

Flathead National Forest Plan

Sustainable Recreation Monitoring (MON-REC); Trails Infrastructure Monitoring (MON-IFS) Monitoring Guide and Evaluation of Results

Point of Contact

Recreation Program Manager: Chris Prew

Introduction

This document provides the instructions and information needed to address the monitoring of human uses of the Forest, specifically recreational uses and the status of the trail system on the Forest. The monitoring items included in this document are listed below:

Monitoring Item and Question (Chapter 5 of Flathead Forest Plan)
MON-REC-01. What is the status of visitor use?
MON-REC-02. Are facilities maintained to users' satisfaction?
MON-REC-03. Are the recreation objectives in the plan being achieved?
MON-REC-04. Are current recreation settings and opportunities meeting or moving toward desired recreation settings and opportunities?
MON-IFS-03. What is the status of the trail system on the Forest?

Purpose and Outline of this Document

Each individual monitoring item in the Forest Plan monitoring program (Chapter 5 of the Plan) has been addressed in a document such as this one, which is intended to serve as the primary location for information needed to conduct the monitoring and to record the results. It is designed to aid in the tracking and preservation of monitoring methods, data and results over the life of the plan. It is anticipated that these documents would be revisited and used as a guide to conduct the monitoring for each biennial reporting; to see past results and record new results; and updated where needed based on recommendations for change in the previous biennial report.

This document is **NOT** the final Biennial Monitoring Evaluation Report (MER), but it should contain most if not all the information needed to prepare that report, and functions as project record material for the biennial MER.

Each monitoring item in this document is organized into five main sections:

- **Introduction:** Key information from the monitoring plan (i.e. indicators, plan component being monitored, data source/collection)
- **Methods:** Detailed information on how the monitoring will be accomplished, the intent of the selected indicators, data sources and confidence levels, etc.
- **Results:** Summary of the monitoring data used and the results for the current biennial monitoring report.

- **Discussion of Results:** A fact-based discussion of results. A list of general questions (see below) and in some cases more specific resource-based questions are provided to help guide this discussion
- **Evaluation of Results for Adaptive Management Finding:** evaluation of what the results mean in terms of management decisions. This information is incorporated into the Biennial Monitoring Evaluation Report.

Discussion of Results for all monitoring items - General Questions to consider

- Consider the following questions in your discussion of results. Try not to interpret, just keep to the facts.
- What is new from the last report? Change in status from last report?
- General Trends? Up, down, maintained? Within desired range? Trends/values not anticipated? Rate of change?
- Is there an alert level (aka trigger, threshold), associated with the target that should be noted? Describe and cite sources.
- Any other monitoring data collected that might be relevant to the question, but wasn't originally included in the plan?
- Are there any other plan components (standards, guidelines, desired conditions) not already listed that might be directly related to addressing and evaluating the monitoring question?
- Is there any new science or information that is now relevant in helping understand and evaluate the monitoring question?
- Did any other events or unforeseen situations positively or negatively influence the monitoring results? For example, naturally occurring events like fire, or internal agency factors.

SUSTAINABLE RECREATION MONITORING (MON-REC)

MON-REC-01. What is the status of visitor use?

MON-REC-02. Are facilities maintained to users’ satisfaction?

Introduction

Providing a variety of sustainable recreational opportunities is a desired condition in the Forest Plan. Recreational opportunities need to be compatible with the desired recreation opportunity spectrum setting for both summer and winter activities. Facilities should be clean and safe, maintained to standards. Visitors are very satisfied with the facilities and the services provided.

Plan components being monitored are the following:

FW-DC-REC-04: Recreation facilities, including toilets, cabins, developed campgrounds, and visitor centers, are maintained to standard to protect Forest resources, provide safe access, and provide visitor experiences commensurate with the recreation opportunity spectrum setting. Visitors are very satisfied with the facilities and services on the Forest.

FW-DC-REC-14: There are sustainable developed recreation opportunities across the Forest. Developed recreation opportunities are compatible with the desired recreation opportunity spectrum setting, and facilities are clean and safe, provide for user comfort, and are managed to reduce the risk of user conflicts and environmental impacts.

FW-DC-REC-15: Existing developed sites are sustainable, maintained, and updated to accommodate current and anticipated recreation needs. New developed recreation sites are constructed to accommodate anticipated recreation demand, where compatible with other resources.

