

## Management Areas

All the alternatives use the same basic set of management areas (MAs). The alternatives do differ in the total acreages and locations of the MAs. (See Table 2 - 3 and the alternative maps.) How the MAs in the 2006 Forest Plan compare to the MAs in the 1988 Forest Plan is summarized in Table 2 - 2.

**Table 2 - 2. Revised Plan/1988 Plan Management Area Comparison.**

| Revised Plan<br>MA Name                                  | MA Map<br>Abbrev. | 1988 Plan<br>MA<br>Number |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Diverse Continuous Forest                                | DCF               | 2.2                       |
| Diverse Continuous Forest<br>with Off-Highway Vehicles   | DCFO              | 2.3                       |
| Historic Forest  | HF                | NA                        |
| Historic Forest with Off-Highway Vehicles                | HFO               | NA                        |
| Forest and Shrubland Mosaic                              | FSM               | 3.1, 3.3, 6.1             |
| Forest and Shrubland Mosaic with Off-Highway<br>Vehicles | FSMO              | 3.2                       |
| Grassland-Forest Mosaic                                  | GFM               | NA                        |
| Future Old Forest  | FOF               | 6.2                       |
| Future Old Forest with Mineral Activity                  | FOFM              | NA                        |
| River Corridor   | RC                | 2.1                       |
| Developed Recreation                                     | DR                | 7.1                       |
| Timbre Ridge Lake  | TRL               | NA                        |
| Special Areas  | SA                | 8.2                       |
| Research Natural Areas                                   | RNA               | 8.1                       |
| Candidate Area   | CA                | 9.2                       |

A brief description of each MA follows. Each MA has a different mix of resource uses. These descriptions highlight only an MA's predominant use. The emphasis in each area should not imply an exclusive use. Detailed descriptions of all the MAs can be found in Chapter 3 of the Revised Forest Plan.

### Diverse Continuous Forest

Large blocks of mature forest that contain a variety of tree species of diverse ages and sizes characterize this management area. These features provide habitat for interior-forest wildlife species.

Shade-tolerant/fire-intolerant species such as maple and beech are becoming more predominant in the forest understory and canopy on the more mesic sites in this management area. The effects of low-intensity ground fire are evident, generally on ridges or drier slopes where efforts to perpetuate oak and hickory species are emphasized. A variety of mature forest conditions are maintained over time using predominately uneven-aged timber harvest and occasional prescribed fire.

Moderate amounts of dispersed, non-motorized recreation opportunities are offered in this management area. Examples of dispersed recreational activities that occur in these areas include hiking, mountain bike riding, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, viewing scenery and wildlife, and gathering forest products

### Diverse Continuous Forest with Off-Highway Vehicles

This management area emphasizes trails for motorized recreation and mature forest habitat for conservation of forest interior species. Vegetation conditions and management are similar to the Diverse Continuous Forest MA. Off-highway vehicle trails are developed and maintained to provide safe trail riding. Moderate amounts of non-motorized recreation are also available. Hiking, horse, and mountain bike trails may be created to connect an existing trail system as long as these do not interfere with the OHV trails.

### Historic Forest

The emphasis of this management area is restoration and maintenance of the mixed oak ecosystem through a combination of mostly uneven-aged timber harvest and frequent prescribed fire.

Forest conditions have always varied over space and time, due to natural processes and changes in climate as well as natural and man-made disturbances. Forest ecologists believe current conditions of the central hardwood forests lie outside their historic range of variability. The desired future condition of this management area is a mix of vegetation more nearly resembling the historic range that existed prior to 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century settlement and development.

A variety of wildlife habitat is provided with emphasis on habitat for species dependent on large oak and hickory trees and a near-continuous canopy. The open nature of the forest and the hard mast produced by the oaks and hickories would provide habitat for many animals.

Moderate amounts of non-motorized recreation opportunities are provided. These include viewing wildlife and scenery, hunting, horseback riding, fishing, trapping, and hiking. In some areas, trails may provide access for non-motorized activities.

### Historic Forest with Off-Highway Vehicles

This management area emphasizes providing trails for motorized recreation and the restoration and maintenance of the mixed oak ecosystem through a combination of mostly uneven-aged timber harvest and frequent prescribed fire. Vegetation conditions and management are similar to the Historic Forest MA.

Motorized recreation opportunities are also emphasized. Off-highway vehicle trails are developed and maintained to provide safe trail riding. Moderate amounts of non-motorized recreation are also available. Hiking, horse, and mountain bike trails may be created to connect an existing trail system as long as they do not interfere with the OHV trails.

