USDA United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Chugach National Forest | 161 East 1st Avenue Door 8 Anchorage, AK 99501-1639

File Code: 1920
Date: April 25, 2022

Dear Planning Participant:

As the responsible official for actions related to the 2020 Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan (2020 LMP), I am providing notice of an administrative change to the plan monitoring program. The plan monitoring program is published in Appendix A of the 2020 LMP and is available as an electronic document at: Chugach National Forest - Planning (usda.gov). The administrative change updates indicators for five plan monitoring topics.

The process for making administrative changes to the plan monitoring program is outlined at 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §219.13(c)(1), also known as the 2012 Planning Rule. Section, §219.13(c)(1), which defines changes to the plan monitoring program indicators as substantive, also requires the responsible official to ensure the public is provided an opportunity to comment on proposed changes. Administrative changes are not subject to objections (36 CFR §219.50).

The Forest provided opportunities for public comment and participation on the proposed changes to the plan monitoring program during a 30-day comment period that occurred between January 7, 2022, and February 7, 2022 (36 CFR §219.16(c)(6) and (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 20(para. 21.51)). We did receive one public comment related to the impacts of social media on national forest system trails and one public comment related to the protection of the Chugach National Forest. However, we did not receive any comments related to the proposed administrative change to the plan monitoring program.

I determined that the administrative change to the plan monitoring program meets the requirements outlined in 36 CFR §219.13(c)(1) and I authorize its implementation. The date for posting the final administrative change to the plan monitoring program on the Forest's planning web page is April 27, 2022, at:
https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/chugach/landmanagement/planning

Additional information about the administrative change and the 2020 LMP may be obtained by email request addressed to: sm.fs.chugachplan@usda.gov

Thank you for participating in the planning process for the Chugach National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jeff Schramm

JEFF SCHRAMM
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

cc: David Fitz-Enz

2020 Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan

Administrative Change 2

Background

While developing the plan monitoring guide and reviewing the best available scientific information, some Plan Monitoring Program indicators were determined inadequate regarding their ability to provide information necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the management direction provided by the 2020 Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan.

The indicator changes described in this document provide adequate trend data related to activities and conditions for which the Forest actively manages. These changes clarify language for consistency with joint monitoring efforts and remove or revise language to improve the adequacy and applicability of data for assessing trends as well as the feasibility of the forest to gather, archive, and apply the information. Overall, these changes improve the accuracy and efficiency of monitoring and analytical reports that are used to inform management direction.

Changes were made to the following plan monitoring program topics:

1. Terrestrial Ecosystems
2. Focal Species
3. Ecological conditions for At-Risk Species
4. Visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives
5. Desired Conditions, Including Social, Cultural, and Economic Sustainability

Change to Table 17 – Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate conditions for terrestrial ecosystems

Original - Table 1. Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate ecological conditions for terrestrial ecosystems

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question	Associated Indicators
Goal 3 Desired Conditions Ecosystem Processes Native plants, fish, and wildlife are the dominant species inhabiting National Forest System lands, while the establishment and spread of invasive species is prevented or minimized and does not threaten ecosystem function.	Are management strategies effectively controlling or preventing the spread of invasive species in aquatic and terrestrial systems?	**Trend in the geographic range and the local abundance of *Elodea* spp. as measured by the number of new waterbodies occupied and the average spatial extent (for example, percentage cover) of *Elodea* spp. in currently occupied waters.** Trend in the distribution and abundance of four highly invasive nonnative terrestrial plants (bird vetch, orange hawkweed, white sweetclover, and reed canarygrass) **as measured by their presence by management area, in each of the three geographic areas of the national forest**.

Changed - Table 2. Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate ecological conditions for terrestrial ecosystems

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question	Associated Indicators
Goal 3 Desired Conditions Ecosystem Processes Native plants, fish, and wildlife are the dominant species inhabiting National Forest System lands, while the establishment and spread of invasive species is prevented or minimized and does not threaten ecosystem function.	Are management strategies effectively controlling or preventing the spread of invasive species in aquatic and terrestrial systems?	~~Trend in the geographic range and the local abundance of *Elodea* spp. as measured by the number of new waterbodies occupied and the average spatial extent (for example, percentage cover) of *Elodea* spp. in currently occupied waters.~~ **Trend in geographic range and number of waterbodies infested with Elodea spp.** Trend in the distribution and abundance of four highly invasive nonnative terrestrial plants (bird vetch, orange hawkweed, white sweetclover, and reed canarygrass) ~~as measured by their presence by management area, in each of the three geographic areas of the national forest.~~

