

Public Input Summary

The monitoring questions of public concern below are underlined. The public concern is in **bold font**. The response to the concern or explanation of how it is addressed is in regular font.

Monitoring Question 1c: How is the Forest complying with the Clean Water Act requirements?

Regarding monitoring question 1c, a concern was expressed about the need for wider riparian buffers.

The Hiawatha National Forest (HIF) implements best management practices (BMPs), such as those listed in the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Sustainable Soil and Water Quality Practices on Forest Land published in 2009. This document also describes the necessary Riparian Management Zone (RMZ) or buffer zone and the RMZ BMPs. Monitoring by the HIF and its partners have demonstrated that the HIF meets the intent of the Clean Water Act.

Regarding monitoring question 1c, a concern was expressed about pesticide use impacting water quality.

The effects of herbicide use for the control of non-native invasive plants (NNIP) on the HIF have been analyzed in environmental assessments for NNIP treatment published in 2007 and 2012. The BMPs referred to above are implemented in all projects where NNIP treatment is done.

Monitoring Question 2a: To what extent are ecologically healthy and productive aquatic ecosystems being restored?

Regarding question 2a, a concern was expressed about felling trees to enhance fishing, leaving stumps on the banks and potentially causing erosion. The same concern as above about adequate riparian buffers was also expressed.

Large woody material is necessary for stream function by providing a more diverse stream structure while improving water quality and aquatic species habitat. Activities conducted by forest operations in and near water bodies require applicable MDEQ permits. Project activities, including timber harvest activities, incorporate the abovementioned MDEQ BMPs, which are monitored for both implementation and effectiveness.

Regarding monitoring question 2a, a concern was expressed about measuring indicators every two years.

The 2012 Planning Rule changes the publication of the Monitoring and Evaluation Report from an annual to a biennial publication. That does not mean that monitoring will only be done biennially. Most of the indicators will still be monitored annually, but reported every two years.

Monitoring Question 2e: To what extent is Forest management providing ecological conditions to maintain habitat of native and desired non-native species?

Regarding monitoring question 2e, a concern was expressed about providing the right proportion of ecological conditions to maintain habitat of native species, early successional species and late successional species.

The proposed monitoring effort will quantify the acres of habitat in an appropriate ecological condition for native and desired non-native species. This monitoring will help decision makers make informed decisions about the distribution of habitat types to be managed. This question will also estimate population levels before and after restoration for targeted species to inform decision makers about the effectiveness of restoration efforts.

Monitoring Question 2g: To what extent are key terrestrial habitat components (e.g., mast, snags, down woody material) being provided?

Regarding monitoring question 2g, a concern was expressed about the lack of coarse woody debris being introduced to the soil.