### Forest and Shrubland Mosaic

Patches of various sized early successional habitat are distributed throughout a forested landscape. Shrub and seedling/sapling forest habitats, along with associated species, flourish and contribute to overall landscape biodiversity and conservation. As shrub and seedling/sapling forest habitats grow into stands of pole-sized trees, new shrub and seedling/sapling forest habitat are created by even-aged timber harvest.

The mix of forest communities runs from oak and hickory in the uplands and on drier hillsides to yellow poplar, beech, maples, oaks, hickories, and other mesic species on moist slopes and in bottomlands. Native pine communities occur in portions of this area.

Prescribed fire plays a role in the maintenance of some forest communities and species, ensuring the continued presence of fire-adapted ecosystems.

Trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding may be provided. Hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, viewing scenery and wildlife, and gathering forest products are examples of recreational activities that may occur in these areas.

### Forest and Shrubland Mosaic with Off-Highway Vehicles

This management area emphasizes trails for motorized recreation as well as early successional habitat interspersed throughout a forested landscape. Vegetation conditions and management are similar to the Forest and Shrubland Mosaic MA.

Motorized recreation opportunities are also emphasized. Off-highway vehicle trails are developed and maintained to provide safe trail riding. Moderate amounts of non-motorized recreation are available as well. Hiking, horse, and mountain bike trails may be created to connect to an existing trail system as long as they do not interfere with OHV trails. No new non-motorized trail system would be constructed.

### Grassland-Forest Mosaic

This management area emphasizes habitat for grassland-dependent wildlife species on reclaimed coalmine lands. Dispersed, non-motorized recreation opportunities are offered in this management area.

A mosaic of large grassland areas edged with shrub and various-aged forest habitat is provided. Recurrent application of prescribed fire and mowing retards succession to shrubs and trees, promotes growth of grasses and forbs and a diversity of grassland habitats. This provides habitat for grassland-dependent species such as Henslow's sparrow and bobwhite quail.

The forested areas surrounding these grasslands are managed as a mosaic of early successional habitat patches of various sizes that intersperse the predominately forested landscape. To replace areas growing out of this habitat condition, new early successional forest habitat is created using predominately even-age timber management. This provides habitat for shrubland-dependent species such as the prairie warbler and yellow-breasted chat.

Hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, viewing scenery and wildlife, and berry picking are examples of the recreational activities that occur in these areas.

### Future Old Forest

Mostly old forest that changes only as a result of natural disturbances and natural succession characterizes this management area. These areas offer Forest visitors opportunities to experience solitude and closeness to nature.

Natural processes will eventually change the forest composition of this management area. Over time, shade-tolerant/fire-intolerant tree species, such as maple and beech, will dominate the understory and canopy. Conversely, the amount of oaks and hickories will decline. Rare communities and associated species not dependent on disturbances will continue to exist, but disturbance-dependent communities will generally decline across this management area.

Terrestrial wildlife associated with this area includes area-sensitive forest interior species such as the worm-eating warbler, Louisiana waterthrush,

cerulean warbler, and wood thrush as well as species sensitive to human disturbance such as black bear.

Forest Service roads will be closed and decommissioned where they are no longer needed, except for access to private oil and gas developments or similar specific uses. Use of roads that access privately held sub-surface rights or existing Federal leases are restricted to only those users or their agents to access, develop, or maintain their property.

In some portions of the area, trails provide access for hiking, horseback riding, viewing wildlife and scenery, fishing, and other non-motorized forms of recreation. Interaction among users is low to moderate. There is subtle evidence of other users except in the vicinity of oil and gas developments. The target recreation experience is semi-primitive, non-motorized.

### Future Old Forest with Mineral Activity

This management area is located on the Marietta Unit of the Athens Ranger District. Similar to the Future Old Forest (FOF) Management Area, a primarily custodial regime of vegetation management is implemented. This will promote mostly old forest that changes only as a result of natural disturbance and succession and will provide opportunities for relatively primitive recreation experiences.

Unlike the FOF Management Area, surface occupancy of Federal oil and gas leases are permitted here. Many oil and gas wells are already present within this management area, both on lands in private surface ownership and on National Forest System land where the subsurface minerals are privately owned (outstanding and reserved rights).

### River Corridor

This management area emphasizes retaining, restoring, and enhancing the inherent ecological processes and functions associated with riverine systems. Management will protect or enhance the scenic quality of these areas to provide high-quality recreation opportunities. This management area includes linear-shaped corridors along Symmes Creek, the Hocking River, the Little Muskingum River, and the Ohio River.

National Forest System land along streams and rivers is predominantly forested; however, some floodplain wetlands or herbaceous-shrub communities may occur. Vegetative conditions are maintained over time using mostly uneven-aged techniques.

