



Hoosier National Forest Highlights



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Monitoring on the Hoosier

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When hiking your favorite trail on the Hoosier have you ever noticed it was no longer muddy or perhaps a portion of the trail was relocated? How did the Hoosier staff know to correct the problem? It was a result of trail monitoring. Or further down the trail you cross an area and you remember that it had been part of a prescribed burn last year. In past years you did not notice all the different blooming flowers that you see now. These new flowers are the result of opening up the forest canopy and allowing more sunlight to reach the ground. Forest personnel are continually monitoring both the trails and other actions done on the Forest to be sure completed projects are producing the results that were planned.

Forest personnel, often with the help of cooperators, monitor many species to be sure actions taken by the Forest are benefitting wildlife. So far this spring and summer we have people driving routes to listen for American woodcock at dusk; drumming ruffed grouse in the morning; and frogs, toads, and salamanders in the evenings. We are also interested in obtaining information about bat populations, preferred travel routes, and summer roosts, especially the endangered Indiana bat. We obtain this information by capturing them at night in mist nets. We are then able to understand the characteristics of the roost trees they prefer. This enables us to better provide this type of habitat.

The Hoosier's monitoring program is conducted to find out how well we are doing in moving the Forest towards the desired condition described in the *Forest Plan*. The monitoring includes a consideration of the effects of management on the land, the resources, and the communities adjacent to or near the Forest. Monitoring and evaluation ensure that *Forest Plan* direction is carried out. Monitoring results may provide a reason for *Forest Plan* revisions or amendments to the *Forest Plan*. Also monitoring requirements are designed and developed to meet the legal requirements in federal regulations.

Monitoring is done to see and record the results of management actions taken by the Hoosier. During the Forest's individual project planning process, monitoring questions and things to measure are developed and included in the planning documents.

The information collected about each project answers three questions: was the management action done right; did it work; and was the planning guidance used correct?

Once monitoring information is collected it is reviewed and analyzed. The first question answers if the action was completed as designed and if it is in agreement with the *Forest Plan* goals and guidance. The second question answers if the action was effective in meeting *Forest Plan* goals and direction. Finally, the third question answers if the original information and assumptions were correct or is there a better way to accomplish the goals. By answering these questions we are able to adapt future similar projects to take advantage of the knowledge we learned from the completed monitoring.

So the next time you visit the Forest and encounter a recently completed project, you can be sure that the Forest is monitoring it to be sure that it is going as planned.

Additional information about monitoring and monitoring reports can be found on the forest website at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/hoosier/planningdocs/monitoring/monitoring.htm>

For additional information on any of these programs contact Dale Weigel, Forest Monitoring Coordinator by email at dweigel@fs.fed.us or call 812-276-4774.



Hoosier Soils Scientist Zach Rigg collects water samples at Wesley Chapel Gulf.



A grid system is used to randomly inventory plant species before and after treatment in wildlife openings on the Hoosier National Forest.



USFS biologists erecting mist nets to capture and study eastern bat species. The nets were placed at vernal pool sites on the Hoosier National Forest. Vernal pools are important water sources for frogs, salamanders, and bats that usually hold water in the spring and fall months of the year. On this night, five different bat species were found, including the Federally-endangered Indiana bat.