

ANNUAL MONITORING AND EVALUATION REPORT

National Forests in Alabama

Fiscal Years 2007-2008

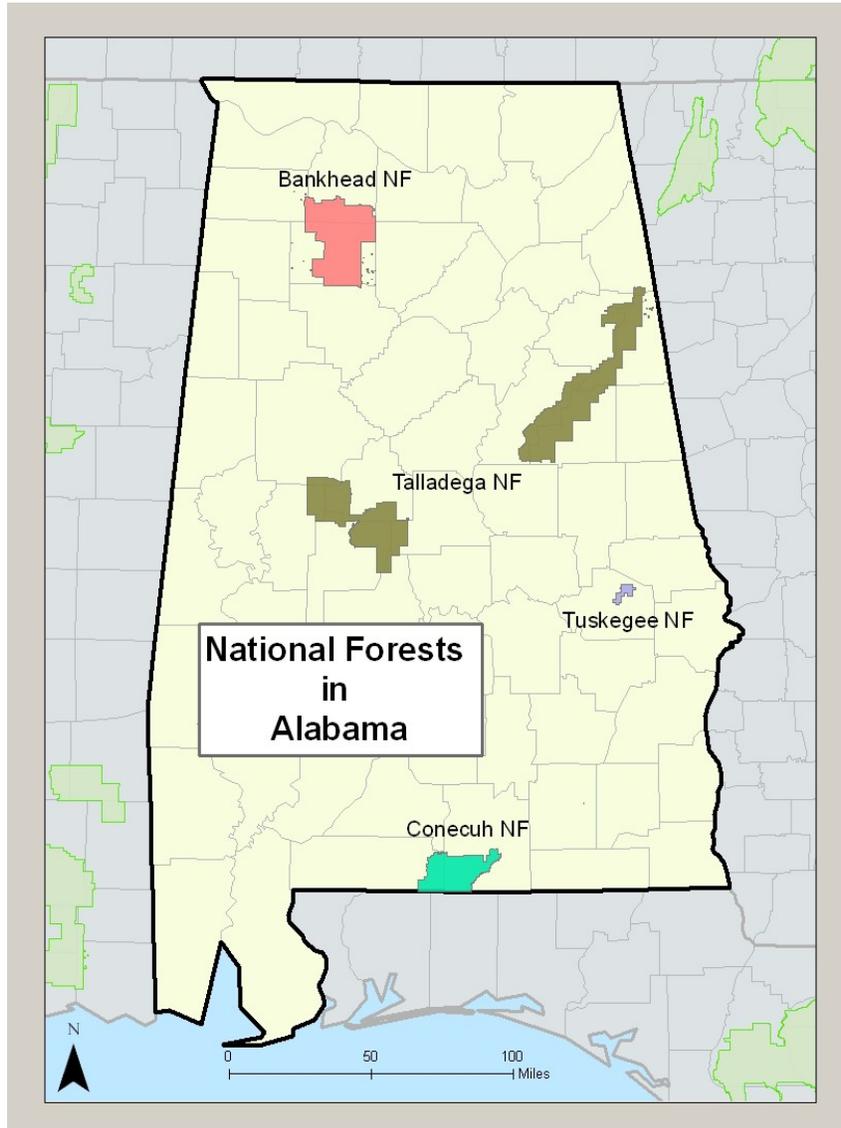


Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1

Forest Supervisor's Certification.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction.....	7

CHAPTER 2

Monitoring Results and Findings

I. Ecosystem Health, Condition and Sustainability

Biodiversity.....	8
Forest Health.....	20
Watershed Condition.....	23

II. Sustainable Multiple Forest and Range Benefits

Recreation/Facilities/Infrastructure.....	25
Roadless Areas/Wilderness/ Wild & Scenic Rivers.....	27
Heritage.....	27
Outputs – Timber/Range/Other.....	28

III. Organizational Effectiveness

Meeting Standards/Objectives	32
Economics	33
Evaluating New Information.....	33

CHAPTER 3

<u>I. Evaluation of Outcomes on the Land</u>	34
<u>II. 2008 Action Plan</u>	37

APPENDICES

A. Contributors.....	i
B. Summary of Field Reviews.....	ii
C. Status of Previous Action Plan.....	iii
D. Updated Research Needs.....	v
RESPONSE FORM.....	vi

Chapter 1

Forest Supervisor's Certification

I have evaluated the monitoring results and recommendations in this report. I am directing that the Action Plan developed to respond to these recommendations be implemented according to the time frames indicated, unless new information or changed resource conditions warrant otherwise. I have considered the funding requirements in the budget that are necessary to implement these actions.

With these actions, the *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan* is sufficient to guide future management unless ongoing monitoring and evaluation identify further needs for change.

Any amendments or revisions to the Forest Plan will be made using the appropriate NEPA Process.

/s/Miera Crawford Nagy

Miera Crawford Nagy
Forest Supervisor

8/25/2010

Date



Executive Summary

This section includes a brief summary of the process used to develop this report and the important findings and results for this period.

The National Forests in Alabama annually monitors and evaluates programs and projects to determine whether these activities are meeting the management direction shown in the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). Monitoring and evaluation are specifically designed to insure:

- (1) Forest Plan goals and objectives are being achieved,
- (2) Standards are being properly implemented,
- (3) Environmental effects are occurring as predicted,
- (4) Our actions are having the expected results,
- (5) New issues are being identified and addressed.

The evaluation of monitoring results allows the Forest Supervisor to initiate action to improve compliance with standards where needed and determine if any amendments to the Forest Plan are needed to improve resource management. This report also provides a tool to improve internal communication and feedback, and provides for accountability to the public.

Evaluation of the monitoring results is reported by resource activity area and responds to monitoring questions (MQ) established in the Revised Forest Plan.

I. Ecosystem Condition, Health and Sustainability

Biological Diversity

Findings: The forest continues through vegetation management to meet forest plan goals and objectives relative to biodiversity.

Aquatic communities should remain stable in relationship to Forest Service activities. Fish and mussel communities are more likely to be affected by existing conditions such as habitat and populations fragmented by reservoirs or by natural conditions such as extreme drought or flooding.

The general indications are that the Oakmulgee RCW population is stable and the Conecuh and Shoal Creek population may be increasing.

Recommendations: Continue monitoring to assess efficacy and forest plan compliance.

Forest Health

Findings: The forest is proactive in managing to reduce forest health threats and has decisions in place to facilitate timely response. Identification of new threats and continued treatment of ongoing threats is critical. Discussions with neighboring landowners have resulted in coordination of treatment on some areas but additional work is still needed to more effectively treat NNIS.

Recommendations: Continue coordination with the partners and adjacent landowners to increase effectiveness of detection and response to forest health threats. Mitigation for prevention and control of NNIS should continue to be a part of every project planning process.

Watershed Condition

Findings: The results of water monitoring indicate that all sites are supporting designated uses as established by the Alabama Department of Environmental Quality.

Riparian areas have predominately been avoided in recent management activities despite the 10% management for early succession outlined in the RLMP.

The conditions and trends of riparian areas and wetland functions and values are either stable or improving. Upland restoration of longleaf pine communities is gradually moving hydrologic functions to a more historic pattern.

Recommendations: New projects need to consider management of riparian areas as per forest plan direction (Objective 8.2).

A review of site preparation on the Conecuh National Forest indicates a need for additional details on compartment maps to display riparian, SMZ's and sensitive soils.

II. Sustainable Multiple Forest and Range Benefits

Recreation Infrastructure/ Facilities

Findings: Illegal cross country OHV use is a continuing problem in certain areas of the forest even though cross country OHV use has been prohibited for many years.

Recommendations: Continue coordination with law enforcement concerning illegal cross country OHV use.

Roadless/Wilderness/Wild and Scenic Rivers

Findings: None

Recommendations: None

Heritage Resources

Findings: None

Recommendations: None

Outputs – Timber, Lands, Minerals, Special Uses

Findings: Timber outputs in both acres treated and volume sold are generally lower the plan projections for both thinning and regeneration. Prescribed burning acres are more closely approaching the projected acres.

Recommendations: None

III. Organizational Effectiveness

Meeting Objectives and Standards – Plan Compliance

Findings: While monitoring indicates that forest plan standards are being applied and the forest is meeting forest plan objectives, resources reviews identified issues and compliance items that require corrective action.

The chief's instruction on Forest Plan appeals requires action two issues. Action has been taken on the wild and scenic river issue and initiated on the old growth standards issue.