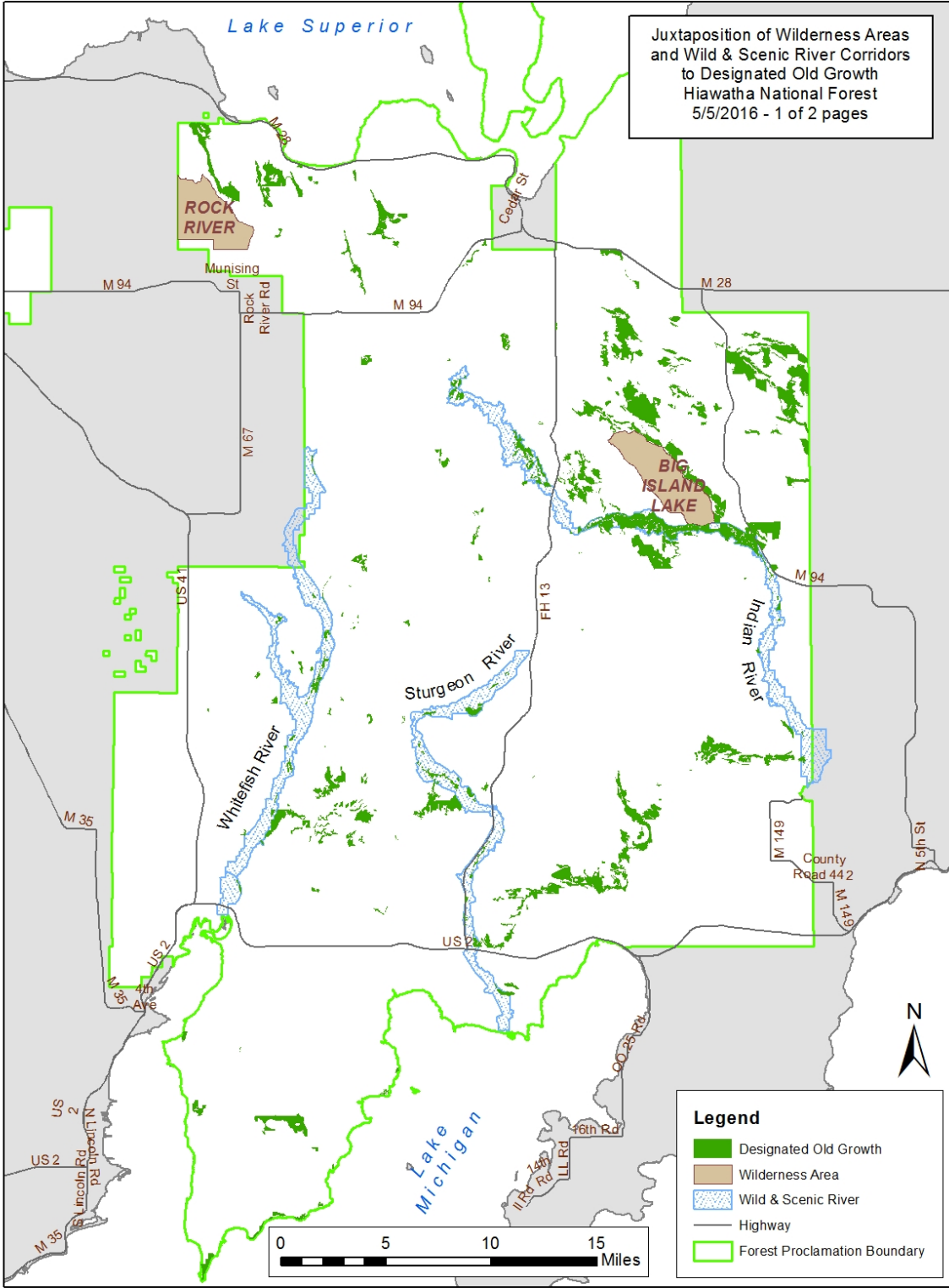
This question will quantify the amount of dead, down, den and snag trees left in stands after harvest to determine if managers are meeting Forest Plan guidelines. The Forest Plan structural guidelines for dead, down, den and snag trees under even- and uneven-aged management are listed on page 2-16 and 2-17 of the 2006 Forest Plan. In addition, thousands of acres of the HIF are not managed for timber products (wilderness, unsuited land, old growth, etc.) where forest succession produces dead, down, den and snag habitat.

Monitoring Question 2h: To what extent are existing and potential old growth forest conditions being created?

Regarding monitoring question 2h, a concern was expressed about how little old growth exists on the HIF because of logging in the early twentieth century and HIF forest management and the lack of connectivity of the old growth system.

Old growth cannot be created. Old growth can develop naturally by letting unmanaged stands remain unmanaged or tend them culturally to accelerate toward old growth. Connectivity was considered in the 2006 Forest Plan development and approval. If one looks at the old growth system mapped out and include wilderness areas and wild and scenic river corridors, there is a lot of connectivity. See the maps below.

