



File Code: 1920
Date: March 17, 2016

Dear Interested Forest User:

The Ozark-St. Francis National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) was revised in September 2005. Non-substantive corrections or adjustments to the Forest Plan may be made under the 2012 Planning Rule (April 2012), using a process called “Administrative Changes”, defined as “any change to a plan that is not a plan amendment or revision” (see 36 CFR 219.13(c)). An Administrative Change allows a Forest to make a change to the Forest Plan to bring it into conformance with new statutory or regulatory requirements. The 2012 Planning Rule and associated directives are available for review online at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/planningrule/home/?cid=stelprd3828310>.

Required Monitoring Elements

The 2012 Planning Rule requires that each forest plan monitoring program must contain, or be revised to contain, by May 9, 2016, one or more monitoring questions and associated indicators addressing each of the eight requirements from 36 CFR 219.12(a)(5). These elements and changes to the current Monitoring Plan to address those elements are listed below.

Proposed Changes to the Monitoring Plan

Monitoring Evaluation Reports will be produced on a biennial schedule unless there is information that should be reported annually. It is anticipated that the next Monitoring Evaluation Report with these additions will be available by September 2017. A review of the eight monitoring elements required at 36 CFR 219.12(a)(5) was conducted by Forest specialists with significant knowledge of the elements under review. The review resulted in few recommended changes to the Monitoring Plan:

1. Status of select watershed conditions: No Change.
2. Status of select ecological conditions including key characteristics of terrestrial and aquatic systems: No Change.
3. Status of focal species to assess the ecological conditions: The recommendation by Forest specialists is that most of the current Management Indicator Species (MIS) also meet the criteria for Focal Species. Table 1 below documents the reasons they are suitable as focal species. Whitetail deer and black bear were not deemed suitable due to the high impact hunting can have on their populations. Whitetail deer and black bear will still be monitored but not considered focal species.
4. Status of a select set of the ecological conditions to contribute to the recovery of federally listed Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species, conserve proposed/candidate species and maintain a viable population of each species of conservation concern: No Change.



Table 1: Analysis of Management Indicator Species (MIS) Species Suitability as Focal Species on the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests (OSFNFs).

MIS	Primary Reason(s) for Selection	Suitable Focal Species
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	To indicate effects of management on maintaining viability of this species through active maintenance of glades along bluff-lines on Mt. Magazine.	Yes
Pileated Woodpecker	To help indicate effects of management on large snags and snag-dependent wildlife on both forests.	Yes
Scarlet Tanager	To help indicate effects of management on forest interior bird communities and mature Dry-Mesic Oak Forest communities on the Ozark NF.	Yes
Acadian Flycatcher	To help indicate effects of management on forest interior bird communities on the St. Francis NF, and on mature mesic hardwood forest communities on both forests.	Yes
Prairie Warbler	To help indicate effects of management on regenerating forest communities on the Ozark NF.	Yes
Yellow-breasted Chat	To help indicate effects of management on regenerating forest communities on the St. Francis NF.	Yes
Cerulean Warbler	To help indicate effects of management on communities associated with mature hardwood forest with complex canopy structures, and dry-mesic oak Forest communities on the Ozark NF.	Yes
Northern Parula	To help indicate effects of management on communities associated with forests in riparian areas.	Yes
White-tail Deer	To help indicate management effects on meeting hunting demand for this species.	No
Wild Turkey	To help indicate management effects on meeting needs of species that need a mix of habitat conditions.	Yes
Black Bear	To help indicate management effects on meeting hunting demand for this species.	No
Largemouth Bass	To help indicate effects of management on warm water rivers and lakes.	Yes
Smallmouth Bass	To help indicate effects of management species, needing cool-water stream communities.	Yes
Northern Bobwhite	To help indicate effects of management on restoration of pine and oak woodland and native grasslands	Yes
Red-headed Woodpecker	To help indicate effects of management on oak woodland overstories.	Yes
Brown-headed Nuthatch	To help indicate effects of management on open pine forest and woodland.	Yes
Ovenbird	To help indicate effects of management on dry-mesic oak forests.	Yes

- 5 Status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives: No Change.
- 6 Measureable changes within the plan area related to climate change and other stressors that may be affecting the plan area: This is a new requirement. Sufficient monitoring questions that monitor the health of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems exist in the Monitoring Plan. These Items can also be indicators of climate change. Additional indicators of climate change will be tracked through the Regional Broad-scale Monitoring Strategy.
- 7 Progress toward meeting the desired conditions and objectives in the plan, including for providing multiple use opportunities: No Change. However, additional indicators to monitor the plan's contributions to social, cultural, and economic sustainability will be tracked through the Regional Broad-scale Monitoring Strategy.
- 8 Effects of each management system to determine that they do not substantially and permanently impair the productivity of the land: No Change.

Administrative Change

The Monitoring Plan is considered a component of the 2005 Forest Plan. The proposed Administrative Change will update the Monitoring Plan to satisfy the requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule.

Background

A report that documents the review of each of the required monitoring elements is available on the Forest website at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/osfnf/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5212211>. The Regional Office is responsible for broad-scale monitoring that will include information on Social and Economic monitoring and climate change. Additional information from the R8 broad-scale monitoring strategy may be found at this website:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/r8/landmanagement/planning>. No changes are anticipated to the Forest's Monitoring Plan as a result of Regional Office broad-scale monitoring, although any conclusive results may be referenced in subsequent monitoring reports.

When will the Administrative Change become effective?

This 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 contact Steve Duzan, Environmental Coordinator, at sduzan@fs.fed.us or 479-864-7282. There are only a few planned changes to monitoring that the Forest conducts; therefore, only minor changes to the Monitoring Plan are proposed.

Comments will be accepted and considered for 30 days following the receipt of this letter of notification. The current Monitoring and Evaluation Reports are available on the Forest's website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/osfnf/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5212211>.

Sincerely,

/s/ Terry A. Krasko (for)
Reggie Blackwell
Forest Supervisor