



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

San Bernardino National Forest
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To File:

The purpose of this letter is to make administrative changes to the San Bernardino National Forest Land Management Plan (LMP) monitoring program. This important program supports an adaptive land management planning process that measures management effectiveness and progress toward achieving or maintaining the plan's desired conditions.

The Forest Service adopted new planning regulations (planning rule) in April 2012, pursuant to the National Forest Management Act. The planning rule requires that existing monitoring programs be changed to meet 8 specific monitoring criteria (36 CFR 219.12(a)(5)):

- (i) The status of select watershed conditions.
- (ii) The status of select ecological conditions including key characteristics of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.
- (iii) The status of focal species to assess the ecological conditions required under § 219.9.
- (iv) 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, conserve proposed and candidate species, and maintain a viable population of each species of conservation concern.
- (v) The status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives.
- (vi) Measurable changes on the plan area related to climate change and other stressors that may be affecting the plan area.
- (vii) Progress toward meeting the desired conditions and objectives in the plan, including for providing multiple use opportunities.
- (viii) The effects of each management system to determine that they do not substantially and permanently impair the productivity of the land (16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(C)).

The existing monitoring framework for the San Bernardino National Forest (Land Management Plan, Part 3, Appendix C) was last changed in 2014 to comply with a court-ordered Settlement Agreement, independent of the planning rule. The changes I am now authorizing are mandated by the planning rule, which considers such actions to be administrative changes, as defined by 36 CFR 219.13. Administrative changes require public notice and opportunity for comment but do not require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

The San Bernardino National Forest is adding new monitoring questions for fire activity, non-native annual grasses, fire regime departure, special uses, and streamflows. I am also adjusting the monitoring question for tree mortality and the indicator for Biological Resource Conditions (Goal 6.2). I am adjusting the reporting frequency for all questions and indicators from every 5 years to every 2 years as mandated by the planning rule. Criterion (viii) applies only to National Forests with timber production programs, which the San Bernardino National Forest does not



have. Therefore, no monitoring is needed for this criterion, and it has not been included in the new monitoring framework.

Management indicator species were included in the LMP for monitoring as an indicator of progress towards meeting Goal 6.2. Under the planning rule, focal species replace management indicator species. An interdisciplinary team reviewed potential focal species and selected non-native annual grasses. The combined set of seven existing monitoring questions and six of seven new or modified questions, investigate ecological conditions that sustain at-risk species and target better indicators of progress towards Goal 6.2 than the habitat monitoring of management indicator species. Therefore, in conformance to the planning rule, I hereby remove all references to management indicator species from the San Bernardino National Forest LMP.

The correction of two clerical errors from the 2014 changes are also included. All other components of the existing plan monitoring framework will be retained, including annual monitoring of selected projects and performance indicators (Parts 2 and 3 Monitoring).

The new monitoring framework and documentation of best available science required by the planning rule are available at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/sbnf/landmanagement/planning>

On March 25, 2016, notification of the proposed changes was sent to a mailing list of 313 hard copy recipients, including Tribal representatives, who are typically interested in San Bernardino National Forest land management issues. Notification was also sent to 9,455 email recipients who had mentioned monitoring during the 2012-2014 Southern California National Forest LMP Amendment process. Finally, the materials were available on the San Bernardino National Forest website.

Three comments were received during the 30-day comment period, one of which expressed a misunderstanding of the proposed changes, another which supported the transition and offered suggestions and support for streamflow monitoring specifically, and the last which commented on project specific monitoring and reporting requirements.

Regarding any misunderstanding of the proposed changes, the forest is available at any time to answer questions regarding the forest monitoring plan and the current transition. We encourage public involvement in the comment process and appreciate the public interest in the forest monitoring program.

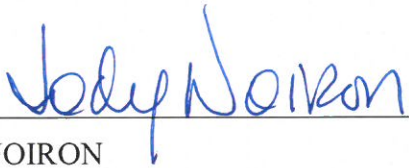
Regarding comments about the streamflow monitoring, the forest appreciates and welcomes any data and support that is available and provided from our partners and cooperating agencies. This administrative change letter only includes those changes that were proposed in the transition documents provided in the public comment letter and does not require the analysis of data beyond that, however the forest may decide at any time to use further data analysis that may support future decisions at the project level.

Regarding project specific activities and the monitoring and reporting requirements specified by other regulating agencies, the Forest will continue to comply with those monitoring requirements as specified at the project level. Those comments do not apply to the LMP Monitoring Program

proposed changes, which are more focused on broad-scale monitoring.

As documented here and in the planning record, this administrative change fulfills the monitoring transition requirements of the 2012 planning rule. This administrative change becomes effective upon signature below. Administrative changes are not subject to the objection process (36 CFR 219.50). This administrative change will remain in effect until the 2005 LMP is revised.

For further information, contact Tasha Hernandez, Forest Environmental Coordinator, at 909-382-2905 or thernandez@fs.fed.us.



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Forest Supervisor