

CHATTAHOOCHEE-OCONEE NATIONAL FORESTS
Revised Land and Resource Management Plan
Administrative Change
2012 Planning Rule Monitoring Program Transition
May 2016

This Administrative Change – the 2012 Planning Rule Monitoring Program Transition – to the 2004 Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, brings the plan monitoring program into conformance with the requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule. The 2012 Planning Rule allows for corrections or adjustments to the Forest Plan using a process called “Administrative Changes.” “Administrative changes” as defined by 36 CFR 219.13(c) in the 2012 Planning Rule is “... any change to a plan that is not a plan amendment or revision. Administrative changes include corrections of clerical errors to any part of the plan, conformance of the plan to new statutory or regulatory requirements, or other content in the plan (219.7(f)).”

Administrative Change

The proposed administrative change to the Forest Plan Monitoring Program are as follows:

Evaluation Reports

Monitoring Evaluation Reports will be conducted on a biennial schedule. It is anticipated that the next Monitoring Evaluation Report with these additions will be available by September 2018.

Climate Change

In meeting the requirement to monitor “measurable changes on the plan area related to climate change and other stressors that may be affecting the plan area” (36 CFR 219.12(a)(5)(vi)), the following monitoring questions and indicators will be added to the Forest’s Monitoring Program:

Monitoring Question #20 – How has climate variability changed and how is it projected to change across the region?

Monitoring Question #21 – How is climate variability and change influencing the ecological, social, and economic conditions and contributions provided by plan areas in the region?

Monitoring Question #22 – What effects do national forests in the region have on a changing climate?

Indicators and Procedures:

These three monitoring questions will be addressed and evaluated through the Region 8 Broader-Scale Monitoring Strategy, which the Forest will incorporate into the Forest Evaluation Reports. To see the indicators and procedures that will be used at the broader-scale for these monitoring questions, see the Region 8’s Broader-Scale Monitoring Strategy at www.fs.usda.gov/main/r8/landmanagement/planning.

In addition to including monitoring questions 20, 21 and 22, the following monitoring questions from the Monitoring Program in the existing Forest Plan provide monitoring information to evaluate “other stressors that may be affecting the plan area.” These monitoring questions and

their indicators are:

Monitoring Question	Indicators
MQ 2: Are landscape-level and stand-level composition and structure of major forest communities within desirable ranges of variability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Status and trend in forest coverage by major forest and woodland community type and successional stage (acres) - Prescribed fire and wildland by forest type, stand condition and season of burn (acres) compared to desired fire regimes - Trend in hooded warbler occurrence in relationship to mature mesic deciduous forests - Trend in red-cockaded woodpecker population in relationship to mature pine forests - Trend in field sparrow occurrence in relationship to woodlands, savannas, and grasslands.
MQ 6: What are status and Trends of Forest Health Threats on the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conditions and trends of forest fuels. - Hazardous fuels treated through wildland fire use, prescribed fire, and mechanical treatment. - Trends in the amount of air pollutants and their effects on forest vegetation, particularly ozone susceptible species. - Compliance with NAAQS air particulate emissions from NF lands. - Trends in native insect and disease effects. - Trends in the number of occurrences and/or acreage of selected non-native species? - Trends in forest composition and condition that have been associated with epidemic insects and diseases. - Effectiveness of treatments to eliminate or control invasive nonnative species?

Social, Cultural and Economic Sustainability

In meeting the requirement to monitor plan contributions to the social, cultural, and economic sustainability of communities, which is a part of monitoring the progress toward meeting the desired conditions and objectives, including providing multiple use opportunities (see 36 CFR 219.12(a)(5)(vii)), the following monitoring question and indicators will be added in to the Forest’s Monitoring Program:

Monitoring Question #23 – What changes are occurring in the social, cultural, and economic conditions in the areas influenced by national forests in the region?

Indicators and Procedures:

This monitoring question will be addressed and evaluated through the Region 8 Broader-Scale Monitoring Strategy, which the Forest will incorporate into the Forest Evaluation Reports. To see the indicators and procedures that will be used at the broader-scale for this monitoring question, see the Region 8’s Broader-Scale Monitoring Strategy at www.fs.usda.gov/main/r8/landmanagement/planning.