The floodplains function as storage areas for floodwaters, sources of organic matter for the streams and rivers, and habitat for riparian wildlife. Aquatic communities are maintained or are returning to their historic compositions and distributions. Aquatic habitat conditions contribute to

the conservation of species that reside in these mainstem streams and rivers.

Roads within and on the perimeter of this management area are used for a variety of recreation activities. In some areas, boat ramps provide access for motorized and non-motorized boating. Viewing scenery and wildlife, fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing, hiking, picnicking, and camping are key recreation activities. Trails in this management area are open only to non-motorized use.

### Developed Recreation

This management area emphasizes management of existing recreation facilities and the future needs of the highly developed sites that serve large numbers of people. This management area includes both existing and potential developed recreation sites and vicinities on the Forest.

The landscape in and around these developed recreation areas varies from park-like to mature forest. Waterbodies are often associated with these areas. A variety of native wildlife is present, ranging from species accustomed to campgrounds and high human use to those that inhabit mature forest habitats. Ponds and lakes in developed recreation areas generally contain game fish such as largemouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish. A variety of wildlife and nature viewing opportunities are available within and near developed recreation sites.

Roads and trails provide access within the more developed areas. Trails lead to lakesides, riverbanks, and undeveloped areas. Roads and trails accommodate the high-density recreation use and related activities associated with the area.

Facilities include campgrounds, picnic areas, boat ramps, interpretive sites, overlooks, swimming areas, and trailheads. Universal access is available to some existing and all newly constructed facilities and structures. Recreation sites are clean, safe, and well-maintained.

Because of this area's high public use and visibility and the major public investment in its facilities and structures, priority is given to acquisition of private in-holdings and subsurface mineral rights. Such acquisition consolidates National Forest System surface and subsurface ownership.

## Timbre Ridge Lake

This management area is located in eastern Lawrence County on the Ironton Ranger District. Timbre Ridge Lake provides quality fishing opportunities in a natural setting. Boating is limited to small watercraft powered manually or by electric motors. In addition to fishing, visitors may participate in low-impact, dispersed recreational activities, such as hiking, mountain biking, backcountry camping, hunting, wildlife viewing, and picnicking.

Water quality in Timbre Ridge Lake and its feeder streams contributes to the recreational fishing experience. Water quality parameters meet or exceed State standards throughout the life of the Forest Plan.

Recreation facilities intended for use by low numbers of people are present but do not diminish the scenic value of the area. Universal access is provided to some existing and all newly constructed facilities and structures. Natural site characteristics dominate the development. Rustic facilities of informal design are available.

Road access to the boat launch facility, the dam, and to private land in-holdings is maintained. Secondary emergency road access to the dam is also maintained.

The landscape around the lake is mostly a closed-canopy hardwood forest, with especially colorful views in the spring and fall. Over time, the forest will change as a result of natural succession and disturbances (similar to the Future Old Forest MA).

## Special Areas

This management area emphasizes the preservation, management, and study of unique natural areas. These areas are regionally or locally significant and have been formally designated upon recommendation by a review committee and approval by the Regional Forester.

These areas meet one or more of the following criteria:

- They are representative of unique geological, ecological, cultural or other scientific values
- They are appropriate areas for scientific research
- They have potential to be a regional or national landmark based on natural or cultural values.

Areas allocated to this management area are scattered throughout the WNF. Sizes vary, ranging from a few acres to several hundred acres. These areas are individually unique and generally not connected to each other.

All activities in these areas are to be consistent with the protection or maintenance of the unique characteristics for which an area was designated (e.g., protecting and perpetuating populations of rare plants or communities).

Recreation activities are also limited to those consistent with the purpose for which an area was designated. A system of hiking trails may provide access for administrative and recreational purposes.

### Research Natural Areas

Research Natural Areas (RNA) are nationally significant areas with unique ecosystems deemed worthy of preservation for scientific purposes. Research is conducted in these areas to better understand their natural processes.

RNAs must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Contribute to the protection of diversity of vegetation communities and wildlife habitat
- Typify important forest, shrubland, grassland, alpine, aquatic, and geologic types
- Represent special or unique characteristics of scientific interest and importance
- Help fulfill legal requirements, such as providing habitat for endangered species
- Protect or maintain special aquatic, geologic or potential natural vegetation and faunal communities or protects cultural resources.

### Candidate Areas

This management area emphasizes the preservation of potential RNAs and special areas. Management is directed at protecting the potentially unique characteristics of an area until it can be studied for designation as a Research Natural Area or Special Area. Management activities are limited to those necessary for maintaining public health and safety or for treating non-native invasive species.

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## Alternatives Considered in Detail

### Alternative A

Alternative A, the no-action alternative, reflects 1988 Forest-wide direction, including the 13 amendments made to that plan. It meets the