

Decision Notice  
&  
Finding of No Significant Impact

**FISHLAKE FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT #13  
MANAGEMENT INDICATOR SPECIES**

USDA Forest Service  
Fishlake National Forest  
Utah

**Decision and Reasons for the Decision**

*Background*

Guidelines were developed by the Forest Service in 1982 which created a framework for providing “diversity of plant and animal communities” under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), 16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(B). The 1982 regulations required Forest plans to identify, select and monitor trends of Management Indicator Species (MIS). MIS were “believed to indicate the effects of management activities” (36 C.F.R. 219.19(a)(1)(1982)).

An MIS is defined as “Any species, group of species, or species habitat element selected to focus management attention for the purpose of resource production, population recovery, maintenance of population viability, or ecosystem diversity” (FSM 2600-91-8). “Management Indicator Species are plant or animal species, or special habitats selected for emphasis in planning. These species may be monitored during Forest Plan implementation in order to assess the effects of management activities on their populations and the populations of other species which similar habitats” (FSM 2620.5).

The 1982 regulations were repealed by 2000 regulations, which were in turn superceded by new regulations in January of 2005. Revisions of forest plans under the new regulations are not subject to the 1982 MIS requirements. However, the Fishlake LRMP was promulgated under the 1982 regulations. The Fishlake National Forest is currently in the “transition period” under the new regulations (36 C.F.R. 219.14(b)(2005)). During this transition period, the plan may be amended in accordance with the 1982 regulations (36 C.F.R. 219.14 (d)(2)(2005)). This plan amendment is proceeding in accordance with the 1982 regulations.

The 1986 Fishlake National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) designated three guilds, or groups of species, as MIS (LRMP II-27, FEIS III-38 – 40). Under the plan, the Forest has conducted forest-wide monitoring and analysis of certain individual species within each guild. For instance, sage thrasher and Brewer’s sparrow have been monitored as representatives of the sage nester guild. Because long term monitoring of individual species is helpful to analyze population trends and management’s effects on species and habitats, the forest

has determined that designation of individual species rather than guilds will eliminate any confusion as to the Forest's monitoring obligations under the 1986 plan.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared that describes the various alternatives considered to amend the Forest Plan. The EA is incorporated by reference

### Decision

Based upon my review of the EA and all of the alternatives, I have decided to select the Proposed Action, Alternative B, which will amend the Fishlake National Forest Plan as described:

Eliminate the following guilds: Cavity Nesters, Riparian Guild and Sage Nesters and replace those guilds with the following individual species as MIS:

- Hairy Woodpecker, Western Bluebird, and Mountain Bluebird
- MacGillivray's Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Song Sparrow.
- Brewer's Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, and Sage Thrasher.

This alternative will clarify which species are to be monitored to fulfill requirements contained in the 1986 Forest Plan. Each species was evaluated against a list of criteria for choosing adequate MIS. This decision does not consider any of the other MIS contained in the 1986 forest plan and will not be changed or eliminated.

### Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered two other alternatives. A discussion of all of the alternatives considered can be found in the EA on pages 3 – 6.

Alternative A – No Action. This alternative represents the existing condition against which the action alternatives are compared. Under the No Action alternative, the guild concept would remain in effect as identified in the Forest Plan and FEIS.

Alternative C. An alternative was submitted by a coalition of interested parties that would have included fourteen wildlife species and 2 plant communities. This alternative was considered in detail as described in the EA, appendix A.

### Public Involvement

A scoping notice was published in the *Richfield Reaper* on October, 19 2005. Scoping letters were mailed to approximately 140 individuals, organizations and agencies on October 17, 2005. Additionally, the proposal is listed in the Fishlake National Forest's Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA). The SOPA is mailed four times a year to approximately 140 individuals, organizations and agencies.

Two written responses were received; one from a coalition of interest groups expressing concerns about the process to amend the Forest Plan, criteria used to select MIS, and

recommending a list of species to include as MIS and the other letter was from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, suggesting several species. The letters received in response to scoping are located in the Project Record. An analysis of the comments received is located in Appendix A of the EA.

## **Decision and Rationale**

The 1986 Forest Plan designated guilds, or groups of species, as MIS. Under the plan, the Forest has conducted forest-wide monitoring and analysis of certain individual species within each guild as part of the monitoring requirements. For instance, sage thrasher and Brewer's sparrow have been monitored as representatives of the sage nester guild.

The ability of the Forest to monitor all of the species contained within a specific guild was limited to several factors including, but not limited to, time, cost, and technical factors. Which species were being monitored led to confusion on the part of some Forest specialists, land managers, and members of the public.