Recommendations: Continue formal integrated resource reviews on two units annually, including follow-up on action plans to insure issues and compliance items are addressed.

Continue work to address the forest plan appeal issue of old growth standards.

Introduction

The National Forests in Alabama annually monitors and evaluates the programs and projects to determine whether these activities are meeting the management direction in the Forest Plan. The purpose of this report is to document the results of the Forest Plan monitoring and evaluation program for fiscal years 2007 and 2008.

Monitoring and evaluation is an ongoing process that is documented through reviews made by the individual resource specialists, Forest Leadership Team and District Rangers. The information from these reviews, individual inventory reports, reports and information from cooperators and research are compiled into one comprehensive report after the Fiscal Year (FY) is completed. The Forest Interdisciplinary and Leadership Teams complete the evaluation and final report. This monitoring report contains information for FY 2007 and FY 2008.

The monitoring and evaluation report that follows is presented in three chapters and four Appendices.

Chapter 1 is primarily an introduction and summary of the report findings and recommendations. Chapter 2 documents monitoring processes, actions, and findings of the monitoring completed. Chapter 3 highlights some of the outcomes of actual projects implementing the Forest Plan that led to the findings and recommendations in Chapter 2. It also contains Action Plan.

Appendix A is the list of contributors to this report.

Appendix B is a summary of the field reviews and other administrative activities completed in connection with the monitoring and evaluation efforts.

Appendix C is the status of the previous action plan.

Appendix D is a list of the significant research findings or needs that have been identified for the National Forests in Alabama.

Chapter 2

MONITORING RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Chapter 5 of the Forest Plan establishes Monitoring Questions that are to be addressed over the course of Forest Plan implementation. Monitoring questions address whether the desired conditions, goals and objectives of the Forest Plan are being met and whether Forest Plan standards are effective, and are discussed in this chapter.

I. ECOSYSTEM HEALTH, CONDITION AND SUSTAINABILITY

A. Biodiversity – Biodiversity is addressed by monitoring questions 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, and 9 (see beginning on page 10). These questions relate to ecological communities, major forest communities, terrestrial habitats, aquatic habitats, and management indicator species. These questions are addressed by monitoring of projects that directly and indirectly alter these communities, specifically projects that alter the overstory or understory vegetation such as timber sales and prescribed burning. Project decisions are signed by the district ranger of a given unit and Table 1 lists projects signed during FY 2007 and FY 2008 by unit.

Table 1: Project decisions signed during FY 2007 and FY 2008 by unit and decision date.

Project Name	Unit	Decision Date
American Chestnut Site Prep and Planting	Bankhead	October 2006
Commercial Thinning to Reduce the Risk of SPB	Bankhead	November 2006
Payne Demo Site Prep, Planting, Release	Bankhead	November 2006
Jailhouse Longleaf Planting	Bankhead	January 2007
Cranal Road Glade Restoration	Bankhead	February 2007
Payne Demo Thinning, Midstory Removal and Prescribed Burning	Bankhead	March 2007

Table 1: Project decisions signed during FY 2007 and FY 2008 by unit and decision date.

Project Name	Unit	Decision Date
Wildlife Habitat Improvement – Midstory Removal	Bankhead	March 2007
Site Prep and Longleaf Planting	Bankhead	June 2007
Pre-commercial Thinning	Bankhead	June 2007
Tornado Salvage Project	Bankhead	July 2007
Wildlife Habitat Improvement – Opening Construction	Bankhead	August 2007
Non-native Invasive Plant Species Treatment	Conecuh	February 2007

Table 1: Project decisions signed during FY 2007 and FY 2008 by unit and decision date.

Project Name	Unit	Decision Date
Loblolly Pine Thinning in C-49, stands 8 & 24	Oakmulgee	March 2007
Loblolly Pine Thinning in C-49, stand 6	Oakmulgee	March 2007
Loblolly Pine Thinning in C-59, Stands 7 & 30	Oakmulgee	May 2007
RCW Habitat Improvement – Midstory Removal	Oakmulgee	May 2007
RCW Longleaf Pine Thinning C-59, Stands 16 & 37	Oakmulgee	May 2007
Southern Pine Beetle Abatement Project	Oakmulgee	August 2007
Tornado Damage Salvage	Oakmulgee	May 2007
Longleaf Planting	Shoal Creek	January 2007
RCW Midstory Removal	Shoal Creek	January 2007
RCW Woodlands	Shoal Creek	April 2007
Restoration of young loblolly pine stands to longleaf	Shoal Creek	January 2007
Suppression of Southern Pine Beetle on the Shoal Creek Ranger District	Shoal Creek	September 2007
Timber Stand Improvement	Shoal Creek	April 2007
Mump Creek Watershed Rehab. and Road Closure	Talladega	July 2007
Non-native Invasive	Talladega	July 2007

Table 1: Project decisions signed during FY 2007 and FY 2008 by unit and decision date.

Project Name	Unit	Decision Date
Plant Species Control		
Pre-commercial Thinning	Tuskegee	November 2006
Wildlife Opening Maintenance	Tuskegee	November 2006
Bankhead FY 08 Prescribed Burning	Bankhead	October 2007
2008 Pre-commercial Thinning	Bankhead	May 2008
Rockhouse/Hoghouse Watershed EA	Bankhead	July 2008
Bear Creek Health & Restoration Project	Conecuh	April 2008
Dixie Tornado Salvage	Conecuh	April 2008
Mid-story Removal for RCW Habitat Enhancement	Oakmulgee	May 2008
Quail Habitat Enhancement	Oakmulgee	April 2008
FY 08 Wildlife Opening Maintenance	Shoal Creek	December 2007
Midstory Removal	Shoal Creek	November 2007
TSI Hand-tool Release and Pre-commercial thinning	Shoal Creek	November 2007
TSI Hand-tool Release and Pre-commercial thinning	Shoal Creek	September 2008

MQ-1. Are rare ecological communities being protected, maintained, and restored? (Goal 13, 14, 15)

Bankhead Glade Restoration Project

An initial inventory of glades in the Bankhead National Forest was produced in collaboration with the Alabama National Heritage Program back in 2006. This inventory documented and surveyed nine glades in detail. This inventory enabled an assessment of current glade conditions in the Bankhead, necessary for developing conservation strategies in the restoration and maintenance of these rare communities.

A sandstone glade in the Caney Creek watershed was identified as needing restoration work to remove encroaching woody vegetation from the glade. Funding was secured to initiate a pilot project in winter and early spring 2007 to restore this three-acre glade. A preliminary evaluation of this particular glade was conducted by U. S. Forest Service biologists Tom Counts and Allison Cochran, and ecologists Al Schotz and Dave Borland, accompanied by Wild South staff members Hank Byrnes, Vince Meleski, and Mark Kolinski.



Removal of the woody encroachment has produced improvements in the open structural conditions on the glade in this pilot project. Where feasible, prescribed fire will also be utilized to help maintain open conditions in and around the glades.

Shoal Creek Turkeybeard (*Xerophyllum asphodeloides*) Site Restoration

A known location of the rare plant called turkeybeard was re-surveyed in 2006 and found to be somewhat encroached by loblolly and Virginia pine saplings. In the winter of 2007

district personnel used chainsaws to reduce the encroaching vegetation and expand the habitat for this species. Seed collection is planned for 2009 so that other appropriate sites in the vicinity can be outplanted with turkeybeard.

Georgia Aster Expansion Project

The purpose of this project is to expand an existing population of Georgia asters and to develop a native seed source for use in future projects. Several upland longleaf pine stands have been identified for treatments (a combination of timber thinning, herbicide, and prescribed burning) that will be used to expand habitat for the asters and many other associated plant species. Botanical surveys of the identified stands occurred in the Spring/Summer of 07. Stand Inventory, NEPA analysis, Prescriptions and, Sale layout followed by archeological surveying of the selected stands are scheduled to occur in FY 08 and 09.



Several collections were made in 2008 for several species of local native plant ecotype seed. This work was conducted by Forest Service and partnership (The Longleaf Alliance and AL State Lands Div.) efforts. Native grass seeds were collected from Conecuh, Talladega, and Tuskegee Districts, along with other species of interest like the Georgia aster (Talladega). Seed from the various species were sent to commercial growers in hopes that they will be available in the near future for use in re-vegetation projects on the districts.



Dwight Cheeks collecting Georgia Aster seed.



Georgia aster seeds and flower.

For information on cave rare communities see MQ 7.

