

CHAPTER 1

FOREST PLAN INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE FOREST PLAN

The Forest Plan guides all natural resource management activities and establishes management standards and guidelines for the National Forests in Mississippi. It describes resource management practices, levels of resource production and management, and the availability and suitability of lands for resource management. To accomplish this, the Forest Plan:

- Establishes management direction and associated long-range goals and objectives for the Forest for the next 45 years (through the year 2030).
- Specifies standards and approximate timing and vicinity of practices necessary to achieve that direction.
- Establishes monitoring and evaluation requirements needed to ensure that direction is carried out and to determine how well outputs and effects were predicted.
- Will be reviewed and updated as necessary, at least every five years, and ordinarily revised every ten years, but at least every 15 years.

The Forest Plan embodies the provisions of the NFMA, the Regulations, and other guiding documents. The land allocation, prescriptions, and standards and guidelines are a statement of one Plan's management direction; however, the projected outputs, services, and rates of implementation are dependent on the annual budgeting process.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE FOREST PLAN TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

The Forest Plan is the selected alternative (Alternative 5) and is based on the various considerations which have been addressed in the accompanying Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The planning process and the analysis procedure which were used in developing this Plan, as well as the other alternatives that were considered, are described or referenced in the EIS. Activities and projects will be planned and implemented to carry out the direction in this Plan. These local projects will be "tiered to" the accompanying EIS as provided for in 40 CFR 1502.20. The local project environmental analysis will use the data and evaluations in the Plan and EIS as its basis.

The Regional guide provided regional standards and guidelines and tentative Forest resource objectives from the 1980 RPA program for the Forest. These were used in formulating this plan.

PLAN STRUCTURE

As displayed in this document, the Forest Plan provides two levels of direction: General forest-wide management direction and specific direction for each management area. Direction is described in terms of management goals and objectives, Forest guidelines, and management direction for each management area. The Forest Plan also specifies monitoring and evaluation procedures.

The Forest Plan is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the Forest Plan and planning area.

Chapter 2 presents a summary of the Analysis of the Management situation. Included in this chapter are supply and demand conditions, and the need to establish or change direction. The level of goods and services provided under current management direction (as constrained by current Forest policies and budget) and the most likely level of goods and services to be provided under probable budgets with the continuation of current management direction. This chapter includes a summary display of projected demands for the significant goods and services. A supply and demand conditions display for each of the RPA planning periods is given.

Chapter 3 shows how the Plan addresses and responds to major public issues, management concerns and resource opportunities (ICO's) identified during the planning process.

Chapter 4 contains the Forest-wide multiple use goals and objectives, standards and guidelines that apply to the National Forests in Mississippi. It provides a description of each management area and direction for management. In Mississippi each District is a management area. They are mapped, and the physical, biological, and social characteristics are briefly discussed. In addition, expected management activities are displayed.

Chapter 5 presents the monitoring and evaluation requirements. A Forest-wide monitoring and evaluation plan will be implemented to indicate how well targets, goals, and objectives are being met as well as what the environmental effects of implementation actually are. This chapter focuses on implementation problems, provides guidance for using this document in project planning, and discusses implementation of the monitoring and evaluation plans.

Chapter 6 is a glossary.

Chapter 7 lists some of the references used in preparing the Plan.

Chapter 8 is an index to help the reader locate subjects in the document.

Additional information is incorporated through references. Most of this information is available in the planning records. These records are available for review at the Supervisor's Office for the National Forests in Mississippi, Jackson, Mississippi.

FOREST DESCRIPTION

There are six separate National Forests (See Figure 1-2) covered by the National Forests in Mississippi Forest Plan.

The Bienville National Forest is located in the east central part of the state and contains 178,374 acres. The Forest is within Scott, Smith, Jasper, and Newton counties. The principal towns within the area are Forest, Morton, and Raleigh. The major travel routes are Interstate 20, U.S. Highway 80, and State Route 18 east and west, and State Route 35 north and south. The closest metropolitan area is Jackson, about 30 miles to the west.

