

DRAFT Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area Monitoring Plan

Purpose

The purpose of this monitoring plan is to determine if the standards, projects, and management practices of the Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area (SRA) are meeting the Desired Condition of the Management Plan and Forest Plan direction.

This monitoring plan will be used to identify data collection needed to determine if the standards are being met. Differences between standards and current condition will be evaluated and used to determine the appropriate action. This action ranges from correcting performance deficiencies when standards and guidelines are not being implemented, to amending or revising the Forest Plan when acceptable effects cannot be achieved within the present framework of the Plan. Monitoring is specifically intended to inform the decision when a need for action is identified.

Responsibility

The Forest Supervisor has the overall responsibility for implementing the Forest Plan. Specific tasks for monitoring of the Opal Creek SRA Management Plan will be identified with each General Monitoring Question.

Monitoring Plan Elements

- Evaluation Question – A question that deals with a facet of and helps to answer the monitoring question. These include Forest Plan assumptions and indicator items that, when answered in total, help answer the general monitoring questions.
- Measured action/effect – Specific Statement of what will be examined
- Methods – The process by which the examination will be done
- Unit of measure –The unit of measure applicable.
- Information Collection Frequency – Specifies the minimum collection intervals express as given time periods
- Report Period – The minimal time interval for reporting.
- Management Responsibility – Person who has responsibility for compilation of information at the Forest Level. Actual data collection may be the responsibility of Forest Staff or District Rangers. Partnerships could be used to collect data.
- Recommendation – Management action recommended (if any) based on the results of the monitoring.

General Monitoring Question #1: Are resource values being protected and enhanced throughout the SRA?

Discussion: Standard MA-2c-05 was developed to address impacts to resources within the SRA.

According to this standard, “When recreation use results in effects that would not achieve desired condition or meet standards, management action shall be taken to address the impacts or effects. The following actions, in order of priority, should be used in most cases:

- a. Informing and educating the public, and site restoration;
- b. Site improvement and/or use of regulations such as limiting and designating campfires, designating campsites, hardening sites, establishing minimum setbacks from features, facility development for health and safety, or resource protection , and/or restricting types of use, group size and/or length of stay;
- c. Restrict numbers of users or timing of use such as allowing only day use, and/or restricting the number of entries;
- d. Close area to all users.”

The purpose of these evaluation questions is to inform the agency of the impacts related to the various recreational uses within the SRA. Question #1.2 specifically addresses the effects of dispersed recreation within the SRA.

Evaluation Question	Measured Action/ Effect	Methods/ Unit of Measure	Information Collection Frequency	Report Period	Management Responsibility	Recommendation
1.1 What are the current levels of use?	Have use levels increased or decreased from the previous year(s)?	Permits Traffic counts The measure will be the number of users	Annually	Annually	Recreation Staff	n/a
1.2 Are management activities minimizing visitor use impacts?	Effects to dispersed sites from visitor use.	Visual inspection of dispersed sites including the size and number of these sites. Specific information related to the individual sites will also be monitored and may include type of use, proximity to water, vegetative cover, bank erosion, sanitation, and mudding. The measure for these sites will be the deviation from the desired condition.	Annual target is to monitor 20% of the “low-impact sites” a year (or all of the sites over a five-year period). For the “high impact sites,” the recommended frequency ¹ of monitoring is annually.	Annually	Recreation Staff	Recommended remedial action

¹ The annual monitoring of high use sites will utilize a rapid assessment form and process.

General Monitoring Question #2: Are effective education and interpretive opportunities being pursued?

Discussion: The Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area Management Plan recognizes the importance of education and information to encourage responsible use of the SRA. A number of standards and guidelines within the management plan address this topic. For example, MA-2c-05 encourages the use of public information and education (among other possible actions) to help resolve any potential resource conflicts within the SRA.

The purpose of this evaluation questions is to determine the effectiveness of signage and education to encourage responsible visitor behavior and minimize resource impacts associated with use of the SRA.

Evaluation Question	Measured Action/Effect	Methods/ Unit of Measure	Information Collection Frequency	Report Period	Management Responsibility	Recommendation
2.1 Are signage/ brochure/PR providing guidance toward responsible user behavior?	Determine whether existing signage and brochures are promoting responsible behavior and whether there is a need for additional efforts.	Observe and critique the current level of signage, brochures, and PR	Annually	Annually	Recreation Staff	Recommended remedial action

General Monitoring Question #3: Are illegal activities being minimized or prevented?

Discussion: Within the SRA, some activities are prohibited or restricted. For example, firearm use within the SRA is also restricted. Standard and Guideline MA-2c-07 states that the “Discharging of firearms shall be prohibited in the Medium and High Intensity Zones from Memorial Day to Labor Day to ensure the safety of other visitors. The use of these weapons (firearms and bows) will be allowed for wildlife hunting, as established by the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, during the remainder of the year.”

In addition, MA-2c-24 states that “The cutting and/or selling of trees including salvage sales shall be prohibited in the Scenic Recreation Area. The cutting of trees in the SRA may be allowed only for: a. Public safety, such as to control the continued spread of a forest fire in the SRA or on land adjacent to the SRA. b. Activities related to administration of the SRA consistent with the Opal Creek Management Plan. c. Removal of hazard trees along roads and trails.”

Similarly, MA-2c-27 states that “Special forest product collection shall be consistent with resource management needs and limited to:

- a. traditional tribal uses, and
- b. personal non-commercial use associated with recreation activities but limited to plant cuttings without mortality, gathering of fruits, nuts and mushrooms, and firewood gathering for on-site campfires.”

The purpose of these evaluation questions is to determine first, whether illegal activities are occurring within the SRA and, if so, the level of this illegal use.

Evaluation Question	Measured Action/Effect	Unit of Measure/ Methods	Information Collection Frequency	Report Period	Management Responsibility	Recommendation
3.1 Are adopted firearms restrictions proving effective?	Vandalism of facilities due to firearm use Impacts to vegetation and resources from firearm use Recreation Visitor Comments	Number of incident reports and/or violations. Anecdotal observations.	Annually	Annually	Recreation Staff/Law Enforcement	Recommended remedial action
3.2 Is destruction or removal of natural resource property being tracked and appropriate management activities implemented?	Destruction or removal of natural resources	Citations and incident reports related to forest product violations. Anecdotal observations.	Annually	Annually	Recreation Staff/Law Enforcement	Recommended remedial action

Evaluation Question	Measured Action/Effect	Unit of Measure/ Methods	Information Collection Frequency	Report Period	Management Responsibility	Recommendation
3.3 Are cultural/recreation sites being vandalized or damaged?	Vandalism of recreation and cultural sites	Citations and incident reports related to damage to cultural and recreational facilities within the SRA. Anecdotal observations.	Annually	Annually	Recreation Staff/Law Enforcement	Recommended remedial action