



File Code: 1950
Date: July 16, 2018

Dear Interested Forest User:

The Ouachita National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), revised in December 2005, allows non-substantive corrections or adjustments under the 2012 Planning Rule (April 2012), using "Administrative Changes." An Administrative Change is defined as "any change to a plan that is not a plan amendment or revision." The 2012 Planning Rule and associated directives are available for review online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/planningrule/>.

Issue Statement/Changed Condition

The Revised Forest Plan references **landscape architect** consultation and concurrence in areas with high Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs). Region 8 produced the *Scenery Treatment Guide – Southern Regional National Forests* in 2008, *after* the Forest Plan was revised; plus landscape architects are no longer regularly employed (except by contract) at the forest level.

Background

The Revised Forest Plan references landscape architect consultation or concurrence in the following instances:

Part 1 – Vision; Desired Condition; Public Use and Enjoyment; Landscape Management (p.23)

Monitoring and Evaluation: During implementation monitoring reviews, determine if the project under review adequately considered SIOs. Report annually the number and type of management projects conducted in areas having a high SIO. Report whether a **landscape architect** was consulted in each case where project implementation was likely to affect scenic integrity, and if applicable, to what degree SIOs were maintained/achieved.

Part 3 – Design Criteria; Forest-Wide Design Criteria; Vegetation Management; General (p.79)

VM003 Whenever proposed projects may affect a recreation trail, consult with **the Forest landscape architect (or his/her designated representative)** to determine how best to minimize impacts on the trail, minimize future vegetation encroachment on the trail and meet the assigned Scenic Integrity Objective. Retain sufficient overstory vegetation above and immediately adjacent to the trail to reduce encroachment of blackberry vines and other vegetation that impede non-motorized travel.

Part 3 – Design Criteria; Management Area Design Criteria; Management Area 9. Water and Riparian Communities; Table 3.10 Management Activities Permitted or Prohibited within Streamside Management Areas (SMAs) (p.104) Felling of individual trees and brush removal to enhance visual quality within administrative sites, developed recreation areas and recreational lakes – subject to **landscape architect**, hydrologist, and fisheries biologist concurrence.



Management Recommendations

1. Administrative change to adjust Revised Forest Plan language to remove language that requires landscape architect consultation or concurrence and substitute instructions to use the *Scenery Treatment Guide – Southern Regional National Forests* (April 2008) or best available science.
2. Develop a protocol in lieu of landscape architect consultation referenced by the Forest Plan, to determine analysis steps and technical requirements based on SIOs and visually sensitive MAs.

Continue to reference the *Scenery Treatment Guide – Southern Regional National Forests* (April 2008) for project-level mitigation/technical requirements/design criteria to meet Revised Forest Plan direction pertaining to SIOs.

Proposed Administrative Changes to the Forest Plan

The proposed change will substitute references to the *Scenery Treatment Guide – Southern Regional National Forests* (April 2008) or best available science where references to the “**Forest landscape architect**” occurs in the following sections:

Part 1 – Vision; Desired Condition; Public Use and Enjoyment; Landscape Management (p.23)

Monitoring and Evaluation: During implementation monitoring reviews, determine if the project under review adequately considered SIOs. Report annually the number and type of management projects conducted in areas having a high SIO. Report whether ~~a landscape architect was consulted~~ **the Scenery Treatment Guide was followed or best available science was used** in each case where project implementation was likely to affect scenic integrity, and if applicable, to what degree SIOs were maintained/achieved.

Part 3 – Design Criteria; Forest-Wide Design Criteria; Vegetation Management; General (p.79)

VM003 Whenever proposed projects may affect a recreation trail, ~~consult with the Forest Landscape Architect (or his/her designated representative)~~ **use the Scenery Treatment Guide or best available science** to determine how best to minimize impacts on the trail, minimize future vegetation encroachment on the trail and meet the assigned Scenic Integrity Objective. Retain sufficient overstory vegetation above and immediately adjacent to the trail to reduce encroachment of blackberry vines and other vegetation that impede non-motorized travel.

Part 3 – Design Criteria; Management Area Design Criteria; Management Area 9. Water and Riparian Communities; Table 3.10 Management Activities Permitted or Prohibited within Streamside Management Areas (SMAs) (p.104) Felling of individual trees and brush removal to enhance visual quality within administrative sites, developed recreation areas and recreational lakes – subject to ~~landscape architect, hydrologist, and fisheries biologist concurrence,~~ **use of the Scenery Treatment Guide or best available science.**

When will the Administrative Change become effective?

This three-part administrative change will become effective after consideration of comments received during public review and upon the signature of the Forest Supervisor. Administrative changes are not subject to the objection process (36 CFR 219.50).

Why am I getting this letter?

This letter is to invite you, should you have any comments or questions concerning this proposed change, to email or call Alett Little, Forest Planner, at alittle@fs.fed.us or 501-321-5372.

Comments may also be mailed to, Ouachita National Forest, Attn: Alett Little, PO Box 1270, Hot Springs, AR 71902. Comments will be accepted until August 16, 2018. This letter will also be posted on the Ouachita National Forest website at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/ouachita/landmanagement/planning>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'N. Wagoner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

NORMAN WAGONER
Forest Supervisor

