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Agriculture

Payette National
Forest

Name of
Ranger District

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Administrative Change to the Land and Resource Management Plan

Payette National Forest

Photos by David Ede

Chapter IV
Implementation of the Forest Plan

Administrative Changes to Chapter IV of the 2003 Forest Plan

The "Monitoring and Evaluation Direction" section in the 2003 Payette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) is replaced with the following direction.

Administrative Changes to bring in to compliance with the 2012 Planning Rule found at 36 CFR 219

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Overview

Monitoring provides feedback for the Payette National Forest (Forest) planning cycle by testing assumptions, tracking relevant conditions over time, measuring management effectiveness, and evaluating effects of management practices. Monitoring information should enable the Forest to determine if a change in plan components or other plan management guidance may be needed, forming a basis for continual improvement and adaptive management. Direction for monitoring and evaluating forest plans is found under the 2012 Planning Rule at 36 CFR 219.12 and in the directives in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12, Chapter 30.

The plan monitoring program must contain one or more monitoring questions and associated indicators addressing each of the following:

1. The status of select watershed conditions
2. The status of select ecological conditions, including key characteristics of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems
3. The status of focal species to assess the ecological conditions required under § 219.9
4. The status of a select set of the ecological conditions required under § 219.9 to contribute to the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species, conservation of proposed and candidate species, and maintenance of a viable population of each species of conservation concern
5. The status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives
6. Measurable changes of the plan area related to climate change and other stressors which may be affecting the plan area
7. Progress toward meeting the desired conditions and objectives in the plan, including providing for multiple use opportunities
8. The effects of each management system to determine it does not substantially and permanently impair the productivity of the land

The plan monitoring program addresses the most critical components for informed management of the Forest's resources within the financial and technical capability of the agency. Every monitoring question links to one or more desired conditions and objectives, as defined in the 2012 Planning Rule. However, not every plan component has a corresponding monitoring question.

The monitoring program sets out plan monitoring questions and associated indicators. Protocols are not a part of the plan monitoring program but will instead be established in implementation guidance. Consideration of and coordination with other broad-scale monitoring strategies, multi-party monitoring collaboration, and cooperation with State agencies where practicable will increase efficiencies and help track changing conditions beyond Forest boundaries to improve the effectiveness of the plan monitoring program. In addition, project and activity monitoring may be used to gather information for the plan monitoring program if it will provide relevant information to inform adaptive management.

Tables H-1 through H-4 (USDA Forest Service 2003, Appendix H) are organized to display the plan components that drive the monitoring question(s) and the indicator(s) for answering the monitoring question. Monitoring questions are used to evaluate if management is maintaining or moving toward or away from desired conditions or objectives.

Indicators are the specific resource measures used in answering the monitoring questions. In general, the Forest Plan component that is the primary direction being addressed by the monitoring question is also listed.

The monitoring indicators listed in this chapter will be evaluated. The associated evaluation process will then determine if the observed changes are consistent with the Forest Plan and if implementation is effective.

Evaluation reports will be produced and made public biennially (per the 2012 Planning Rule at 36 CFR 219.12(d)). An interdisciplinary team will develop the biennial monitoring evaluation report which will summarize the results of completed monitoring, evaluate the data, consider relevant information from broad-scale or other monitoring efforts, and make recommendations to the Responsible Official. Some monitoring indicators will require longer timeframes for thoroughly evaluating results, but a biennial review of what information has been collected will ensure timely evaluation to inform planning. The biennial monitoring evaluation does not need to evaluate all questions or indicators biennially, but needs to provide monitoring results with new information regarding management effectiveness and progress towards meeting desired conditions or objectives or validation (or invalidation) of assumptions.

The monitoring evaluation report will help the Responsible Official determine whether or not a change to the Forest Plan, management activities, or the monitoring program is needed or if a new assessment may be warranted based on the new information. It is not a decision document. It is used to inform adaptive management of the plan area.

Species of Conservation Concern

As defined in the 2012 Planning Rule at 36 CFR 219.9(c), a species of conservation concern (SCC) is "a species, other than federally recognized threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species, that is known to occur in the plan area and for which the regional forester has determined that the best available scientific information indicates substantial concern about the species' capability to persist over the long-term in the plan area." The 2012 Planning Rule requires the Regional Forester to identify SCC for plan revision. To be consistent with direction in FSH 1909.12, Chapter 20, the Regional Forester will identify SCC ahead of plan revision if the Forest proposes a plan amendment to change plan direction associated with ecological sustainability or diversity of plant and animal species, per 36 CFR 219.8 and 219.9, respectively. As SCC are identified for the Forest by the Regional Forester, the monitoring plan will be changed as needed.