Table 1. MON-REC-01 and 02 plan components, indicators, data source, data collection interval and point of contact

Plan Components	Indicator	Data Source / Partner	Data collection interval	Point of Contact
FW-DC-REC-04,14,15	01. Visitation estimates 02. Visitor activities 03. Percent overall satisfaction	The national visitor use monitoring data that is generated every five years for the Forest that is accessed here: https://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/nvum/ .	5 years which is the frequency of the national visitor use monitoring.	Forest recreation program manager

Methods

The national visitor use monitoring program (NVUM) (or similar future monitoring program) provides science-based estimates of the volume and characteristics of recreation visitation to the National Forest System. The NVUM program ensures that all visitor statistics for national forests and grasslands produced by the Forest Service use a standardized measure. For example, visitors must be physically recreating on Forest Service managed lands for a visit to count. They cannot be passing through, viewing from a non-Forest Service managed road, or just using restroom facilities.

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Review the master report and specific datasets for the most current year for the Forest. There are sections for the three indicators: visitation estimates, visitor activities and percent overall satisfaction.

- **IND-REC-01 - Visitor estimates:** Review and document the visitor estimates report that displays the number of annual site visits and national forest visits on the forest. The effects of unusual events such as forest fire closures are reflected in this estimate.
- **IND-REC-02 - Visitor activities:** Review and document the top 10 visitor activities participation. This is a good indicator of the types of recreation opportunities and activities in current demand by recreation visitors.
- **IND-REC-03 - Overall satisfaction:** Review and document the percent satisfaction reports. This provide information about visitor satisfaction on 14 elements analyzed by the Forest as a whole and by site type. This information is shown for developed sites, undeveloped forest areas (general forest) and designated wilderness.

Results

Table 2: Monitoring results for MON-REC-01 and 02, Recreational Visitor Use and Satisfaction

Monitoring indicator	2010	2015	2021-Forest plan Monitoring (2020 NVUM)
IND-REC-01: Visitor estimates Total	885,000	1,098,000	2020 NVUM Results are not available yet.
IND-REC-02: Top 10 visitor activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Viewing natural features 2. Viewing wildlife 3. Relaxing 4. Hiking/walking 5. Downhill skiing 6. Driving for pleasure 7. Hunting 8. Nature center activities 9. Fishing 10. Gathering forest products 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Downhill skiing 2. Viewing natural features 3. Hiking/walking 4. Viewing wildlife 5. Relaxing 6. Driving for pleasure 7. Fishing 8. Developed camping 9. Hunting 10. Other non-motorized 	2020 NVUM Results are not available yet.
IND-REC-03: Satisfaction Day use developed sites Overnight developed sites Underdeveloped areas Wilderness			2020 NVUM Results are not available yet.

Discussion of Results

Discuss trends from past visitor use monitoring reports.

Visitor estimates:

Knowing the amount of visits helps to identify existing and future work force needs, potential impacts on other natural resources, and in estimating the economic value of Forest Service recreation on local and regional communities.

- *Has use increased or decreased from previous monitoring years?*

Anecdotally, recreation use and visitation has increased over the last 2 years, in particular for FY20. The FY20 increase in use may be an anomaly due to changes in visitor use patterns related to the COVID pandemic. In addition, in 2020, Glacier National Park had the entire east side of the park closed and only 1 campground open for use. This contributed to a noticeable increase in use and areas of the forest used on the Hungry Horse-Glacier View RD.

- *Discuss if there was any major events such as a fire, or other natural events that may have impacted visitation. Discuss if there was any economic or other social situation that may have impacted visitation.*

The COVID 19 pandemic in 2020 had an impact on visitor use and patterns across the forest.

Visitor activities:

- *How have the percent activities and main activities shifted?*

With no data from the 2020 NVUM changes from 2015 cannot be identified. Downhill ski visits on the forest continue to increase, with a 19% increase in visits over the last 5 years.

- *Are there new activities occurring on the forest that are impacting other resources or other visitors?*

Anecdotally, pack-rafting use is continuing to increase on the forest. E-bike use and requests are becoming an emerging activity on the forest.

- *Are there any detectable changes to activities due to changing climate?*

Partner organizations that groom cross-country ski trails on the forest have expressed concerns about the changes in snowpack and challenges in grooming some areas, as well as requests for considering other areas at higher elevations for grooming.

Visitor satisfaction:

Satisfaction of visitors provides information about visitor satisfaction which helps to decide where to invest in resources and to allocate resources more efficiently toward improving customer satisfaction.