Rationale for the Change:

Two changes are proposed for clarification of language. First, the phrase “as measured by…” has been removed from this table. Indicators are defined in the Forest Plan Monitoring Program (Appendix A, 2020 LMP) to address the Desired Conditions of the plan. Measures and protocols are defined in the monitoring guide (in preparation) and provide flexibility for adaptation as scientific information is gathered and reported to inform them. Second, the indicator in the plan for *Elodea spp*., average spatial extent is focused on information within a single waterbody and cannot be measured accurately at this point in time nor is it reflective of conditions across all forested lands. Therefore, information from a single water body would not provide appropriate information on trends in conditions upon which to base a forest-wide management decision. Forest staff therefore suggest replacing this indicator with the more suitable trend of presence of *Elodea spp*. in the geographic range across the plan area.

Change to Table 19 – Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate the status of focal species

Original - Table 3. Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate the status of focal species

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question	Associated Indicators
Goal 3 Desired Conditions Ecosystem Processes Native plants, fish, and wildlife are the dominant species inhabiting National Forest System lands, while the establishment and spread of invasive species is prevented or minimized and does not threaten ecosystem function.	Are management strategies effectively controlling or preventing the spread of invasive species in aquatic and terrestrial systems?	**Trend in the geographic range and the local abundance of *Elodea* spp. as measured by the number of new waterbodies occupied and the average spatial extent (for example, percentage cover) of *Elodea* spp. in currently occupied waters.** Trend in the distribution and abundance of four highly invasive nonnative terrestrial plants (bird vetch, orange hawkweed, white sweetclover, and reed canarygrass) **as measured by their presence by management area, in each of the three geographic areas of the national forest.**

Changed - Table 4. Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate the status of focal species

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question	Associated Indicators
Goal 3 Desired Conditions Ecosystem Processes Native plants, fish, and wildlife are the dominant species inhabiting National Forest System lands, while the establishment and spread of invasive species is prevented or minimized and does not threaten ecosystem function.	Are management strategies effectively controlling or preventing the spread of invasive species in aquatic and terrestrial systems?	~~Trend in the geographic range and the local abundance of *Elodea* spp. as measured by the number of new waterbodies occupied and the average spatial extent (for example, percentage cover) of *Elodea* spp. in currently occupied waters.~~ **Trend in geographic range and number of waterbodies infested with Elodea spp.** Trend in the distribution and abundance of four highly invasive nonnative terrestrial plants (bird vetch, orange hawkweed, white sweetclover, and reed canarygrass) ~~as measured by their presence by management area, in each of the three geographic areas of the national forest~~.

Rationale for the Change:

Two changes were made for clarification of language. First, the phrase “as measured by…” was removed from this table. Indicators are defined in the Forest Plan Monitoring Program to address the Desired Conditions of the plan. Measures and protocols are defined in the monitoring guide and provide flexibility for adaptation as scientific information is gathered and reported to inform them. Second, the indicator in the plan for *Elodea spp*., average spatial extent is focused on information within a single waterbody and cannot be measured accurately now. This indicator cannot be measured and is also not reflective of conditions across all forested lands. Therefore, information from a single water body would not provide appropriate information on trends in conditions upon which to base a forest-wide management decision. Forest staff therefore suggest replacing this indicator with the more suitable trend of presence of *Elodea spp*. in the geographic range all across the plan area.

Change to Table 20 – Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate ecological conditions for select at-risk species

Original – Table 5. Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate ecological conditions for select at-risk species

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question	Associated Indicators
Goal 3 Desired Conditions Terrestrial Ecosystems Sufficient nesting habitat is maintained to support persistent populations of dusky Canada geese. Ecological conditions (for example, alpine tundra on moist, boulder-strewn, and solifluction slopes; wet mossy seeps; seepage areas among rocks; snow melt areas; and fine gravel saturated by snow melt) that maintain viable populations of Aleutian cress (*Aphragmus eschscholtzianus*) exist within the plan area. Forest Service management activities within these habitats are designed to minimize negative human impacts to Aleutian cress.	Are habitat conditions necessary to support populations of species of conservation concern (dusky Canada goose and Aleutian cress) being maintained?	Dusky Canada goose: Population trends in the Copper River Delta **Fledging success** Nest depredation Aleutian cress: Trend of known populations of Aleutian cress Tree and shrub encroachment in alpine habitat

Changed – Table 6. Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate ecological conditions for select at-risk species