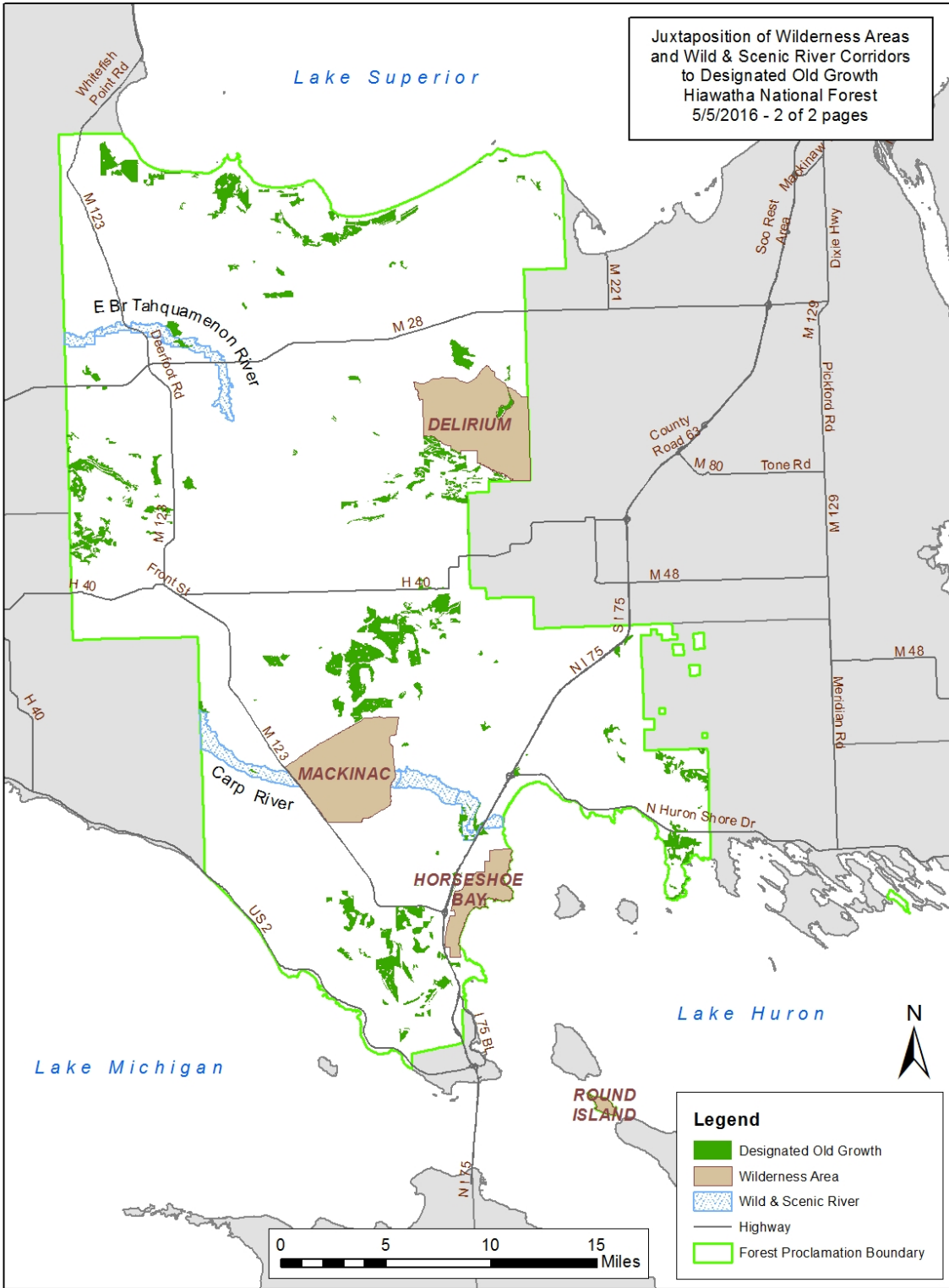
After further evaluation of this question, the monitoring question has been revised to read as follows: To what extent are existing and potential old growth forest stands being managed or unmanaged to develop into or accelerate toward old growth?



Legend

- Designated Old Growth
- Wilderness Area
- Wild & Scenic River
- Highway
- Forest Proclamation Boundary

Juxtaposition of Wilderness Areas
and Wild & Scenic River Corridors
to Designated Old Growth
Hiawatha National Forest
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Legend

- Designated Old Growth
- Wilderness Area
- Wild & Scenic River
- Highway
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Monitoring Question 3c: Is the type and frequency of disturbance associated with dry-sand outwash plains (ELT 10/20) appropriate to maintain ecosystem integrity throughout the historical range of variation?

Regarding monitoring question 3c, a concern was expressed about not needing to maintain permanent openings beyond which nature historically provided and the need to support later-successional species.

This monitoring question refers specifically to ELT 10/20, which is the driest and most fire-prone ecosystem on the HIF. Historically, frequent wildfire maintained permanent and temporary openings and savannas, as well as regenerating mature pine stands, across these sand plains. This question will quantify sharp-tailed grouse population trends as a measure of how well the forest is providing the early successional component of the range of ecological conditions historically found in these dry ecosystems.