Physical and Biological Ecosystems

At a Forest scale, potential vegetation groups (PVGs) are a useful organizing concept to delineate habitat, which may be related to wildlife occurrence, influenced by elevation, microclimates, or productivity. The Forest has identified desired conditions for potential vegetation groups and watershed condition indicators (USDA Forest Service 2003, Appendices A and B, respectively). The key ecosystem characteristics listed in Appendices A and B are intended to be used for forest plan monitoring at a forest-wide or biophysical-setting scale. Many existing vegetation characteristics are associated with wildlife habitats, and meeting desired conditions in Appendix A, including patch size by PVG, is used as a mid-scale indicator for wildlife source habitat quality (USDA Forest Service 2003).

Specific physical and biological ecosystem indicators that would be monitored for key ecosystem characteristics on the Forest are identified and described in Table IV-1 below. Key ecosystem characteristics can also be combined in different ways to assess habitat for specific species of interest, using habitat models based upon the best available scientific information. Species-specific habitat models are used at the project scale to assess potential effects of forest plan implementation.

Key ecosystem characteristics related to climate change and wildlife are measured at very large scales, not the forest scale, but are important to some wildlife species on the Forest. For example, one key ecosystem characteristic is "persistent spring snow," which is useful for monitoring habitat for some species, including wolverine. Changes in the distribution of persistent spring snow on the Forest are monitored annually. Another key ecosystem characteristic is related to drought, measured by drought severity indices and trends, which would be monitored over time as data are updated.

As defined in the 2012 Planning Rule at 36 CFR 219.19, focal species are a "small subset of species whose status permits inference to the integrity of the larger ecological system to which it belongs and provides meaningful information regarding the effectiveness of the plan in maintaining or restoring the ecological conditions to maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities in the plan area." The presence and distribution of select threatened and endangered species and sensitive species are included as such indicators in the Forest's plan monitoring program and are assessed in cooperation with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, non-government organizations (NGOs), and other federal agencies. Bull trout, a threatened species, is an indicator of ecological integrity of an aquatic ecosystem integral to the Forest. White-headed woodpeckers and pileated woodpeckers are monitored because they are indicators of ecological integrity, resilience, and natural disturbances important for restoring and maintaining terrestrial habitats of concern on the Forest.

Table IV-1. Physical and biological ecosystem plan monitoring questions and indicators for the Payette National Forest (Forest)

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question(s)	Indicator(s)	Addresses Monitoring Element(s)
Terrestrial Ecosystems and Vegetation			
Forest, grassland, shrubland, and riparian plant communities are within a desired range of variability for composition, structure, patterns, and processes. Vegetation forms a diverse network of habitats and connective corridors for wildlife and provides desired levels of snags, coarse woody material, and soil organic matter. Terrestrial and aquatic habitats support species diversity, with an emphasis on maintaining or restoring threatened, endangered, and sensitive species and rare and unique plant communities.	Is live vegetation at, or moving towards, desired conditions as described in Appendices A and E of the Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service 2003)?	Mix of size classes, canopy cover, and species composition and their spatial patterns by forested Potential Vegetation Group (PVG) and non-forested cover types within 5th field hydrologic units.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7
	Are planned treatments being implemented within priority watersheds to meet desired outcomes?	Acres treated annually in the identified priority watersheds.	
	Are Forest management actions affecting known habitat of globally rare (G1, G2, G3) plant species at the project level?	Acres of disturbance of known occupied habitat of globally rare species.	
Fire			
Wildland fire functions in its natural ecological role to improve the health of the land by creating fire-resilient landscapes and restoring fire-adapted ecosystems.	Is wildland fire, including prescribed fire, being utilized to move landscapes towards desired conditions for resiliency and condition class?	Acres burned resulting in desired conditions or acres burned that move the watershed closer to desired conditions.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7
High fire risk within the wildland urban interface (WUI) is reduced to conditions that will provide for protection of life, investment, and valuable resources.	Are high wildfire risk areas being identified within the WUI and are those acres being subsequently treated to reduce that risk?	Acres of high wildfire risk within the WUI treated in a manner that reduces risk.	2, 6