The Delta National Forest is located in the west-central part of the state, and contains 59,518 acres. National Forest ownership is entirely in Sharkey County, but the proclamation boundary includes parts of Issaquena and Warren Counties. There are no towns within the boundaries. The closest communities are Rolling Fork, Holly Bluff, and Valley Park.

The De Soto National Forest is located in the southeastern portion of Mississippi and contains 500,609 acres. This Forest is divided into two separate blocks, one being in Wayne, Jones, and Greene Counties, and the other in Greene, Perry, Forrest, Pearl River, Stone, George, Harrison, and Jackson Counties. The principal communities within or adjacent to the boundaries are New Augusta, Beaumont, McLain, and Brooklyn. The closest metropolitan areas are the Biloxi-Gulfport area which is about 5 miles south of the Forest; Hattiesburg which is between the two blocks; and Laurel which is about 10 miles north of the Forest. The major travel routes are U.S. Highways 49 and 98, State Highways 67, 15, 57, 26, 29, 13, 63, and 42.

The Holly Springs National Forest is located in the north-central part of the state, and contains 146,737 acres. Counties in which the Forest lies are Benton, Lafayette, Marshall, Tippah, Union, and Yalobusha. The section in Yalobusha County is separated from the rest of the Forest by about 30 miles. The principal communities within the boundaries are Hickory Flat and Potts Camp. The nearest town is Holly Springs. The closest metropolitan area is Memphis, Tennessee, about 50 miles northwest of the Forest. The major travel routes are U. S. Highway 78 and 72, and State Routes 30, 7, 4, 370, 5, 2, 349, and 355.

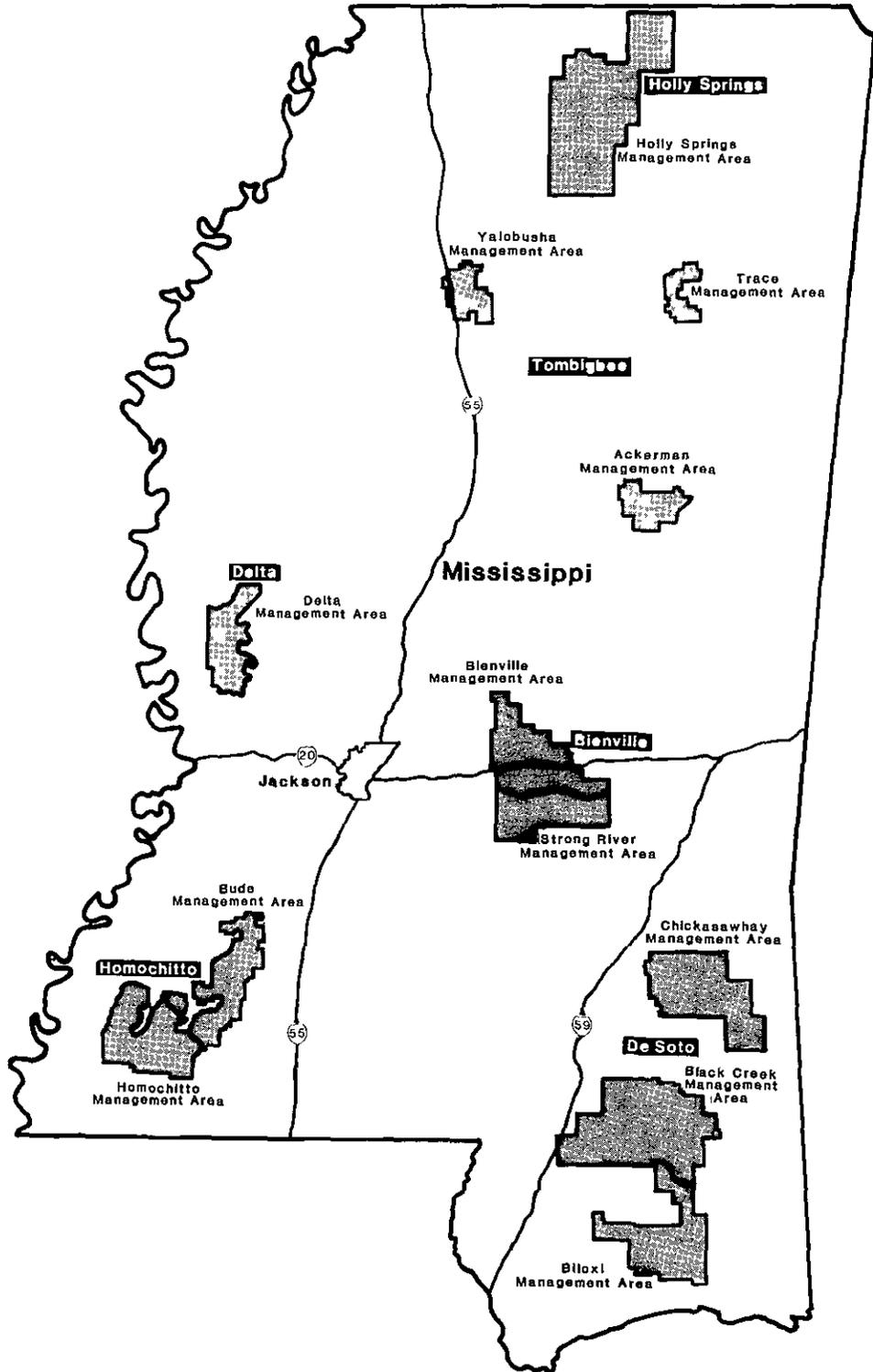
The Homochitto National Forest is in the southwest corner of the state, and it contains 188,781 acres. This Forest lies in Adams, Amite, Copiah, Franklin, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Wilkinson Counties. The principal towns are Natchez to the west, Brookhaven and McComb to the east, and Meadville, Bude, and Gloster within the area. The major travel routes are U. S. Highway 84 and 98, and State Highways 33, 563, and 550. The closest metropolitan areas are Jackson, Mississippi which is about 40 miles north, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana which is about 45 miles south of the Forest.