Because long term monitoring of individual species is helpful to analyze population trends and management's effects on species and habitats, the forest has determined that designation of individual species rather than guilds will eliminate any confusion as to the Forest's monitoring obligations under the 1986 plan.

## **Finding of No Significant Impact**

After considering the potential environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. I have also determined that this amendment to the Forest Plan is a non-significant amendment. I have based my finding on the following:

### Context:

This Decision will amend the 1986 Forest Plan regarding designated MIS. No new species are being added and no individual species is being eliminated. This amendment will stay in effect until the Fishlake National Forest Plan is revised.

### Intensity:

1. Both beneficial and adverse effects have been considered. I find there are no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on the resources or components of the human environment associated with the decision being made. This decision will cause no irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.
2. The action will not affect public health or safety.
3. Selection of MIS does not involve soil disturbance or vegetative manipulation; therefore I find the action will not significantly affect any unique characteristics of the Fishlake

National Forest, such as wetlands, floodplains, existing or eligible wild and scenic rivers, existing wilderness, or inventoried roadless areas.

4. The effects of this action on the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. No new or unusual methods, tools, or quantities of activities are being approved.
5. The selected alternative does not involve highly uncertain, unique, or unknown environmental risks. The analysis shows that effects do not include impacts to the environment.
6. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects.
7. This action is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.
8. No ground disturbance will be involved; therefore no sites listed in, or eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places will be affected by this decision. I find that this decision will not cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific or cultural resources.
9. The proposed action will not affect endangered or threatened species or critical habitat. This decision only applies to consideration of management indicator species listed in the EA.

## **Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations**

The 1982 NFMA regulations direct that “based on an analysis of the objectives, guidelines, and other contents of the Forest Plan, the Forest Supervisor shall determine whether a proposed amendment would result in a significant change in the plan. If the change resulting from the proposed amendment is determined to be significant, the Forest Supervisor shall follow the same procedure as that required for development and approval of a Forest Plan (i.e., conduct a plan revision). If the change resulting from the amendment is determined not to be significant for the purposes of the planning process, the Forest Supervisor may implement the amendment following appropriate public notification and satisfactory completion of NEPA procedures” (36 CFR 219.10(f)(1982)).

Forest Service direction requires: “The following factors are to be use when determining whether a proposed change to the forest plan is significant or not significant, based on NFMA planning requirements. Other factors may also be considered, depending on the circumstances.” (FSH 1909.12.5.32)

### 1. Timing.

This change would take affect immediately. Since the current LRMP is undergoing a revision, this amendment would be in effect until the revised LRMP is signed. This amendment is considered outside the plan period (the first ten years of the Plan) and is only expected to be in place for 2 to 3 years, at which time a revised LRMP would replace the current LRMP, including all amendments.

2. Location and Size.

This proposed amendment would apply to all units of the Fishlake National Forest. Since there are no ground disturbing activities, it is considered programmatic as opposed to site-specific. Location and size are not factors in this amendment.

3. Goals, Objective, and Outputs.

This amendment will not change any of the goals, objectives, or outputs (short-term or long-term) contained in the current LRPM. This amendment ensures the Forest Monitoring program is consistent with the Forest Plan.

4. Management Prescription.

This amendment would not result in a change to any management prescription contained in the current LRMP.

Based on the required factors and the analysis contained in the EA and project record, I have determined this proposed LRMP amendment is not significant.

**Implementation Date**

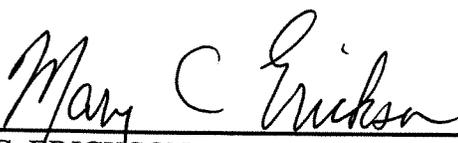
This project will be implemented on the seventh calendar day following publication of the legal notice of decision.

**Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities**

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217.3. Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 217.9. A written appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeal Reviewing Officer within **45 days** of the date of publication of this legal notice in the *Richfield Reaper*. Appeals must be sent to: Regional Forester, Intermountain Region USFS, 324 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Ogden, Utah 84401; by fax to 801-625-5277; or by email to: [appeals-intermtn-regional-office@fs.fed.us](mailto:appeals-intermtn-regional-office@fs.fed.us). Emailed appeals must be submitted in rich text (rtf) or Word (doc) and must include the project name in the subject line. Appeals may also be hand delivered to the above address, during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**Contact**

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Christopher Wehrl, 115 East 900 North, Richfield, UT 84701, phone: (435) 896-9233.

  
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MARY C. ERICKSON  
Forest Supervisor, Fishlake National Forest

2/6/06  
Date

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