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question	Associated Indicators
Goal 3 Desired Conditions Terrestrial Ecosystems Sufficient nesting habitat is maintained to support persistent populations of dusky Canada geese. Ecological conditions (for example, alpine tundra on moist, boulder-strewn, and solifluction slopes; wet mossy seeps; seepage areas among rocks; snow melt areas; and fine gravel saturated by snow melt) that maintain viable populations of Aleutian cress (*Aphragmus eschscholtzianus*) exist within the plan area. Forest Service management activities within these habitats are designed to minimize negative human impacts to Aleutian cress.	Are habitat conditions necessary to support populations of species of conservation concern (dusky Canada goose and Aleutian cress) being maintained?	Dusky Canada goose: Population trends in the Copper River Delta ~~Fledging success~~ **Nesting success** Nest depredation Aleutian cress: Trend of known populations of Aleutian cress Tree and shrub encroachment in alpine habitat **Add: Persistence of snowpack in alpine terrain**

Rationale for Change 1:

Forest staff determined that clarification was needed because the existing monitoring program to which this project tiers measures nesting success specifically, thus tying to the management activities: nest habitat construction. Nesting success is defined as the proportion of nests that successfully hatch at least one egg; whereas fledging success (successful maturation of young to fledging) is not monitored by the forest or partners because it does not measure the efficacy of the nest habitat construction program.

Rationale for Change 2:

Based on 2021 habitat survey information for Aleutian Cress, forest specialists determined that persistence of snowpack is a key ecological condition necessary to support this alpine, wetland species and is a strong indicator of suitable presently available habitat. Tree and shrub encroachment provides an indicator of ecological changes to habitat conditions that often exclude habitat for Aleutian Cress. The forest proposes that, based in the new and limited historic information, monitoring both the tree and shrub encroachment and the snowpack persistence provides a more complete picture of the currently available habitat each year (wetland areas as indicated by snowpack) and loss of habitat over time that is necessary to support this species of conservation concern.

Change to Table 21 – Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives

Original - Table 7. Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Questions	Associated Indicators
Goal 2 Desired Conditions Recreation Through partnerships between the Forest Service and organizations and communities, the Chugach National Forest offers opportunities for unparalleled outdoor recreation experiences that showcase the natural and cultural heritage of the Kenai Peninsula, Prince William Sound, and Copper River Delta geographic areas. Recreation sites and trail systems are economically and socially sustainable and are supported by communities and partners through shared infrastructure development and maintenance, delivery of information, and provision of recreation services. The number and location of recreation facilities reflect current and future public needs and demand, within Forest Service financial capabilities, and are consistent with forestwide recreation facility planning. Access to winter recreation opportunities is maintained or enhanced through a collaborative effort between the Forest Service, local communities, other agencies, and partner organizations to provide plowing of parking lots and trail grooming (where authorized).	Are recreation opportunities and infrastructure achieving desired conditions and are they sustainable?	Recreation facility occupancy rate Number of outfitter guide permits issued and administered, types of guided activities, and locations Number of miles of trail maintained by volunteers and partners Number of recreation sites operated and maintained by volunteers and partners **Deferred maintenance accomplished annually ($)** **New deferred maintenance needs added to Infra annually ($)** Total deferred maintenance forestwide ($)

Changed - Table 8. Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Questions	Associated Indicators
Goal 2 Desired Conditions Recreation Through partnerships between the Forest Service and organizations and communities, the Chugach National Forest offers opportunities for unparalleled outdoor recreation experiences that showcase the natural and cultural heritage of the Kenai Peninsula, Prince William Sound, and Copper River Delta geographic areas. Recreation sites and trail systems are economically and socially sustainable and are supported by communities and partners through shared infrastructure development and maintenance, delivery of information, and provision of recreation services. The number and location of recreation facilities reflect current and future public needs and demand, within Forest Service financial capabilities, and are consistent with forestwide recreation facility planning. Access to winter recreation opportunities is maintained or enhanced through a collaborative effort between the Forest Service, local communities, other agencies, and partner organizations to provide plowing of parking lots and trail grooming (where authorized).	Are recreation opportunities and infrastructure achieving desired conditions and are they sustainable?	Recreation facility occupancy rate Number of outfitter guide permits issued and administered, types of guided activities, and locations Number of miles of trail maintained by volunteers and partners Number of recreation sites operated and maintained by volunteers and partners ~~Deferred maintenance accomplished annually ($)~~ ~~New deferred maintenance needs added to Infra annually ($)~~ Total deferred maintenance forestwide ($)

Rationale for the Change:

The indicators for deferred maintenance accomplished annually and new deferred maintenance are part of the total combined deferred maintenance conditions that are measured annually and reported. Removing the two indicators and retaining Total Deferred Maintenance would improve efficiency in reporting while appropriately capturing the trends in conditions needed for the forest to assess the impacts of its management actions.