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question(s)	Indicator(s)	Addresses Monitoring Element(s)
Watershed Condition and Water Quality			
Desired Condition: Watershed conditions are properly functioning. **Objectives**: Maintain all watersheds (6th level HUC) currently classified as "Functioning Properly". Move all other watersheds towards desired conditions by improving the watershed condition indices where planned activities occur. Improve priority watersheds to the next Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) condition.	Is the Forest implementing projects that will restore and maintain stream channel integrity, flow regimes, and water quality as outlined in the Forest Plan Watershed and Aquatic Restoration Strategy (WARS) and WCF?	Change in select watershed conditions indicators: 1) total road miles and road density; 2) miles and road density within riparian conservation areas (RCAs); 3) miles of total roads, RCAs roads, and unauthorized roads decommissioned. Number of watersheds moved to an improved Watershed Condition Class.	1
Desired Condition: Surface water quality meets or exceeds State standards for aquatic biodiversity and beneficial downstream uses. **Standard**: Project design must meet or exceed applicable best management practices (BMPs) prescriptions to mitigate nonpoint-source pollution.	Are BMPs and project design features implemented and effective in protecting water quality and riparian resources?	National BMP Monitoring Protocols to determine if BMPs are carried out and effective in mitigating nonpoint source pollution	1
Aquatic Ecosystems and Species			
Distribution of native and desired nonnative fish and other aquatic species is maintained or is expanding into previously occupied habitat, with interconnectivity between and within metapopulations.	Is stream habitat in priority watersheds being maintained or restored to fully support beneficial uses and native and desired nonnative fish species and their habitats?	Watershed conditions indicators either maintained or improving within priority watersheds Native and nonnative species presence/absence	1, 2, 4
Habitats for threatened and endangered aquatic species are managed consistent with established and approved recovery plans. Management actions either contribute to or do not prevent recovery or delisting of these species. Degrading effects from Forest programs are at levels that do not threaten the persistence of threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate (TEPC) species populations.	Are the distribution, abundance, and habitat quality of TEPC aquatic species being maintained and/or restored?	Watershed conditions indicators either maintained or improving within TEPC watersheds Number of actions implemented consistent with recovery plans (draft or final)	1, 2, 4

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question(s)	Indicator(s)	Addresses Monitoring Element(s)
Wildlife			
The amount, distribution, and characteristics of source habitat are present at levels necessary to support persistence of native and desired nonnative wildlife species within their respective ranges across the planning unit.	Have habitat restoration and conservation been prioritized in watersheds identified in the Forest Plan through such items as the Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Restoration Strategy?	Percentage of available acres within restoration treatments in high priority versus other 5th field watersheds Acres restored or trending toward desired conditions in priority watersheds identified in the Forest Plan through items such as the Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Restoration Strategy	3, 4, 6
Habitats for TEPC and sensitive terrestrial wildlife species are managed consistent with established and approved recovery plans. Management actions either contribute to or do not prevent recovery or delisting of these species. Degrading effects from Forest programs are at levels that do not threaten the persistence of TEPC and sensitive species populations.	Are the distribution, abundance, and habitat quality of TEPC and sensitive terrestrial wildlife species being maintained and/or restored?	Presence/absence data of [name the species] in potential habitat	3, 4, 6
Human activities do not prevent populations from maintaining desired distribution and abundance during critical life stages.	Has winter recreation affected species source environments?	Miles of groomed snowmobile trail, number of winter outfitters and their use, and acres open to motorized over-snow use to estimate level of winter recreation use for site-specific projects	2, 3, 5
	Are bighorn sheep present in areas of risk?	Sighting or telemetry location in a risk area	3, 4
	Are bighorn sheep present in or near active domestic sheep and goat allotments?	Presence of bighorn sheep and presence of domestic sheep or goat bands	3, 4
	Is separation between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep and goats maintained?	Presence of bighorn sheep and presence of domestic sheep or goat bands	3, 4
	Are domestic sheep straying from permitted grazing allotments?	Presence of domestic sheep on areas identified as not suited for domestic sheep grazing	3, 4

Productivity of the Land

Productivity is defined as the capacity of National Forest System lands and their ecosystems to provide various renewable resources in certain amounts in perpetuity (36 CFR 219.19). In this context, productivity is an ecological term, not an economic term. Specific productivity indicators that would be monitored for key ecosystem characteristics on the Forest are identified and described in Table IV-2.

