



File Code: 1940
Date: August 29, 2022

Dear Interested Party:

The Allegheny National Forest is working to update our monitoring program for the 2007 Allegheny National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and is requesting public input on the proposed changes. If you would like to provide feedback for us to consider, additional information and instructions for how to comment are provided below.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are separate, sequential activities required by the National Forest Management Act and serve as continuous learning tools that form the backbone of adaptive management.

- Monitoring is the repeated collection of data by observation or measurement to evaluate changes in condition and progress toward meeting management objectives. The data collected helps inform our decision making.
- Evaluation is the analysis and interpretation of monitoring data to present it in a clear, concise, and compelling manner in a monitoring report.

Monitoring data and the evaluation of it are summarized in a monitoring report. These reports have several uses. Among other things, the reports:

- Help determine whether we need to change the Forest Plan, monitoring program, or conduct an assessment to evaluate a changed condition in more detail.
- Help determine what type of management activities should be proposed in the future to help achieve desired condition.
- Are frequently referenced in our NEPA documents to support our effects analysis for proposed activities.

The Forest Plan Monitoring Program

The 2007 Forest Plan's monitoring program focused on evaluating the achievement of desired conditions, goals, objectives, and whether there was a need to change the plan. The program was updated in 2016 to conform to new direction from the 2012 Planning Rule. A copy of the current Forest Plan monitoring program, and the most recent monitoring and evaluation report, are available online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/allegheny/landmanagement/planning>.

Proposed Changes

We are proposing to replace the current Forest Plan monitoring program with 13 questions, some



of which have multiple indicators. The questions are enclosed. They include many elements from our current monitoring program, and were developed to focus on information needed to determine whether management activities are effectively achieving desired outcomes. We would also remove questions that can be addressed at any time through other reports or data calls.

How to Comment

Comments regarding our proposed changes to the monitoring program are now being accepted. All comments received will be considered and will help inform the decision to be made on how to change our Forest Plan monitoring program. After a decision is made, the updated monitoring program will be incorporated into the Forest Plan using the administrative change procedures of 36 C.F.R. § 219.13(c).

If interested, we would appreciate any comments you would like to provide regarding the proposed changes to our Forest Plan monitoring program. Comments will be most helpful if received by September 30, 2022. Comments may be submitted by:

- **Mail** to Glenn Howard, Forest Environmental Coordinator , Allegheny National Forest, 4 Farm Colony Drive, Warren, PA 16365.
- **Hand delivery** to the Supervisor's Office at 4 Farm Colony Drive, Warren, PA 16365.
- **Email** to comments-eastern-allegheny@usda.gov. Please enter "Updated Monitoring Program" on the subject line and include your name and physical mailing address as well.
- **Call** to 814-728-6100.
- **Fax** to 814-726-1465.

For hand delivery or telephone calls, please note that normal business hours are 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Please note that comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be available for public inspection as part of the planning record.

For More Information

This letter, and additional information regarding the Forest Plan and our monitoring program, is available online at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/allegheny/landmanagement/planning>. If you have any questions or would like to request printed copies of our proposed changes, please feel free to contact Glenn Howard at 814-728-6186 or glenn.howard@usda.gov.

Sincerely,



/S/JAMIE DAVIDSON
Forest Supervisor

Encl.

Proposed Forest Plan Monitoring Questions

#	File Code	Question	Indicator(s)	Monitoring Frequency	Evaluation Frequency
1	2300 Recreation and 2380 Scenery	Is damage to resources occurring at dispersed sites or from unauthorized use?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of inventoried or re-inventoried dispersed sites monitored. 2. Number of unauthorized use areas monitored. 3. Describe and discuss how resource damage has been addressed. 	Annual	2 years
2	2300 Recreation and 2380 Scenery	Are we meeting or exceeding scenic integrity levels?	Concerns raised with scenic integrity of management activities.	Annual	2 years
3	2300 Recreation and 2380 Scenery	What is the status of visitor use and visitor satisfaction?	Trends in visitation use estimates and visitor satisfaction.	5 years	5 years
4	2080 Noxious Weeds and 2400 Vegetation	Have programmatic and project-level management activities been effective at controlling the introduction and spread of non-native invasive plant species?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe and discuss effectiveness of seed mixes, mulch, forage, and road surfacing material at limiting the introduction and spread of non-native invasive plant species. 2. Describe and discuss effectiveness of manual, mechanical, and herbicide protocols and treatments. 	Annual	2 years
5	2080 Noxious Weeds and 2400 Vegetation	Are prescriptions for each forest type effective at achieving desired stocking, species composition, and seedling establishment timeframes?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe and discuss the percent seedling stocking at five years following even-aged or uneven-aged regeneration harvest. 2. For EAM and UEAM, characterize stocking, species composition, and seedling establishment time, particularly with regard to the various 	Annual	2 years



#	File Code	Question	Indicator(s)	Monitoring Frequency	Evaluation Frequency
			opening sizes under UEAM. 3. Describe and discuss the effectiveness of prescribed fire.		
6	2080 Noxious Weeds and 2400 Vegetation	What factors (for example, native and non-native insects and diseases, non-native invasive plants, deer, weather events, and climate change) are influencing forest health?	1. Describe and discuss measured changes to the length and timing of the frost-free season 2. Describe and discuss emerging threats to forest health. 3. Describe and discuss changing trends in forest health. 4. Describe and discuss management responses taken by ANF staff and cooperators to address these threats and changes.	Annual	2 years
7	2500 Watershed and Air	Have programmatic and project-level management activities been effective at achieving water quality standards and Forest Plan goals for protecting and improving water quality and quantity?	1. Describe and discuss monitoring completed as part of National Best Management Practices Monitoring Program. 2. Describe and discuss effectiveness of watershed restoration projects. 3. Provide a summary of achievement or non-achievement of water quality standards for streams. 4. Describe and discuss effectiveness of herbicide design criteria in protecting water	Indicator 1: Annual Indicators 2-4: 2 years	2 years

#	File Code	Question	Indicator(s)	Monitoring Frequency	Evaluation Frequency
			quality.		
8	2500 Watershed and Air	Are programmatic and project-level management activities effective at achieving soil quality standards, and how are natural events and other disturbances affecting soils?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe and discuss soil disturbance monitoring and soil quality standards. 2. Describe and discuss factors beyond the ANF's control that affect soil productivity. 	Annual	2 years
9	1600 Wildlife, Fish, and Sensitive Plant Habitat	How is Forest Plan implementation contributing to the conservation of federally listed threatened and endangered species?	Describe and discuss conservation measures implemented for federally listed threatened and endangered species and the effectiveness of the measures applied (where appropriate)	Annual	2 years
10	1600 Wildlife, Fish, and Sensitive Plant Habitat	How is Forest Plan implementation restoring, enhancing, or maintaining ecological conditions for RFSS?	Describe and discuss actions taken to restore, enhance, or maintain ecological conditions for RFSS and the effectiveness of the measures applied	Annual	2 years
11	1600 Wildlife, Fish, and Sensitive Plant Habitat	How are management activities, natural events, and other disturbances affecting quality, cold-water ecosystems?	Describe and discuss the presence/absence of brook trout	Annual	2 years
12	1600 Wildlife, Fish, and Sensitive Plant Habitat	Have wildlife habitat enhancement projects been effective in achieving stated objectives at the project level?	Describe and discuss effectiveness of wildlife habitat enhancement projects	Annual	2 years
13	Economic Conditions	What is the economic contribution of management activities on the Allegheny National Forest?	Employment, labor income, and gross domestic product from management activities on National Forest System lands	6 years	6 years