In addition to including monitoring question 23, the following monitoring questions from the Monitoring Program in the existing Forest Plan provide information to evaluate social, cultural, and economic sustainability. The premise is that by producing or contributing to the ecosystem services that provide benefits to people and communities, social, cultural, and economic sustainability is enhanced. The following monitoring questions and indicators from the existing Monitoring Program in the Forest Plan provide information needed to evaluate ecosystem service benefits that are relevant to plan implementation:

Monitoring Question	Indicators
MQ 11: What is the status and trend of wilderness character?	Air Quality Related Values (AQRV)
MQ 14: Are heritage sites being protected?	Heritage protection effectiveness, Heritage Resources Surveys
MQ 17: How do actual outputs and services compare with projected?	Forest products production, Transportation infrastructure.

Focal Species

Another new requirement is that our Monitoring Program must include monitoring questions and indicators on the status of a select set of focal species to assess ecological conditions (see 36 CFR 219.12(a)(5)(iii)). A “focal species” is defined as a “species whose status permits inference to the integrity of the larger ecological system to which it belongs and provides meaningful information regarding the effectiveness of the plan in maintaining or restoring the ecological conditions to maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities in the plan area” (36 CFR 219.19). To address this, the following monitoring question will be added to the Forest’s Monitoring Program:

Monitoring Question #24: What is the status and trend of selected focal species on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests?

Indicator and Procedures:

These species, with the exception of brook trout, are being monitored under the existing Monitoring Program and they will continue to be monitored according to the protocols already established. However, the evaluation of the information gathered from the monitoring of these species will now be used within the context of evaluating the integrity of the ecological system the species is a part of, along with the effectiveness of the plan in maintaining or restoring those ecological conditions. Brook trout would be monitored following Region 8 Handbook for Monitoring and Guidance. Electrofishing is a widely accepted technique for both presence/absence sampling as well as for capture/recapture and other population estimation strategies. An upward trend in the number of populations and miles of occupied streams of Southern Appalachian brook trout are the desired changes.

The following table shows the species that are being identified as “focal species” for this Monitoring Program, along with ecological system/ecological conditions for which each focal species will serve as an indicator:

Focal Species	Ecological System/Conditions
Pine warbler*	Yellow pines, pine oak forested habitat
Chestnut-sided warbler*	Early successional forest habitat
Hooded warbler*	Mesic deciduous forested habitat
Prairie warbler*	Early successional forest habitat
Ovenbird*	Interior forest habitat
Acadian Flycatcher*	Riparian habitats
Pileated woodpecker*	Snags abundance
Brook trout	Streams with suitable water quality

Remarks: *MIS (Management Indicator Species)

The following is a list of the existing species-related monitoring questions and indicators that will now serve to meet the requirement of monitoring species identified as “focal species”:

Monitoring Question	Indicators
MQ 2: Are landscape-level and stand-level composition and structure of major forest communities within desirable ranges of variability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trend in forest coverage by major forest and woodland community and successional stage (acres) - Prescribed fire and wildland by forest type, stand condition and season of burn (acres) compared to desired fire regimes - Trend in hooded warbler occurrence in relationship to mature mesic deciduous forests - Trend in red-cockaded woodpecker population in relationship to mature pine forests - Trend in field sparrow occurrence in relationship to woodlands, savannas, and grasslands.
MQ 3: Are key successional stage habitats being provided?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trends in successional communities and abundance of key successional habitats (high-elevation early-successional habitats, old growth, mature forest interiors) - Trend in occurrence and habitats of several Management Indicator Species – prairie warbler, chestnut-sided warbler, Acadian flycatcher, ovenbird, scarlet tanager, Swainson’s warbler, pine warbler - Trend in wildlife openings (acres). - Trend in existing and potential old growth by forest community class
MQ 4: How well are key terrestrial habitat attributes being provided?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actions taken to protect and provide den trees, soft and hard mast, snags, and downed wood - Trend in occurrence trends in occurrence and habitats of Management Indicator Species – pileated woodpecker

Approval and Effective Date

This Administrative Change becomes effective upon signature below, and being posted online at the Forest’s website. Administrative changes are not subject to the objection process (36 CFR

219.50). This Administrative Change will remain in effect until the 2010 Revised LRMP is revised.


BETTY M. JEWETT
Forest Supervisor

5/17/16
Date