MQ-2. Are landscape-level and stand-level composition, structure, and function of major forest communities within desirable ranges of variability?



Several components contribute to providing for the restoration and maintenance of native communities (Goal 1). Vegetative treatments including fire, timber harvest, tree planting and non-native invasive species (NNIS) treatments contribute to the composition, structure and function of major forest communities. Table 2 displays aces of vegetation management treatments by activity and year to meet forest plan goals.

Table 2: Acres of vegetative treatments by activity and fiscal year.

Activity	Acres				
	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008
Timber Harvest - Thinning	1,421	1,265	4891	3229	2055
Burning	78,000	94,000	72,000	57,763	92,927
NNIS	200	250	445	560	970
Tree Planting	327	1005	653	928	889
Natural Regeneration	0	0	0	4212	3007
Site preparation	0	967	999	472	786
Timber Harvest – Regeneration	76	203	724	1052	1896
Release	1391	2784	3665	1170	1008
Pre-commercial thinning	402	277	750	195	692

Source: Timber harvest acres as reported in Timber Information Manager (TIM). All other treatment acres as reported in Forest Service Activity Tracking system (FACTS).

MQ-3. Are key successional stage habitats being provided?

Vegetation management, using various treatments, contributes to providing and maintaining habitats. Timber harvest, thinning and regeneration provide and maintain key successional stages (Table 2).

MQ-4. How well are key terrestrial habitat attributes being provided?

Table 2 displays the acres of vegetation management treatments that provide key terrestrial habitat attributes and key habitat components (Goals 11,15,16,17,18,19).

MQ-5. What is the status and trend in aquatic habitat conditions in relationship to aquatic communities? (Goal 9, 10, 11, 35)

The National Forests in Alabama aquatic monitoring plan was initiated in 2007. Ten randomly selected sites across the NFsAL were sampled each year in 2007 and 2008 for fish and physical habitat attributes. An additional 10 sites will be sampled in 2009. Fish collections were chosen because of widespread fish occurrence in all watersheds and availability of existing datasets. An Index of Biological Integrity (IBI) developed specifically for Alabama watersheds will be utilized to assess the biological condition of the sampled streams. The relationship between fish assemblages and sediment load modeled from watershed land cover will also be examined. The results will be reported for a three year period after samples are collected in 2009.

A comprehensive survey of herpetofauna (including aquatic) of the Conecuh NF was completed in 2007. The objectives of the project were to establish a baseline for the monitoring of the response of reptiles and amphibians to the management efforts of restoring longleaf pine ecosystems to the Conecuh NF and to compare current conditions with historic herpetofaunal surveys. The report is titled: [Herpetofaunal Response to Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Restoration, Conecuh National Forest](#), Alabama.

MQ- 7. What are the status and trends of federally listed species and species with viability concerns on the forest?

MQ 7 is addressed by monitoring impacts of actions on federally listed species, regional forester’s sensitive species and Management Indicator Species.



Aquatic species - An inventory and assessment of existing road/stream crossings of perennial streams was completed in 2006 for the NFsAL. Information from this assessment was used to replace 3 crossing structures in 2007 with the objective of improving aquatic organism passage (AOP) and restoring natural stream channel geomorphology and function. Additional projects aimed at improving AOP across the forest are planned contributing to the conservation and recovery of federally listed species and species with viability concerns.

Indiana Bat – Bat Caves

Mist-netting, harp-trapping, and cave surveying have revealed the presence of the following species of bats on the Bankhead National Forest: Indiana bats, gray bats, Seminole bats, Silver-haired bats, eastern pipistrelle bats, evening bats, Northern long-eared bats, eastern red bats and big brown bats. Monitoring efforts take place at several locations across the forest but mostly in the northern portion, within 3 –5 miles of known hibernacula.

Biennial Hibernacula Survey(Bats)

Every other year, Forest Service personnel and partners conduct Indiana and gray bat surveys in known hibernacula (Armstrong and Backwards-Confusion caves). The table below includes the 2007 survey data as compared to previous surveys of known hibernacula. The survey was conducted on January 18, 2007.

ARMSTRONG CAVE

2007	2005	2003	2001
Indiana Bats - 69	Indiana Bats - 10	Indiana Bats - 21	Indiana Bats - 19
Gray Bats - 2	Gray Bats - 33	Gray Bats - 0	Gray Bats - 1

BACKWARDS-CONFUSION CAVE

2007	2005	2003	2001
Indiana Bats - 6	Indiana Bats - 2	Indiana Bats - 2	Indiana Bats - 6
Gray Bats - 0	Gray Bats - 3	Gray Bats - 0	Gray Bats - 0
Others Noted 24 Eastern Pipistrelle	15 Eastern Pipistrelles	24 Eastern Pipistrelle bats	8 Eastern Pipistrelle bats

Bat Blitz

The Bankhead National Forest (National Forests in Alabama), in partnership with Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources – Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries, hosted the 7th Annual Southeastern Bat Diversity Network Bat Blitz in Northwest Alabama August 10 – 14, 2008. The Blitz was headquartered at Alabama’s Episcopal Church Camp and Conference Center - Camp McDowell - near Nauvoo. To kick-off the event, North Alabama’s non-game biologist Keith Hudson led a field trip to Sauta Cave National Wildlife Refuge for an emergence of approximately 100,000 gray bats. Over 75 participants, including agency, university, non-governmental organizations, and consultant biologists and volunteers from 18 states surveyed bats at 25 sites during the 3-night inventory effort. Surveys included mist-netting, harp trapping at 2 caves, and an acoustic inventory on Lewis Smith Lake. Seven species and 385 individual bats were collected, including 16 Indiana bats and one gray bat. Common species captured were red bat, northern long-eared bat, evening bat, Eastern pipistrelle, and big brown bats.

Data collected will aid Bankhead National Forest in restoration and management of native forest communities and wildlife and in protection and restoration of rare communities, including caves, for endangered bats. Additional information is available at the [Southeastern Bat Diversity Network Website](http://www.sbdn.org/2008_bat_bltz.html). (http://www.sbdn.org/2008_bat_bltz.html)

Biological evaluations – Biological evaluations and biological assessments are completed for all projects to assess the potential impacts to federally listed species, critical habitat and species on the regional forester’s sensitive species list.

RCW – Several decisions listed in Table 1 on pages 8-9 specifically addressed habitat needs for the RCW, resulting in maintained and improving the habitat. The following table highlights the cluster and nestling information as well as the acres of prescribed burning to maintain RCW habitat.

The general indications are that the Oakmulgee population is stable and the Conecuh and Shoal Creek population may be increasing. Habitat improvements on the Talladega continue in preparation of augmentation which is projected for FY 2009.

Table 3: RCW Nestlings banded by year and acres of habitat prescribed burned by unit.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Conecuh					
Nestlings Banded	35	36	45	49	45
RCW Acres Burned(Total)	21,495	16,684	15,117	10,959	26,887
Growing Season	10,229	7,018	3,720	2,615	9,917
Dormant Season	11,266	9,666	11,449	8,344	16,970
Oakmulgee					
Nestlings Banded	37	0	147	143	52
RCW Acres Burned(Total)	21,270	22,000	10,000	6,000	21,285
Growing Season	14,779	13,200	6,000	3,000	1,500
Dormant Season	6,491	9,000	4,000	3,000	19,785
Shoal Creek					
Nestlings Banded	10		16	17	12
RCW Acres Burned(total)	12,240		11,000	8,722	15,918

Table 3: RCW Nestlings banded by year and acres of habitat prescribed burned by unit.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Growing Season	5,000		4,500	2,332	7,014
Dormant Season	9,240		6,500	6,390	8,904
Talladega					
Nestlings Banded					0
RCW Acres Burned(Total)					19,400
Growing Season					8,274
Dormant Season					11,126

The Revised Forest Plan contains both short-term and long-term RCW population recovery objectives from the *Revised Recovery Plan for the RCW* (Recovery Plan). The RCW population growth objectives consider available habitat and population augmentation. Forest management activities such as thinning, burning and mid-story removal prepare the habitat and suitable habitat must be available for population growth.

Table 4 displays population objectives by unit and the annual report summaries for 2004 through 2008.