Table IV-2. Productivity of the land: plan monitoring questions and indicators on the Payette National Forest (Forest)

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question(s)	Potential Indicator(s)	Addresses Monitoring Element(s)
Productivity of the Land			
Soil protective cover, soil organic matter, and coarse woody material are at levels that maintain or restore soil productivity and soil-hydrologic functions where conditions are at risk or degraded. Soils also have adequate physical, biological, and chemical properties to support desired vegetation growth.	Is the Forest maintaining or restoring long-term soil productivity?	Amount of activity area in non-detrimentally disturbed condition Amount of activity area classified as Total Soil Resource Commitment (TSRC)	2, 7, 8
Existing noxious weed populations are not expanding in size. New noxious weed outbreaks may occur temporarily or continue to exist as small, nonexpanding populations in areas of high susceptibility. Noxious weed populations in low susceptibility areas are small and scattered with low-to-moderate densities. New invader species to the Forest are not becoming established. Native plants are dominant on disturbed or recently restored sites.	Are Forest management strategies effectively controlling or eradicating targeted populations of noxious weeds?	Acres of known infestation in management areas identified for eradication or control	2, 8

Human Uses and Designations of the Forest

The plan monitoring program must contain one or more monitoring questions and associated indicators addressing the status of visitor use and visitor satisfaction and progress toward meeting recreation objectives. Specific human use indicators that would be monitored for key ecosystem characteristics on the Forest are identified and described in Table IV-3.

Table IV-3. Human uses and designations of the forest plan monitoring questions and indicators on the Payette National Forest (Forest)

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question	Indicator	Addresses Monitoring Element(s)
Facilities			
Facilities—such as roads, trails, campgrounds, and administrative sites—are constructed, reconstructed, or eliminated as needed to provide a balance of safe, effective, and environmentally responsible management activities.	Is the transportation system providing recreational opportunities and safe and efficient public and agency access, and is it environmentally compatible?	Miles of roads maintained via INFRA. Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) and National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) results Miles of trail maintained, trail surveys (TRACS)	5, 7
	Are facilities, including developed recreation sites, free of high-risk conditions?	How well facilities meet drinking water quality criteria Developed recreation site condition surveys	5
Recreation Setting			
Recreational settings range from primitive to developed, offering a wide spectrum of opportunities and uses. Visitors enjoy a variety of special attractions, including National Recreation Areas, Wilderness Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Scenic Byways, historic landmarks, and winter recreation areas.	Are recreation activity levels changing, and are shifts occurring between types of activities and locations of recreational use?	NVUM result Project-specific change to Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)	5
Dispersed recreation sites and uses are located and conducted in an environmentally responsible manner and managed to established standards.	Is the level of use occurring at dispersed sites impacting other resource values? If so, what actions were taken and were they effective?	Acres adversely impacted by dispersed recreation Acres of adversely impacted areas treated to contribute toward restoring desired conditions	5, 7, 8
Conflicts between recreationists are reduced or addressed while a broad array of recreational opportunities are available.	Are conflicts arising between recreational uses? Are conflicts being resolved?	Number of project decisions addressing recreation conflicts	5

Economic, Cultural, and Social Environment

Monitoring social, cultural, and economic indicators (FSH 1909.12) accomplishes the following:

- Informs managers and the public of changes in social, cultural, and economic conditions that are influenced by the plan
- Monitors contributions of the management of the plan area toward meeting social, cultural, and economic attributes of desired conditions

- Provides feedback for adaptive management toward expected and potential contributions to social and economic sustainability

Specific cultural indicators that would be monitored for key ecosystem characteristics on the Forest are identified and described in Table IV-4.

Table IV-4. Economic, cultural, and social environment plan monitoring questions and indicators on the Payette National Forest (Forest)

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question	Indicator	Addresses Monitoring Element(s)
Social and Economic			
Sustainable ecosystems provide a variety of sustainable products and services for current and future generations. Timber, range, and recreation offer opportunities for economic development and contribute to local community needs, while maintaining ecological integrity.	Is the Forest meeting the expected outcomes for timber production?	Levels of commercial and non-commercial timber products provided (Allowable Sale Quantity [ASQ] and Timber Sale Program Quantity [TSPQ])	7
	Is the level of livestock grazing changing?	The number of head months associated with term grazing permits	7
	Is the Forest providing recreational opportunities as planned?	Change in Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) program results	5
Tribal Interests and Rights			
Ecosystems on the Forest are managed to promote meaningful relationships with American Indian tribes to understand and incorporate tribal cultural resources, needs, interests, and expectations.	Are tribal interest and rights identified through consultation being addressed?	Challenges identified in annual Tribal Summary Report submitted to Washington Office Tribal Relations	7
Historic Resources			
Stewardship of historic properties	Are historic properties being managed to standard?	Presence of Heritage Management Plan Inventory of NFS lands Evaluation for eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places Condition assessments on Priority Heritage Assets Cultural resource stewardship Opportunities for study and/or public use Volunteer hours	7