Monitoring Question 4a. To what extent is the management of the Forest contributing to the conservation of threatened, endangered and species of conservation concern (TES)?

A concern was expressed about monitoring of the federally listed threatened northern long-eared bat.

Monitoring Question 4a addresses that concern.

Monitoring Question 4c: To what extent is the Forest working cooperatively with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state and other federal agencies to update and implement recovery plans and conservation assessments for threatened, endangered and sensitive species (TES)?

Regarding monitoring question 4c, a concern was expressed about needing a balance between saving fish species from extinction and preserving the natural appearance of riparian corridors.

The MDEQ BMPs referenced previously would be implemented as appropriate for managing forest resources on HIF lands. The State's practices affirm buffer strips along all streams and bodies of water, both permanent and intermittent, are the most critical practice in the protection of forest land water quality, so perennial and intermittent streams and waterbodies are buffered according to State BMPs. The buffers extend out on either side of perennial or intermittent streams or lakes to include non-forested wetlands and areas of instability.

Monitoring Element 5: Status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives (36 CFR 219.12(a)(5)(v)).

Regarding monitoring element 5, a concern was expressed about the need to designate more areas for preservation.

The HIF contains six designated wildernesses, including the Delirium, Mackinac, Round Island, Horseshoe Bay, and Big Island lake wildernesses, for a total of 37,408 acres of wilderness. The HIF also includes five national wild and scenic rivers, including the Carp, Indian, Sturgeon,

Tahquamenon, and Whitefish for a total of 38,643 acres of wild and scenic river corridors. There are 47,602 acres of old growth in addition to the designated wildernesses and the wild and scenic rivers. A total of 123,653 acres is designated for preservation or management toward a goal of late-successional species or old growth. The Organic Administration Act authorized the creation of what is now the National Forest System. It established forest reserves to improve and protect the forests within the boundaries, or for the purpose of securing favorable water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for United States citizens. The Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act affirmed the application of sustainability to the broad range of resources for which the Forest Service Service has responsibility. This act confirms the authority to manage the national forests for outdoor recreation, timber, watershed and wildlife and fish purposes.

Regarding monitoring element 5, a concern was expressed that too much of the HIF is managed for hunting and for timber.

Only 1 to 1.5 percent of the 578,000 acres of land suitable for timber production on the HIF is harvested annually.

Monitoring Question 5e: To what extent is wilderness being managed to protect the biological and physical resources and wilderness values while accommodating recreational uses?

Regarding monitoring question 5e, a concern was expressed about measuring indicators every two years.

The 2012 Planning Rule changes the publication of the Monitoring and Evaluation Report from an annual to a biennial publication. That does not mean that monitoring will only be done biennially. Most of the indicators will still be monitored annually, but reported every two years.

Regarding monitoring question 5e, a concern was expressed about the need to add old growth buffer zones to wilderness areas and wild and scenic river corridors.

Physical and biological resources are protected in wilderness areas while accommodating recreational use by prohibiting the use of motorized travel, including off-highway vehicles (OHVs) and snowmobiles and allowing non-motorized recreation, such as foot travel, canoeing, camping, etc.). Additionally, no vegetation management occurs in wilderness areas, so old growth conditions will develop over time as the forests mature and succeed. There is no requirement for a buffer for wilderness areas. The wild and scenic river corridors usually include all lands within a quarter mile of the ordinary high water mark on both sides of the river.

The old growth system design as described in Chapter 3 of the 2006 Forest Plan describes larger blocks of old growth to better meet the need of some wildlife and provide for the aesthetic value of large, old trees over large areas. Wild and scenic river corridors, other riparian lands and unsuited lands, such as wilderness areas, then serve as connective corridors between old growth blocks as depicted in the maps above.

Monitoring Element 7: Progress toward meeting the desired conditions and objectives in the plan, including for providing multiple use opportunities (36 CFR 219.12(a)(5)(vii)).

Regarding monitoring element 7, a question was asked about whether the HIF can track by percentages how much is spent annually for

a. Management, engineering, studies and follow-ups or

b. Fabrication, installation and implementation of projects in the HIF?

