In the future, it is expected that the forest will further modify the monitoring question and supplement the tree-species-composition analysis with additional monitoring protocols.

(vii) Progress toward meeting the

desired conditions and objectives in the plan, including for providing multiple use opportunities.

The existing plan monitoring program was designed, in part, to meet this requirement even though the 2008 Forest Plan was developed with less focus on Forest-wide Desired Conditions and a greater focus on Forest-wide Multiple-use Goals. Within this limitation, most Plan monitoring program Questions were designed to meet specific Forest Plan Objectives.

To meet this requirement of the 2012 Planning Rule, two existing plan monitoring questions # 19 Soil and Water – Soil Productivity and # 20 Soil and Water – State Water Quality Standards clearly meet this

requirement of the 2012 Planning Rule.

(viii) The effects of each management system to determine that they do not substantially and permanently impair the productivity of the land (16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(C)).

The existing plan monitoring questions # 19 Soil and Water - Soil Productivity meets this requirement for maintaining the productivity of the land.

MARCH 2015 MODIFICATIONS

The 2008 Forest Plan addressed many of the requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule (see above). The proposed March 2015 monitoring modifications address the gaps between the 2008 program and the requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule. The March 2015 modifications include the following:

- The question that addressed Federally Listed Threatened or Endangered and Alaska Region Sensitive Species has been slightly modified to clearly include both plants and animals. It also now includes Species of Conservation Concern. Although, Species of Conservation

Concern for the Tongass have not yet been identified by the Alaska Region, the Monitoring Question has been modified to include those species once listed. It has been moved and renumbered as question # 18.

- The Monitoring Question that addressed Recreation (# 37) currently meets the requirement regarding progress toward meeting recreation objectives. Information about visitor use and satisfaction is already gathered as a component of the National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) program. The existing plan monitoring question for

Recreation has been modified to include a second part that specifically addresses visitor use and satisfaction as currently measured by the NVUM program.

The Monitoring Question that addressed Climate Change (# 2) has been modified to address more clearly the requirement of the 2012 Planning Rule for monitoring measurable changes related to climate change and other stressors that may be affecting the Forest. It is anticipated that ongoing climate-change-vulnerability assessments and multi-stakeholder collaborations will result in a suite of monitoring questions related to climate change. Until that work is completed, the monitoring question has been modified to

DEFERRED AND FUTURE ACTIONS

One requirement of the 2012 Planning Rule is being deferred, at this time. The requirement that the Forest monitor the status of focal species to assess the ecological conditions required under 36 CFR 219.9 will be

deferred until focal species are identified as a part of the Forest Plan Amendment currently under way. It is anticipated that the monitoring questions addressing Management Indicator Species will be modified, shortly after the

plan amendment is completed in 2016.

In addition, the Forest Plan Amendment, currently under way, may identify other modifications to the plan monitoring program

that should be made. Those modifications will be documented as a part of that process.

Tongass National Forest Draft Plan Monitoring Program

We invite you to participate now and throughout this process. For more information, please visit the project website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/tongass/landmanagement/?cid=stelprd3801708>.

Thank you for your interest in this project. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Susan Howle Forest Plan Amendment Project Manager at (907) 723-0477 or showle@fs.fed.us.

The Tongass National Forest Draft Plan Monitoring Program is available for public review and located at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/tongass/landmanagement/planning>

Send or hand-deliver written comments on the Tongass National Forest Draft Plan Monitoring Program to: Tongass National Forest, Attn: Susan Howle, 648 Mission Street, Ketchikan, Alaska 99901. The FAX number is (907) 228-6215. Comments may be sent via email to: comments-alaska-tongass@fs.fed.us with "Tongass National Forest Draft Plan Monitoring Program" on the subject line. Comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and should clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns and contentions.

In all correspondence, please include your name, address, and organization name if you are commenting as a representative of an organization. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