The Tombigbee National Forest is in the northeast section of the state and it contains 66,196 acres. This Forest is divided into two blocks, one in Chickasaw and Pontotoc Counties, and the other in Winston, Choctaw, and Oktibbeha Counties. There are no towns within the Forest boundaries, but Ackerman and Louisville are adjacent to the southern block, and Houlika, Houston, and Van Vleet are adjacent to the northern block, and Tupelo is 15 miles northeast. The major travel routes are the Natchez Trace and State Highways 32 and 41 in the north, and State Highways 12, 25, and 15 in the south. The nearest metropolitan areas are Meridian, 60 miles south of the southern block, and Memphis, Tennessee, 90 miles northwest of the northern block.

Figure 1-1
Location Map



Figure 1-2
Vicinity Map



FOREST ORGANIZATION

The National Forests in Mississippi is administered by a Forest Supervisor stationed in Jackson, Mississippi. The National Forests in Mississippi is subdivided into ten Ranger Districts, a Nursery and Seed Orchard. The field offices and their locations are:

<u>National Forest</u>	<u>Ranger District</u>	<u>Headquarters Town</u>
Bienville	Bienville Strong River	Forest Raleigh
Delta	Delta	Rolling Fork
De Soto	Biloxi Black Creek Chickasawhay	McHenry Wiggins Laurel
Holly Springs	Holly Springs Tombigbee *	Holly Springs
Homochitto	Bude Homochitto	Meadville Gloster
Tombigbee	Tombigbee *	Ackerman
De Soto	Ashe-Erambert Nursery-Seed Orchard	Brooklyn

*The Tombigbee Ranger District covers all of the Tombigbee National Forest plus that portion of the Holly Springs National Forest in Yalobusha County.