- *Has visitor satisfaction gone down or up? Review the 14 elements in visitor satisfaction; what are the trends for each elements?*
- *Discuss any changes in program, funding levels for maintenance or visitor contacts that might have effected visitor satisfaction.*

Because there are no new results available for this monitoring period; no data on visitor satisfaction can be reported on for this monitoring period.

Evaluation of Results for Adaptive Management Finding

The following findings and recommendations resulted from the evaluation of monitoring results as documented above.

Table 3. Summary of Findings for Monitoring Item MON-REC-01 and 02

1. Plan Monitoring Results: Does the monitoring question and indicator(s) provide the information necessary to understand the status of the associated plan component listed above?
Yes. –
Recommendations – slight correction needed in Forest plan monitoring program
2. Plan Implementation Status ¹: Do monitoring results demonstrate progress of the associated plan components for with this monitoring item?
UNCERTAIN – (A) - Availability of data or Interval of data collection beyond this reporting cycle. There will be some Forest Plan Monitoring reports where no new data will be available, due to the 2 year cycle of Plan monitoring vs the 5 yr cycle of NVUM report
Recommendation
3. Type of change under consideration ²: If corrective action/change was indicated under either #1 or #2, <u>where</u> might that change might be needed?
Correction in the forest plan monitoring program to the forest plan components being monitored: FW-DC-REC-04, FW-DC-REC-14, FW-DC-REC-15

¹ **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STATUS:** (A) **Uncertain** – Availability of data or Interval of data collection beyond this reporting cycle (indicate date of next time this monitoring item will be evaluated); (B) **Uncertain** - More time/data are needed to understand status or progress of the plan component(s); (C) **Uncertain** - Methods inadequate to assess the status or progress toward achieving plan component(s). (D) **NO** - Implementation of plan component(s) ARE NOT trending, progressing, and/or conducted as desired; (E) **YES** - Implementation of plan component(s) ARE trending, progressing, and/or conducted as desired

² **CHOICES for where change may be needed include:** Monitoring program, plan component, management activity, plan assessment, program strategy or approaches documents, public engagement strategy

MON-REC-03. Are the recreation objectives in the plan being achieved?

Introduction

Objectives for recreational activities were developed for the Forest considering historic and expected budget allocations as well as professional experience with implementing various resource programs and activities. It is possible that objectives could either exceed or not meet a target based upon a number of factors, including budget and staffing increases or decreases, increased or decreased planning efficiencies, and unanticipated resource constraints. Objectives will occur over the life of the forest plan, considered to be over the first 15 years of plan implementation, unless otherwise specified.

Plan components being monitored are the following:

FW-OBJ-REC-01: Rehabilitate eight to ten dispersed recreation sites on the Forest with erosion or sanitation issues or other adverse effects on natural resources.

FW-OBJ-REC-03: Improve seven to twelve developed campgrounds. See GA-OBJ for specific numbers by geographic area.

FW-OBJ-REC-04: Add two to six recreational cabin rentals to the National Reservation System.

GA-NF-OBJ-02: Complete one to three trails that provide for mountain bike opportunities in the Whitefish Range vicinity.

GA-SV-MA7-Crane-OBJ-01 Construct a designated mountain bike trail system in the Crane Mountain area.

GA-SM-OBJ-01: Construct and designate approximately 1 to 4 miles of motorized trail connectors that provide high-elevation loop opportunities outside the NCDE primary conservation area and Salish demographic connectivity area, where consistent with desired recreation opportunity spectrum settings.

GA-SM-OBJ-02: Construct a non-motorized trail that connects the Whitefish Trail¹ through NFS lands.

GA-SM-MA7-Blacktailski-OBJ-01: Construct a non-motorized trail that connects NFS lands in the vicinity of Blacktail Mountain to trails on other ownerships in the Foy's Lake area (Foy's to Blacktail Trails).

Desired conditions that these objectives support include the following:

FW-DC-04: Loop opportunities are a part of both the road and trail systems.

FW-DC-08: The Forest's trail system provides a variety of high-quality motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities during summer and winter. Forest system trails access

¹ For additional information about this trail system, see the Whitefish Legacy Partners website, <http://whitefishlegacy.org>.

destinations, provide for loop opportunities that connect to larger trail systems, provide linkages from local communities to the Forest, and are compatible with other resources.