Change to Table 23 – Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate progress toward meeting desired conditions not addressed elsewhere in the monitoring program, particularly those related to social, cultural, and economic sustainability of communities

Original - Table 9. Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate progress toward meeting desired conditions not addressed elsewhere in the monitoring program, particularly those related to social, cultural, and economic sustainability of communities

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question	Associated Indicators
Goal 2 Desired Conditions Ecosystem Services Healthy salmon stocks and quality fish habitat support all types of fisheries uses across the national forest; the amalgamation of commercial, sport and subsistence uses of the fisheries resources benefits local, regional, and national economies. Wild, renewable resources provided by the national forest are sustained by ecological processes, are accessible to users, and contribute to the livelihood and lifestyles of both rural and non-rural Alaska residents. National Forest System lands continue to provide habitat for native and desired nonnative wildlife species, helping to support populations capable of sustaining hunting opportunities. Forest products are available and accessible for harvest for cultural, personal, and commercial use in a sustainable manner. Timber harvest meets multiple-use goals of providing wood products for commercial and private use, wildlife habitat enhancement, improving forest health, or achieving a land management plan desired condition. Sustainable levels of goods and services such as recreation and tourism opportunities, established fisheries, minerals extraction and energy generation, forest products, outfitter and guide services, and ecosystem stewardship opportunities are available to communities. These goods and services contribute to the local economy through generation of jobs and income while creating a variety of products for use, both nationally and locally. The Forest Service encourages a diverse array of recreation opportunities by permitting businesses to provide guided recreation activities for visitors to the Chugach National Forest.	Is the national forest providing a sustainable, predictable level of goods and services to communities?	Trends in number of commercial recreation permits issued Trends in developed recreational facility use Trends in number of forest product permits issued **Trends in commercial and sport fishing harvest** Trends in number of permits issued for subsistence harvest Trends in number of mineral materials permits issued and locatable mineral plans of operations approved

Changed - Table 10. Monitoring questions and associated indicators that evaluate progress toward meeting desired conditions not addressed elsewhere in the monitoring program, particularly those related to social, cultural, and economic sustainability of communities

Selected Plan Component(s)	Monitoring Question	Associated Indicators
Goal 2 Desired Conditions Ecosystem Services Healthy salmon stocks and quality fish habitat support all types of fisheries uses across the national forest; the amalgamation of commercial, sport and subsistence uses of the fisheries resources benefits local, regional, and national economies. Wild, renewable resources provided by the national forest are sustained by ecological processes, are accessible to users, and contribute to the livelihood and lifestyles of both rural and non-rural Alaska residents. National Forest System lands continue to provide habitat for native and desired nonnative wildlife species, helping to support populations capable of sustaining hunting opportunities. Forest products are available and accessible for harvest for cultural, personal, and commercial use in a sustainable manner. Timber harvest meets multiple-use goals of providing wood products for commercial and private use, wildlife habitat enhancement, improving forest health, or achieving a land management plan desired condition. Sustainable levels of goods and services such as recreation and tourism opportunities, established fisheries, minerals extraction and energy generation, forest products, outfitter and guide services, and ecosystem stewardship opportunities are available to communities. These goods and services contribute to the local economy through generation of jobs and income while creating a variety of products for use, both nationally and locally. The Forest Service encourages a diverse array of recreation opportunities by permitting businesses to provide guided recreation activities for visitors to the Chugach National Forest.	Is the national forest providing a sustainable, predictable level of goods and services to communities?	Trends in number of commercial recreation permits issued Trends in developed recreational facility use Trends in number of forest product permits issued Trends in ~~commercial and~~ sport fishing harvest Trends in number of permits issued for subsistence harvest Trends in number of mineral materials permits issued and locatable mineral plans of operations approved

Rationale for the Proposed Change:

Forest specialists determined that measuring the healthy salmon stocks as an ecological good or service the forest provides through counts in commercial fishing harvest would not be suitable because it is strongly affected by fisheries management decisions and ecological conditions outside of forest influence. External conditions such as hatchery salmon management, commercial and sport fishery openings and closures, and ocean conditions (among others) strongly affect the measures of commercial harvest rates and are outside of control of forest management. A more suitable measure under forest management is the trends in suitable, available fish habitat, is one measured under the Aquatic Organism Passage program. Additionally, subsistence fisheries harvest measured under subsistence in this topic area within the forest-based watershed is a measure of fisheries related public services on the forest that directly affect local communities.