FOREST MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The managerial organization of the National Forests in Mississippi consists of the Forest Supervisor, eight staff officers including Business Management Staff; Range and Wildlife Staff; Fire Staff; Timber Staff; Planning, Evaluation, and Public Service Staff; Recreation Staff; Soil and Watershed Staff; Lands and Minerals Staff; and Engineering Staff. In 1983 there were 290 permanent employees and 225 temporary employees for a total of 515 employees over the course of the year. Professionals employed were 10 engineers, 64 foresters, and 36 other professional or administrative types at or above GS-9.

RANGER DISTRICT DESCRIPTION

The Bienville Ranger District is the north half of the Bienville National Forest. It is best known for its timber and wildlife resources, and the Shockaloe National Recreation Trail with two base camps designed for horse riders.

The soils are a heavy clay ("Black Prairie") which restricts many activities to dry seasons due to severe rutting and compaction problems.

The Strong River Ranger District is the south half of the Bienville National Forest, and it also is known for its timber and wildlife resources. The headwaters of the Strong River flow through the western part of the District. There is some oil and gas activity and one large developed recreation site at Marathon Lake. The Strong River has some broad hardwood bottoms that provide excellent wildlife habitat.

The Delta Ranger District encompasses the entire Delta National Forest which is the only bottomland hardwood National Forest in the nation. Much of the area is subject to annual slackwater flooding. The potential for wildlife and timber production is high. This area contains three virgin research natural areas and several large greentree waterfowl reservoirs. The summer is characterized by high temperatures and high humidity, abundance of mosquitoes and luxuriant growth of vines, including poison ivy.

The Biloxi Ranger District is on the southern part of the De Soto National Forest and is joined by the Black Creek Ranger District on the north. The metropolitan Gulf Coast area borders the Biloxi District on the south. The area has less fertile, sandy soils than most of the rest of the state and is known for its diversity of plant communities such as longleaf pine, pitcher plant flats, and titi swamps. It is characterized by large man-made pine forests, interlaced with blackwater streams.

The Black Creek Ranger District is joined on the south by the Biloxi Ranger District. The plant communities are nearly as diverse as the Biloxi District. About 120,000 acres are under use to the Mississippi National Guard for Camp Shelby as a training area. Most of the District is in the Black Creek watershed. Black Creek is being studied as a potential wild and scenic river in the National Forest System. The District is known for its timber production, wildlife, and the Black Creek Float Trip. Black Creek and Leaf Wilderness Areas are located on this district.

The Chickasawhay Ranger District is a separate block of the De Soto National Forest. The District is known for the Gavin Auto Tour and its vast area of pine plantations in the western portion. The District is divided by the Thompson Creek hardwood bottoms. The latest recreation area development on the National Forests in

Mississippi was at Turkey Fork in the eastern part of the District. The eastern portion of the District is the most diverse in terms of species and age classes.

The Bude Ranger District is the eastern half of the Homochitto National Forest. There is much oil and gas exploration and production. The terrain is very irregular, and the loessial soils are more productive than those found on the other Forests. The one large recreation area on the Forest is located on this District. The Homochitto River flows through the middle of the District.

The Homochitto District is the western half of the Homochitto National Forest. This District is much like the Bude except that the loessial soils are deeper. There is much oil and gas activity. Both Districts provide excellent wildlife habitat with many mixed pine hardwood stands.

The Holly Springs Ranger District occupies the largest block of the Holly Springs National Forest. Being only a short drive from Memphis, it is attractive to many hunters from that area. There are three Corps of Engineers reservoirs adjacent to the District. Soils are extremely fragile and highly erosive with many severely gullied areas. Numerous flood control impoundments are scattered throughout the District. There is one large recreation area at Chewalla Lake.

The Tombigbee Ranger District is made up of the two separate blocks of the Tombigbee National Forest, and one small block of the Holly Springs National Forest. The District is made up of old farmland that has been abandoned and replanted to trees. The Natchez Trace crosses one block of land making it easily accessible from the north and south. Soils are fragile and erosive with many gullied areas. Several archaeological sites of Indian origin are located in the area. The District has two large recreation areas that draw some travelers from the Natchez Trace. Throughout the rest of the Plan the Tombigbee Ranger District will be referred to as three management areas -- the Trace, Yalobusha, and Ackerman.