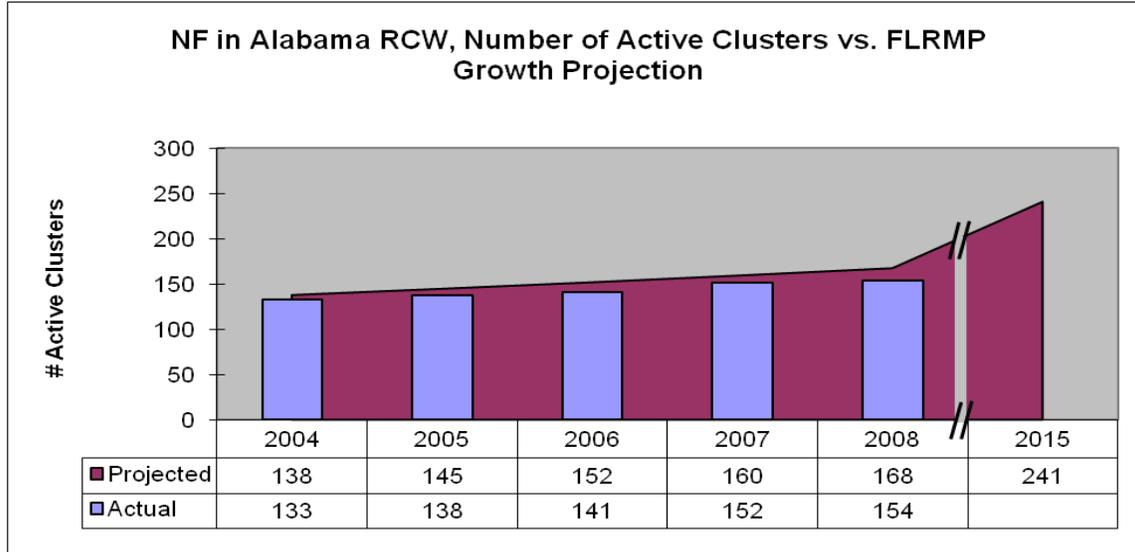
Table 4: FLRMP Table 2.7 RCW Population Objectives (Page 2-31, FLRMP) and RCW Annual Report Summaries for 2004-2008

Actual Population Size	RCW HMA	2002 Active Clusters	Short-term (Plan Horizon) Population Objective	Long-term Population Objective (Recovery) Objective	2004 Active Clusters	2005 Active Clusters	2006 Active Clusters	2007 Active Clusters	2008 Active Clusters
	Conecuh		19	28	308	23	27	28	37
Oakmulgee		120*	185	395	100	100	100	102	104
Shoal Creek		8	18	125	10	11	13	13	14
Talladega		0	10	110	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		27	241	938	133	138	141	152	154

Source: RCW Annual Report-Completed/Submitted to USFWS by District Biologists

* 2003 Complete survey of Oakmulgee RCW clusters revealed a 20% decline since 1993 (date of previous 100% survey). Actual 2003 number of active clusters was found to be 98.

The following graphic displays a comparison of the projected population data with actual.



Growth has been slower than projected mainly due to the lower than projected growth of the Oakmulgee population. The size of the Oakmulgee population (>100) disproportionately influences overall Forest growth rates. Conecuh population growth rates have been greater than projected.

Changes to listed species – The Federally listed species for the National Forests in Alabama has not changed since the previous report.

New recovery plans – None

Regional Forest’s Sensitive Species - The Regional Forest’s Sensitive Species list for NFsAL remains unchanged.

MQ-8. What are the trends for demand species and their use?

(Goal 9, 10, 11,12,13,16)

During 2007 and 2008 the fisheries in nine lakes, ponds, and reservoirs were sampled and assessed including all lakes within management prescription 7.D (Concentrated Recreation Zone). Other lakes within management prescription 7.E were also sampled and assessed. Lake management plans were developed from the assessments. In every case bass and bream populations in these lakes are meeting or exceeding demand or fishing pressure.



MIS

During the plan revision process and as result of litigation MIS for the forest were evaluated. The details of that evaluation may be found online in the [Supplemental Information Report Management Indicator Species, National Forests in Alabama, Draft – September 2001.](#)

Twelve species were selected as management indicator species (MIS). Three of the twelve, white-tailed deer, eastern wild turkey and northern bobwhite quail were selected to help indicate management effects on meeting hunting demand for these species. The NFsAL works in cooperation with the Alabama Department of Conservation, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division in managing habitat for these species and monitoring them. Statewide information concerning hunting and harvests is available online <http://www.outdooralabama.com/research-mgmt/publications/>.

The remaining MIS are birds and are monitored using "The Southern National Forest's Migrant and Resident Landbird Conservation Strategy" (Gaines and Morris 1996). The NFsAL continues to conduct annual surveys on approximately 300 points. On the NFsAL the bird points were established in the 1997, and in June 2007 [Population Trends and Habitat Occurrence of Forest Birds on Southern National Forests 1992-2004](#) (General Technical Report NRS-9) was published with results from this ongoing effort.

The general trends(1997-2004) for NFsAL MIS were reported in the previous M & E Report.

Findings: The forest continues through vegetation management to meet forest plan goals and objectives relative to biodiversity.

Aquatic communities should remain stable in relationship to Forest Service activities. Fish and mussel communities are more likely to be affected by existing conditions such as habitat and populations fragmented by reservoirs or by natural conditions such as extreme drought or flooding.

The general indications are that the Oakmulgee RCW population is stable and the Conecuh and Shoal Creek population may be increasing.

Recommendations: Continue monitoring to assess efficacy and forest plan compliance.

B. Forest Health (Forest Pests, Air Quality, Mortality Events) – Forest Health is addressed by monitoring question 6.

MQ-6. What are status and trends of forest health threats on the forest? (Goal 1, 2, 3, 7)

Sound timber management practices help establish and maintain healthy and productive forests. Fiscal years 2007 and 2008 were significant for the Alabama National Forests.



Significant strides were made implementing the Records of Decision for the Forest Health and/or RCW initiatives on the Bankhead National Forest and the Talladega Division of the Talladega National Forest. Progress was also made on the implementation of the Longleaf Ecosystem Restoration Project on the Oakmulgee Division of the Talladega National Forest and the Longleaf Restoration Project on the Tuskegee National Forest. Under these decisions, trees are being removed to meet other resource objectives, such as habitat

improvement for the Red Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW), reduction of hazardous fuels in the wildland-urban interface, restoration of off-site pine stands to native longleaf and shortleaf pine stands, and conversion of selected off-site pine stands to mast producing hardwood stands.

Maintaining or improving the health of younger, 10 to 40 year old pine stands, is another important management objective. Through use of pre-commercial, and commercial and intermediate thinnings in overstocked stands, mortality due to cyclic Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) attacks will be reduced and the spread of root diseases favoring and flourishing in off-site tree species will be slowed. Decisions, as listed on Table 1 for forest health, restoration, thinning and pre-commercial thinning are key to maintaining a healthy resilient forest. As shown in Table 2 above (page 13), approximately 3,229 and 2,055 acres were commercially thinned during 2007, and 2008 respectively as well as 750 and 925 acres of pre-commercial thinning.

Reforestation and release of plantations from aggressive, over-topping competitors continues to be an important management activity.



Southern Pine Beetle - Southern Pine Beetle

activity was insignificant during the summers of 2007 and 2008. Less than 30 bug spots were recorded and treated during 2007, all occurring on the Bankhead National Forest. Total treatment area was 80 acres. No spots required control actions during 2008.

Hurricane Ivan – Early in fiscal year 2007 saw the conclusion of harvesting on two Conecuh National Forest hurricane salvage sales.

Tornado Events – In fiscal year 2008, two tornados left paths of twisted, broken and uprooted trees on the Conecuh National Forest and the Shoal Creek District of the Talladega National Forest. Their impacts were significant not only on public lands but on private lands and to private structures.

A team of forest specialists were assigned to survey storm damaged timber stands and to prepare an environmental assessment for salvage operations on the most heavily impacted and operable areas.

District Rangers signed decision notices to treat the tornado damaged areas and to restore salvaged areas back to native longleaf pines. At the end of the fiscal year (2008) salvage on 389 acres of operable lands had been completed with removal of most damaged trees.



Non-native Invasive Species - Non-native Invasive Plant Species (NNIS) are an increasing concern across the landscape. Over the years species like kudzu have impacted the forest by occupying habitat for native species and in cases hampering management efforts. In recent years new species like cogongrass have had even greater impacts. The NFsAL NNIS program continued to grow in 2007 and 2008 with approximately 560 and 970 total treated acres reported, respectively, for these two years. All six districts are

currently participating in NNIS suppression efforts; however cogongrass continues to be the priority species for the Forest. Oakmulgee and Conecuh districts have several known cogongrass infestations, and a new infestation was found in May of 2008 on the Tuskegee District. NNIS threats to our Forest's resources are expected to increase as new species and introductions find their way to Forest lands.