The Forest Service Timber Sale Accounting Systems can and do track outputs that can be measured against the Forest Plan output numbers. Management activities can also be tracked. The budget system and transaction registers also have tracking tools.

Monitoring Question 7b: How close are projected costs with actual costs?

Regarding monitoring question 7b, the following question was asked: Does the HIF track the contribution of dollars and man hours contributed by grant programs and grant sponsors for bridge structures, culverts, trail improvements, trailheads and other maintenance items like trail brushing, signing and grading?

This information is not tracked as part of Forest Plan monitoring, but it is tracked on a per grant or per agreement basis. This is required for accountability and is managed by the regional grants and agreements coordinator.

Monitoring Question 7c: To what extent is the Forest meeting the vegetative composition objectives?

Regarding monitoring question 7c, a concern was expressed about preserving more acres and dedicating too many acres to early-successional species with little regard for older habitat.

As stated previously, only 1 to 1.5 percent of the 578,000 acres of land suitable for timber production on the HIF is harvested annually. Preservation was also addressed in the paragraph above regarding the concern about monitoring element 5. Vegetation composition objectives in the Forest Plan are both definitive and flexible. They are definitive from the standpoint of expected minimums and maximums within certain categories. They are flexible by allowing a wide range of options outside of the definitive minimums/maximums previously described.

Monitoring Question 7d: Has public demand for commodity uses and non-commodity opportunities changed?

Regarding monitoring question 7d, a concern was expressed about the need to consider wilderness a commodity.

An economic valuation of wilderness has not been done as part of Forest Plan development or implementation.

Monitoring Question 7e: To what extent is the Forest meeting its transportation system objectives?

Regarding monitoring question 7e, a concern was expressed about the need to create more roadless areas by not building new roads and decommissioning roads. Another concern was expressed about the need to provide reasonable access to the forest.

The concerns were considered, and it was determined that no change was necessary. The proposed monitoring questions and monitoring indicators do address the need to provide access and decommission roads, as needed.

Monitoring Question 7h: Are harvested lands adequately restocked after 5 years?

Regarding monitoring question 7h, a concern was expressed about measuring how long it takes managed areas to return to a natural-appearing condition.

This question is very specific to the National Forest Management Act requirement of regenerating stands to assure adequate restocking within 5 years of harvesting.

POTENTIAL OTHER QUESTIONS

A recommendation was made for the development of a question regarding the impacts of avian corridors on recreational trails.

The recommendation is addressed in proposed monitoring questions 5c-5g.

Monitoring Element 8: 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)) (36 CFR 219.12(a)(5)(viii)). For purposes of this subpart, a timber management system, including even-aged and uneven-aged management.

Regarding monitoring element 8, a recommendation was made to add to the list of objectives whether it is prudent to log in semi-primitive areas, semi-primitive non-motorized areas and wild and scenic river corridors.

Vegetation management guidelines for wild and scenic rivers are listed on page 3-45, and timber management standards for wild and scenic rivers are listed on page 3-45 of the 2006 Forest Plan. Standards and guidelines for recreation opportunity spectrum assignments by management area are described in Chapter 2 (pages 2-3 through 2-9) of the 2006 Forest Plan. More details about each management area are included in Chapter 3. Management areas 6.1 through 6.4 specifically address the standards and guidelines pertaining to vegetation and timber management in semi-primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized areas.

Deleted Monitoring Question: To what extent are Forest management activities achieving semi-primitive ROS objectives?

Regarding the abovementioned deletion, a concern was expressed that there are no semi-primitive areas.

Semi-primitive areas are designated and managed as such according to the 2006 Forest Plan. The topic of the deleted monitoring question is addressed under the other monitoring questions regarding the status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives.

Monitoring Question 5f: To what extent are wild and scenic river values being managed to protect the biological and physical resources while accommodating recreational uses?

Clarification: The Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) referenced in the indicator column are defined by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as the unique characteristics that make a river worthy of special protection. The act states that ORVs can include scenery, recreation, fish and wildlife, geology, history, culture, and other similar values. Accurately and adequately expressing a river's ORVs provides a foundation for planning, management, and monitoring activities within a wild and scenic river corridor.