The Forest entered into a Participating Agreement with the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service (Auburn University) in FY 08 to assist with training and education of the public and county employees of counties adjoining federal lands in Alabama.

On May 13, 2008 the Forest Supervisor and 21 other agency/organization representatives officially entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), committing to facilitating a voluntary and cooperative effort in providing a means of control, suppression, or eradication of cogongrass in Alabama. For more information see the [Cogongrass Task Force Website](#).

Air Quality - PSD applications are processed annually and reviewed by the Region 8 Zone Air Specialist. Results are shared with the Forest Supervisor. Current air monitoring trends indicate atmospheric nitrates and sulphur as potential forest health threats.

Findings: The forest is proactive in managing to reduce forest health threats and has decisions in place to facilitate timely response. Identification of new threats and continued treatment of ongoing threats is critical. Discussions with neighboring landowners have resulted in coordination of treatment on some areas but additional work is still needed to more effectively treat NNIS.

Recommendations: Continue coordination with the partners and adjacent landowners to increase effectiveness of detection and response to forest health threats. Mitigation for prevention and control of NNIS should continue to be a part of every project planning process.

C. Watershed Condition – Watershed condition is addressed by monitoring questions 15 and 16.

MQ-15. Are watersheds maintained (and where necessary restored) to provide resilient and stable conditions to support the quality and quantity of water necessary to protect ecological functions and support intended beneficial uses? (Goal 4, 5, 6, 8)

During 2007-2008 twenty-three sites on the Conecuh, Oakmulgee, and Talladega Ranger Districts were established as monitoring locations. Nine sites on the Conecuh Ranger Districts have been maintained, these sites are Barney Creek CS (Continuous Sampling), Blackwater Creek DS (Discrete Sampling), Five Runs DS, Hogfoot Creek DS, Hurricane Creek DS, Miller Creek DS, Panther Creek DS, Rock Creek DS, and Sweetwater Creek DS. Six Sites on the Oakmulgee Creek have been maintained, these sites are Affonnee Creek DS, Elliotts Creek DS, Little Oakmulgee Creek DS, Payne Creek DS, Sandy Creek DS, and Yeager Creek DS. Eight sites on Talladega Ranger District have been maintained, these sites are Cheaha Creek DS, Emahee Creek DS, Garing Creek DS, Horse Creek DS, Mump Creek DS, Salt Creek DS, Swept Creek DS and Tallasseehatchee Creek DS. Parameters recorded at these locations include temperature, conductivity, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen and total dissolved solids. The results of this monitoring indicate that all sites are supporting designated uses as established by the Alabama Department of Environmental Quality.

Watershed Restoration activities continued to center around road decommissioning and limiting illegal vehicle use. Significant projects include the Mump Creek Road Project on the Talladega Ranger District and the Capsey Creek Project on the Bankhead Ranger District.

MQ-16. What are the conditions and trends of riparian area, wetland and floodplain functions and values? (Goal 6, 8, 10)

Water Inventory: Six level watershed assessments were completed during 2007/2008. A GIS database was constructed and is available as a reference for the districts. Additionally assessments were completed on the eastern half of the Oakmulgee Ranger District as part of their SPB EA.

The conditions and trends of riparian areas and wetland functions and values are either stable or improving. Upland restoration of longleaf pine communities is gradually moving hydrologic functions to a more historic pattern.

During 2007 a comprehensive review of site preparation on the Conecuh Ranger District was completed. The review revealed some minor problems that were resolved. An additional need for compartment maps illustrating riparian, SMZ's and sensitive soils was identified.

Riparian areas have predominately been avoided in recent management activities despite the 10% management for early succession outlined in the RLMP. New projects need to consider management of riparian areas.

Soil Inventory: A total of 11,551 acres of soil inventory was accomplished on the Oakmulgee Ranger District during FY 2007 in accordance with National Cooperative Soil Survey Standards. This completes the Soil Inventory of the Oakmulgee Division, Talladega National Forest. In addition, a re-correlation of a 1979 soil inventory of the Bankhead National Forest was initiated in Winston County through the Natural Resource Conservation Service. A total of 29,850 acres was accomplished in 2008.

Monitoring of soils standards on timber sales (implementation) has been accomplished on the Conecuh and Talladega National Forests. The Conecuh was accomplished through field assistance and spot monitoring of timber sale sites. Implementation monitoring of site preparation and RCW mid-story removal has been accomplished on the Conecuh and Talladega National Forests. Effectiveness monitoring of soils standards has been established on the Conecuh and Talladega National Forests and was completed in FY 2008.

Findings: The results of water monitoring indicate that all sites are supporting designated uses as established by the Alabama Department of Environmental Quality.

Riparian areas have predominately been avoided in recent management activities despite the 10% management for early succession outlined in the RLMP.

The conditions and trends of riparian areas and wetland functions and values are either stable or improving. Upland restoration of longleaf pine communities is gradually moving hydrologic functions to a more historic pattern.

Recommendations: New projects need to consider management of riparian areas as per forest plan direction (Objective 8.2).

A review of site preparation on the Conecuh National Forest indicates a need for additional details on compartment maps to display riparian, SMZ's and sensitive soils.

II SUSTAINABLE MULTIPLE FOREST AND RANGE BENEFITS

A. Recreation, Facilities, Infrastructure – Monitoring questions 9, 10, and 13 address recreation, facilities and infrastructure.

MQ-9. Are high quality, nature-based recreation experiences being provided and what are the trends? (Goal 22, 23, 24)

The National Forests in Alabama continues to offer high quality recreation opportunities at all of its recreation sites, in spite of decreased budgets and the elimination of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). Financial resources shortages have forced the reduction of some service standards and levels, except at those facilities under concession special use permit(SUP). Houston Recreation Area, added to the SUP in 2005, continues to operate well under concession management. The Forest-wide Recreation O&M contract, implemented after the loss of the SCSEP workforce, continues to function well for the most part.

There have been some additions to the quality of existing recreation opportunities. After a positive financial analysis, several water and electrical hookups were added to Open Pond Campground, as well as a new bathhouse, and electric utilities at existing sites were upgraded to 50 amp service. At Clear Creek, our most heavily used campground, over half of the campsites were upgraded to 50 amp service. An obsolete substandard water system, bathhouse and campground toilet were shut down at Payne Lake Eastside, and a municipal water hookup is planned, as well as new accessible toilets and a host site.

Several underused picnic sites were decommissioned across the forest, and plans are being made to decommission more in the future. In 2007 and 2008, two substandard inaccessible obsolete flush bathhouses, were replaced with accessible vault SST toilets, which has reduced O&M costs and deferred maintenance, as well as utility costs. Planning began in 2008 to build a CCC-style replacement picnic pavilion at Coleman Lake Recreation Area in 2010, through a partnership with the Timber Framers Guild.

The NFsAL continues to focus on its niche of dispersed recreation. Construction of the final 15 mile section of the Pinhoti National Recreation Trail is ongoing, and should be completed by 2010 or 2011. In October 2008, a 14 mile mountain bike trail was constructed on the Talladega Ranger District, through a grant provided by the City of Sylacauga, which provides the trailhead facilities on a city park. All O&M costs are committed, by agreement, from the City and the local mountain bike club. Also, planning for several projects on existing OHV and horse trails, involving reconstruction or relocation, were begun in 2007. One trail relocation project on the Kentuck OHV trail system was completed in 2008.

In 2008, the Talladega RD developed an umbrella MOU with the diverse hiking trail community that uses and maintains the Pinhoti NRT, resulting in greater coordination and commitment of volunteer resources to the hiking trails of the Talladega Division. One result was the 2007 reconstruction of the historic Horn Mountain CCC Shelter, using mostly volunteer labor.

Table 6 displays a list of recreation decisions by unit during FY 2007 and 2008.

Table 6: Recreation projects by unit and decision date.

Project Name	Unit	Decision Date
Mt. Cheaha 10K Run Event	Talladega	February 2007
Lake Howard Bike Trail	Talladega	October 2007
Coleman Lake Redesign and Renovation	Shoal Creek	February 2008
Payne Lake Eastside Renovation	Oakmulgee	August 2008
Southern Endurance Riders Event	Shoal Creek	August 2008

MQ-10. What are the status and trends of recreation use impacts on the environment? (Goal 22)

Illegal cross country Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use and illegal equestrian use are continuing problems in certain areas of the forest even though these cross-country uses have been prohibited for several years. Close coordination with law enforcement continues concerning this matter. In 2008, the Bankhead RD initiated a contract with retired District LEO to patrol the Flint Creek OHV Trail system, talk to users about illegal use, and report violations to the current District LEO. This seemed to reduce the incidence of illegal OHV use adjacent to the trail system, and is expected to be continued and expanded in the future.

Many public meetings were held on the Bankhead RD with equestrian users who demanded more trail opportunities; it is hopeful that continued positive contact and partnership projects will increase cooperation from the equestrian community. The Shoal Creek RD has developed a positive partnership with the Alabama Horse Council, which has resulted in increased horse trail maintenance activities by horse volunteers.

Future trail relocations and improved drainage crossings are planned in 2009 and 2010, to reduce opportunities for off-trail use, and to eliminate many low-laying “play” areas on floodplains of adjacent creeks, with their attendant impacts to the aquatic resource.

MQ-13. Are the scenery and recreation settings changing and why? (Goal 27)

Change to the scenic integrity was minimal during this period (2007-2008); however restoration work and non-native invasive plant treatments positively affected the scenic integrity of the National Forests in Alabama.

Restoration work did create short-term negatives to scenic integrity. Specifically the conversion of off-site loblolly pine stands to longleaf pine stands resulted in some short-term negative aspects to the scenic integrity. However in the long run, this is expected to be a positive effect on scenic quality and thus improve scenic integrity. An ecologically logical tree

component is expected to result in healthier, more pleasing landscapes. Also, the non-native plant treatments (see Table 2) resulted in healthier, better composed landscapes. Moving towards natural diversity by eliminating non-native species improved the scenic integrity.

Visitors continue to view evidence of off trail OHV use in some areas of the forest. The resulting soil and vegetative disturbance negatively affects the area's scenic integrity.

Findings: Illegal cross country OHV and equestrian use is a continuing problem in certain areas of the forest even through this use has been prohibited for several years.

Recommendations: Continue coordination with law enforcement concerning illegal cross country OHV and illegal equestrian use.

B. Roadless/Wilderness/Wild and Scenic Rivers – Monitoring questions 11 and 12 address roadless, wilderness, and wild and scenic rivers.

MQ-11. What is the status and trend of wilderness character? (Goal 7)

The Class I Sipsey Wilderness air monitoring station has been maintained for FY 2007 and FY 2008.

A Forest Wilderness NNIS Control Plan and a Wilderness Education Plan, was completed in 2008.

MQ-12. What are the status and trend of Wild and Scenic River conditions?

The status and trend of Wild and Scenic River conditions remains unchanged.

Findings: None

Recommendations: None

C. Heritage Resources

MQ-14. Are heritage sites being protected? (Goal 30, 31) Fiscal Year 2007

In Fiscal Year 2007, the National Forests in Alabama submitted 22 HRM survey reports and seven letters to the Alabama SHPO and interested THPO's as part of our Section 106 responsibilities.

On the Oakmulgee Ranger District of the Talladega National Forest, 350 acres of previously surveyed areas were revisited as part of our monitoring of past surveys. This area had originally been surveyed in 1979 and 1981. No archeological sites were located. A total of 29 previously archeological sites were revisited. Twenty-two of these sites were considered not eligible for the NRHP. Additional testing revealed one of the sites that had been undetermined to be not eligible to the NRHP. The eligibility of six sites remained undetermined.

On the Tuskegee National Forest, 61 acres of previously surveyed areas were revisited as part of our monitoring of past surveys. The revisit of this area produced one archeological site. The site was not considered eligible to the NRHP.

Fiscal Year 2008

In Fiscal Year 2008, the National Forests in Alabama submitted 21 reports and eight letters to the Alabama SHPO and interested THPO's as part of our Section 106 responsibilities.

On the Oakmulgee Ranger District of the Talladega National Forest, 42 acres of previously surveyed area was revisited as part of our monitoring of past surveys. This area had been surveyed twice before, and a stone mound was recorded. The tract of land was being considered for land exchange, and additional reporting was required regarding the stone mound site. The site was determined to be from agricultural clearing, and therefore, not eligible to the NRHP.

On the Talladega District of the Talladega National Forest, a previously recorded site was revisited. The site had originally been reported as containing ten stone mounds in 1998. Upon further investigations, the site was found to contain an additional 30 stone mounds in the complex, and the site boundaries were greatly increased. This site is considered eligible to the NRHP.

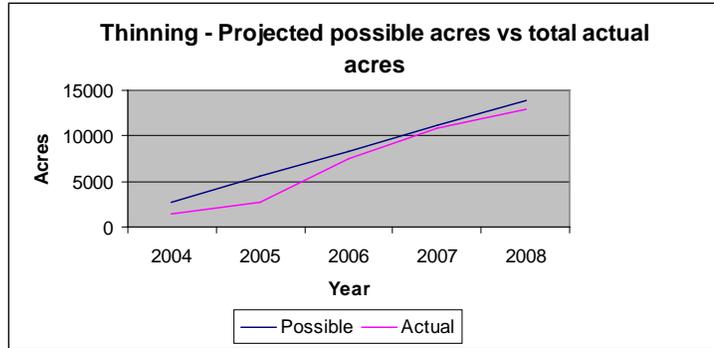
Findings: None

Recommendations: None

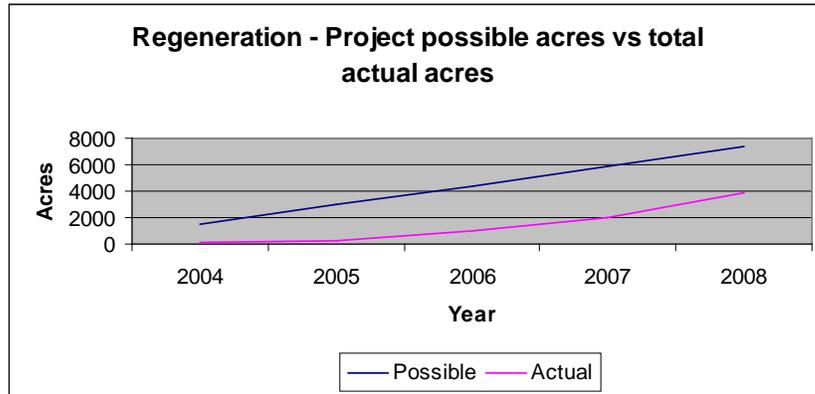
D. Outputs – Timber/Forage/Other products

MQ-17. How do actual outputs and services compare with projected? [36 CFR 219.12(k)1]
Forest management activities are employed to attain desired future conditions, wildlife habitat improvement, and recreation settings, etc., and also result in outputs such as timber volume. The forest plan and FEIS projected possible activities and outputs that may occur over the life of the plan. These projected possible outputs and activities included but are not limited to thinning, regeneration, and prescribed fire. The following graphics display the actual activities and outputs in comparison to the projected possible activities and outputs. The possible activities and outputs were projected for the first period, i.e., ten years; however for presentation and comparison purposes they have been annualized.

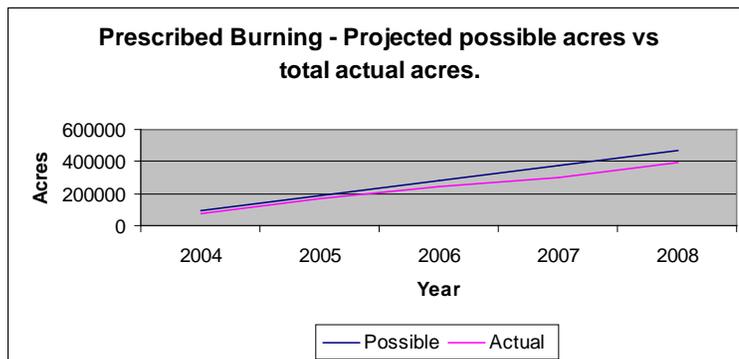
Thinning – The forest plan projected a total 27,842 acres of possible thinning for ten years, annualized at 2784 acres per year or 13,921 acres for 2004 through 2008. The total acres thinned from 2004 through 2008 are 12,861.



Regeneration – The forest plan projected a total 14,772 acres of possible regeneration for ten years annualized at 1,477 acres per year or 7,386 acres for 2004 through 2008. The total acres of regeneration from 2004 through 2008 are 3951.

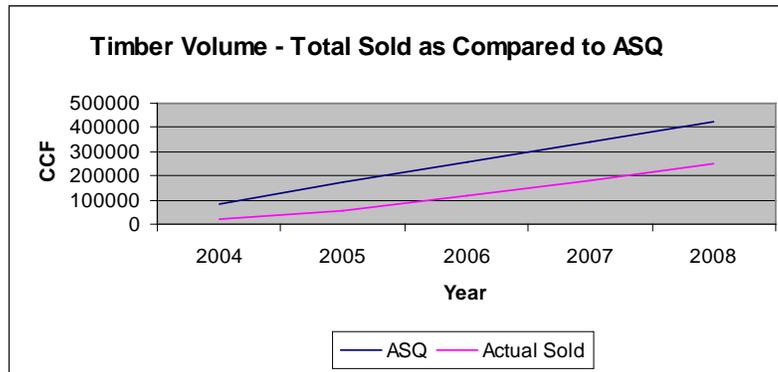
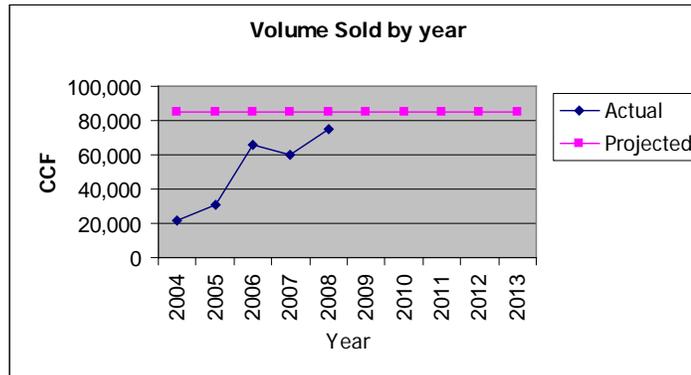


Prescribed Burning – The forest plan projected a total 944,040 acres of possible prescribed burning for ten years, annualized at 94,404 acres per year or 472,020 acres for 2004 through 2008. The total acres of prescribed burning from 2004 through 2008 are 394,690.



Timber Outputs

The forest plan describes expected timber outputs in terms of Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ), the maximum quantity of timber that may be sold from the land suitable for timber production for a specified period (10 years). The ASQ for NFsAL is 85.3 million cubic feet for the first period, 2004 - 2013. Additionally, the Forest Plan estimates 13,093 of acres of final harvest (regeneration or restoration) and 29,521 acres of thinning for the first period. These numbers are not goals but rather estimate the output of management activities. The following graphics display the timber sold volume outputs to date in comparison to the projected outputs as reported in TIM.



The following table displays the timber outputs by year and forest plan projections.

Table 7: Timber outputs Outputs by year and 10-year forest plan projections.

	10 Years Projected	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	Total	% of projected
Timber Volume Sold	85,300,000 Cubic Feet	2,173,400 Cubic Feet	3,062,100 Cubic Feet	6,566,400 Cubic feet	6,020,700 Cubic Feet	7,512,900 Cubic Feet	25,335,500	30%
Acres Thinned	29,251	1,421	1,265	4,891	3,229	2,055	12,861	44%
Acres Final Harvest	13,093	600	85	806	1,022	1,896	4,409	34%

Range

During FY 2008 the NFsAL moved forward with closing the two then open grazing allotments (Camp Creek and Open Pond), both located on the Conecuh National Forest. At the end of the 2004 Grazing Season, NFsAL reported a total of 882 acres having range management objectives. Grazing use (Head Months; HMS) tallied 141 (cattle) and 69 (domestic horses) for the two allotments for a total of 169 HMS (220 Animal Unit Months, AUMS). All 882 acres were reported as meeting or moving toward Forest Plan objectives. A total of 400 riparian acres within allotments were monitored and reported as meeting or moving toward Forest Plan objectives.

Findings: Timber outputs in both acres treated and volume sold are generally lower the plan projections for both thinning and regeneration. Prescribed burning acres are more closely approaching the projected acres.

Recommendations: None

III ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

A. Meeting Forest Plan Objectives and Standards

MQ-18. Are silvicultural requirements of the Forest Plan being met? MQ-19. Are Forest Plan objectives and standards being applied and accomplishing their intended purpose?
Goal 1

Many forest plan goals and objectives are met through vegetation management using silvicultural practices such as timber harvesting, site preparation, timber stand improvement and tree planting. Forest plan standards along with forest service handbooks and manuals provide the direction on how these practices are applied. Field reviews, spot checks and annually reports are utilized to monitor the compliance with this direction. Integrated resource reviews are conducted on two districts annually (appendix b). Additionally, prior to making decisions, the decision documents (Table 1 and Table 5) are reviewed for compliance with the forest plan. Reviews, spot checks, and reporting (FACTS) indicate that silvicultural practices and project decisions are in compliance with the forest plan. However, resource reviews (see appendix B) during this period identified compliance items and issues resulting in corrective action and follow-up.

Plan Appeals

Following the release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Forest Plan the forest plan was appealed. The chief upheld the decision with instruction requiring action on forest plan standards for old growth and clarification on the wild & scenic rivers evaluation process. In February 2008, clarification on the wild & scenic rivers evaluation process was sent to the regional office for review and forwarding to the Washington office. In August 2008, 430 letters were mailed inviting public comment and initiating the plan amendment process for adding old growth standards.

Findings:

While monitoring indicates that forest plan standards are being applied and the forest is meeting forest plan objectives, resources reviews identified issues and compliance items that require corrective action.

The chief's instruction on Forest Plan appeals requires action two issues. Action has been taken on the wild and scenic river issue and initiated on the old growth standards issue.

Recommendations:

Continue formal integrated resource reviews on two units annually, including follow-up on action plans to insure issues and compliance items are addressed.

Continue work to address the forest plan appeal issue of old growth standards.

B. Economics

The annual budget continues to fluctuate over time. The FY 2007 budget continued the downward trend; however the FY 2008 budget showed a modest increase. These fluctuations impact our ability to adequately manage the forest in many ways. Vacant positions go unfilled. Many monitoring activities are accomplished using agreements and partnerships that may have to be reduced in the future should there be budget shortfalls.

Annual Budget	
FY 2004	\$13,659,120
FY 2005	\$15,135,309
FY 2006	\$12,529,571
FY 2007	\$11,266,749
FY 2008	\$14,163,589

There are a large number of new and important issues facing the forest including increasing urban interface, non-native invasive species, increased public interest, new policies, litigation and others. Budget fluctuations create new challenges and opportunities for the forest.

C. Evaluating New Information

Following is a list of the most current issues, concerns and opportunities for the National Forests in Alabama:

- ❑ Non-native invasive species(NNIS) continue as a forest health issue for the forest.
- ❑ A continuing forest health issue is the need for thinning of young (17 to 35 years old), overstocked loblolly pine plantation for the purpose of reducing their risk to SPB attack.
- ❑ Loblolly Decline Oakmulgee/Talladega – The forest continues to work with the Forest Health unit on the causes of and the management concerns related to Loblolly decline. Preliminary reports and a decision support system are developed and shared with the districts.
- ❑ Global Climate change implications and concern are coming to the forefront as more information becomes available.

Chapter 3

I. EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES ON THE LAND

An important part of the process is to determine if the projects we are implementing are indeed moving resource conditions toward the desired conditions as described in the Revised Forest Plan. Many valuable projects were completed from FY 2006 to FY 2008 and the following discussion highlights some of the outcomes of that work by major division of land on the National Forests in Alabama.

Conecuh National Forest

Conecuh Boggy Hollow NNIS to Native Project

The goal of the Native Plant Materials-funded project was to convert cogongrass-infested areas to native plant species associated with the Longleaf pine ecosystem in two wildlife openings and along roadsides. An active Red Cockaded woodpecker colony is located within 100 ft of the roadside. In FY 2008 the cogongrass was treated with herbicides (glyphosate and imazapyr). The project originally called for planting native seed, but due to seed in, the area was restored naturally. Successful re-colonization of native species was found including annual ragweed, partridge pea, poorjoe, and wooly croton. A small area of infestation will be treated again in FY 2009 and prescribed fire is scheduled for FY 2010. The photos in this section show recently sprayed cogongrass thatch, and native re-colonization of the roadside (following spring). The third photo is a close up of the native pioneer plant community that reclaimed the site. Read the full report online [here](#). See other native plant projects at <http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/nativeplantmaterials/using.shtml>.



Cogongrass Treatment with imazapyr and glyphosate



Roadside Cogongrass Treatment



Native Re-colonization



Close-up Native Re-colonization

Talladega National Forest

Shoal Creek Kudzu Control

Kudzu is a stand-replacing invasive vine that exists on all NFsAL districts, and is generally extremely difficult to eradicate. The Shoal Creek District has treated, via both contract and force account, roughly 110 acres of kudzu infestation each year since 2005. Infestations on these acres are now either exterminated or nearly gone for the most part. The district used applications of Clopyralid and glyphosate, depending on the situation and proximity to water. While there is still some kudzu that persists on the Shoal Creek, consistency of treatment has resulted in a successful project.



Large kudzu infestation prior to treatment.

National Forests in Alabama

Fiscal Year 2008 was a Banner Year for Wildlife and T&E Accomplishments for National Forests in Alabama. Bankhead National Forest hosted the Southeastern Bat Diversity Network's Bat Blitz. Talladega Ranger District reintroduced red-cockaded woodpeckers to that forest, more than 10 years after they were lost.



II. FY 2008 Action Plan

- 1. Action:** As implementation of the forest plan continues, new information becomes available that is relevant to management and must be considered during prior and during implementation. Incorporate new information in the forest plan and new project decisions and continue monitoring to assess efficacy and forest plan compliance. Specifically, incorporate current T & E species and regional forester's sensitive species list.

Responsibility: Forest biologist, Forest Planner, district biologists.

Due Date: Ongoing.

- 2. Action:** Forest health threats impact landowners across boundaries and coordination with neighbors is critical to response efforts. Continue coordination with the partners and adjacent landowners to increase effectiveness of detection and response to NNIS. Develop partnerships with the state and other land management organizations to education and facilitate cooperation.

Responsibility: Forest biologist, Forest Botanist, District biologists, District Rangers and Forest Supervisor.

Due Date: Ongoing.

- 3. Action:** While monitoring indicates that forest plan standards are being applied and the forest is meeting forest plan objectives, resources reviews have noted areas that can be improved, i.e, significant issues and compliance items. Continue formal integrated resource reviews on two units annually, including follow-up on action plans to insure issues and compliance items are addressed

Responsibility: Staff officers, District Rangers, Resource specialists: Forest Biologist, Forest Hydrologist, Forest Engineer, Forest Silviculturist, Forest Soil Scientist, Forest Fire Management Officer, Timber Unit Leader, Forest Planner, Lands Unit Leader, Recreation Unit Leader.

Due Date: Annually, by September 30.

- 4. Action:** Continue work to address the forest plan appeal issue of old growth standards.

Responsibility: Forest Planner, Forest Landscape Architect.

Due Date: FY 2009

Appendix A

Contributors:

Charles Price, Staff Officer for Planning and Natural Resources

Felicia Humphrey, Planner

Eugene Brooks, Silviculturist

James Clute, Timber Sales

Allison Cochran, Wildlife Biologist

Stephanie Dean, Timber Sale Accountant

Jay Edwards, Hydrologist

Stanley Glover, GIS Coordinator

Art Goddard, Soil Scientist

John Moran, Fisheries Biologist

Joe Nicholson, Recreation Specialist

Robert Pasquill, Archaeologist

Ryan Shurette, Botanist

Dagmar Thurmond, Wildlife Biologist

Steve Weldon, Fire Planner

Appendix B - Summary of Field Reviews and Other Administrative Activities

The Forest completed two formal Quality Reviews (Integrated Program Reviews) during FY2007 on the Conecuh National Forest and Shoal Creek Ranger District of the Talladega National Forest, and two reviews in FY 2008 on the Bankhead National Forest and the Talladega Ranger District of the Talladega National Forest.

- 1) Conecuh Review Summary** - A Forest Management Program Activity Review of the Conecuh Ranger District was conducted on April 10-12, 2007 by an integrated resource review team. The review found that overall the Forest management program quality of work is improving and noted four significant issues. Additionally the review team identified 15 compliance items to be addressed by the district. The district has formally responded to this review.
- 2) Shoal Creek Review Summary** – A Natural Resources Program Activity Review of the Talladega National Forest, Shoal Creek Ranger district was conducted on June 5 -7, 2007 by an integrated resources review team. The review noted four significant issues and 15 compliance items to be addressed by the district. The district has formally responded to this review addressing these items.
- 3) Bankhead Review Summary** – A Forest Management Program Activity Review of the Bankhead National Forest was conducted on June 30 through July 2, 2008 by an integrated resource review team. A draft of the Review has been passed to staff but has not been forwarded to the district.
- 4) Talladega Review Summary** – A Natural Resources Program Activity Review of the Talladega National Forest, Talladega Ranger district was conducted on July 15 – 17, 2008 by an integrated resources review team. A draft of the review has been passed to staff but has not been forwarded to the district.
- 5) Fire Management** personnel conducted Preparedness Reviews on each district to ensure pre-suppression readiness. Fire Management participated in prescribed burning and guided accomplishment recording and documentation. Additionally, in according with policy, fire management staff conducted reviews on 10% of wildfires.
- 6)** Previously established **fixed monitoring plots** (fuels) on the Conecuh, Oakmulgee and Talladega Districts were revisited to monitor prescribed burning activities. Additional plots were established.
- 7) A Timber Sales and Office Management Review** was conducted in accordance with FS direction on the Bankhead National Forest in July 2008. This review included all aspects of the timber sale program from preparation to administration.

Appendix C - Status of Previous M& E Report Action Plan – FY 2004 - 2006

- 1. Action:** As implementation of the forest plan continues, new information becomes available that is relevant to management and must be considered during prior and during implementation. Incorporate new information in the forest plan and new project decisions and continue monitoring to assess efficacy and forest plan compliance. Specifically, incorporate current T & E species and regional forester's sensitive species list.

Responsibility: Forest biologist, Forest Planner, district biologists.

Due Date: Ongoing

Status: Ongoing

- 2. Action:** Forest health threats impact landowners across boundaries and coordination with neighbors is critical to response efforts. Continue coordination with the partners and adjacent landowners to increase effectiveness of detection and response to NNIS. Develop partnerships with the state and other land management organizations to education and facilitate cooperation.

Responsibility: Forest biologist, Forest Botanist, District biologists, District Rangers and Forest Supervisor.

Due Date: Ongoing

Status: Cogongrass Task Force MOU – May 2008; Ongoing

- 3. Action:** While monitoring indicates that forest plan standards are being applied and the forest is meeting forest plan objectives, resources reviews have noted areas that can be improved, i.e., significant issues and compliance items. Continue formal integrated resource reviews on two units annually, including follow-up on action plans to insure issues and compliance items are addressed.

Responsibility: Staff officers, District Rangers, Resource specialists: Forest Biologist, Forest Hydrologist, Forest Engineer, Forest Silviculturist, Forest Soil Scientist, Forest Fire Management Officer, Timber Unit Leader, Forest Planner, Lands Unit Leader, Recreation Unit Leader.

Due Date: Annually, by September 30.

Status: Two reviews were completed in FY 2007 and two completed in FY 2008. However, review reports and for the FY 2008 reviews have not been finalized or forwarded to the districts, and no follow-up has occurred.

4. **Action:** Address forest plan appeal issues of old growth and wild & scenic rivers within specified timeframes.

Responsibility: Forest Planner, Forest Landscape Architect.

Due Date: FY 2009

Status: In February 2008, clarification on the wild & scenic rivers evaluation process was sent to the regional office for review and forwarding to the Washington office. In August 2008, letters were mailed inviting public comment and initiating the plan amendment process for adding old growth standards. The amendment process is expected to be completed in FY 2009.

Appendix D - List of Significant Research Findings, Inventories, and Updated Research Needs

Alabama Inventory List: The Rare, Threatened, & Endangered Plants & Animals of Alabama – June 2006 (Alabama Natural Heritage Program)

Aquatic Passage Assessment of Current Road Crossings

Fire Effects Monitoring Plots – NfsAL

Population Trends and Habitat Occurrence of Forest Birds on the Southern National Forests 1992-2004 –June 2007

Supplemental Information Report Management Indicator Species, National Forests in Alabama, Draft – September 2001

Herpetofaunal Response to Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Restoration, Conecuh National Forest, Alabama - April 2007