Table 4. MON-REC-03 plan components, indicators, data source, data collection interval and point of contact

Plan Components	Indicator	Data Source / Partner	Data collection interval	Point of Contact
FW-OBJ-REC-01	IND-REC-	Forest site-specific environmental analysis documents and decisions; Recreation program of work accomplishments	Biennial	Forest recreation program manager
FW-OBJ-REC-03	04. Number of dispersed recreation sites on the Forest that have been rehabilitated to correct erosion or sanitation issues			
FW-OBJ-REC-04	05. Number of campgrounds that have been improved			
GA-NF-OBJ-02	06. Number of recreation cabin rentals added to the national reservation system since the record of decision			
GA-SV-MA7-Crane-OBJ-01	07. Number of bicycle trails constructed in the Whitefish Range vicinity			
GA-SM-OBJ-01	08. Construction of a bicycle trail in the Crane Mountain area			
GA-SM-MA7-Blacktailski-OBJ-01	09. Construction of a non-motorized trail that connects NFS lands in the Blacktail vicinity to the Foy's to Blacktail Trails system			
GA-SM-OBJ-02 through 04	10. Construction and designation of motorized trail connectors that provide high-elevation loop opportunities			
	11. Construction of a non-motorized trail that connects the Whitefish Trail (Whitefishlegacy.org) to NFS lands			

Methods

This monitoring question is primarily designed to see how well we are implementing some of the key objectives for recreation. Objectives should be met within 15 years of December 2018, when the ROD was signed unless a specific timeframe is denoted in the objective.

There are more than the 8 recreation objectives that we are monitoring that need to be implemented over the life of the plan. In the additional information column, discuss the reasons why some objectives may not/are not be met/meeting, e.g., funding issues, environmental issues, environmental analysis, or no longer a valid objective

Once an objective is met, state that in the results.

Review Forest NEPA decisions since the implementation of the plan and the recreation program of work for any of these types of recreation project accomplishments that have occurred during the monitoring period (the 2 years since previous monitoring report). Discuss with district recreation personnel for additional information.

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Definition of improvement of recreation sites: Can include but is not limited to installation or repair of toilets, replacement and/or installation of picnic tables and fire rings, alignment of parking spaces, planting of vegetation, installation or replacement of bulletin boards, and installation of food storage boxes.

Results

Table 5: Monitoring results for MON-REC-03. Recreation Forest Plan Objectives

Forest Plan Objective	Monitoring Indicator	Accomplishment 2021 monitoring report (For years 2019 and 2020)	Additional Information
FW-OBJ-REC-01 Rehabilitate eight to ten dispersed recreation sites on the Forest with erosion or sanitation issues or other adverse effects on natural resources.	IND-REC-04. Number of dispersed recreation sites on the Forest that have been rehabilitated to correct erosion or sanitation issues	<u>Van Lake dispersed camping area was improved in the Swan Valley Geographic Area</u>	<u>Van Lake Campground improvement project -CE Signed 7/12/2019</u>
FW-OBJ-REC-03 Improve seven to twelve developed campgrounds. See GA-OBJ for specific numbers by geographic area.	IND-REC-05. Number of campgrounds that have been improved	<u>0</u>	
FW-OBJ-REC-04 Add two to six recreational cabin rentals to the National Reservation System.	IND-REC-06. Number of recreation cabin rentals added to the national reservation system since the record of decision	<u>0</u>	
GA-NF-OBJ-02 Complete one to three trails that provide for mountain bike opportunities in the Whitefish Range vicinity.	IND-REC-07. Number of bicycle trails constructed in the Whitefish Range vicinity	<u>0</u>	0 completed on NFS land. Taylor Hellroaring decision approved 30 miles of new trails. Crystal Cedar decision approved 24.6 miles of new trail. Neither of these two projects implemented any trail work in 2019 or 2020. Whitefish Mtn Resort added new trails
GA-SV-MA7-Crane-OBJ-01 Construct a designated mountain bike trail system in the Crane Mountain area.	IND-REC-08. Construction of a bicycle trail in the Crane Mountain area	<u>0</u>	0

RECREATION, TRAILS INFRASTRUCTURE – Monitoring Guide/Eval of Results

Forest Plan Objective	Monitoring Indicator	Accomplishment 2021 monitoring report (For years 2019 and 2020)	Additional Information
<p>GA-SM-MA7-BlacktailSki-OBJ-01</p> <p>Construct a nonmotorized trail that connects NFS lands in the vicinity of Blacktail Mountain to trails on other ownerships in the Foy's Lake area (Foy's to Blacktail Trails).</p>	<p>IND-REC-09. Construction of a non-motorized trail that connects NFS lands in the Blacktail vicinity to the Foy's to Blacktail Trails system</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>Not in the monitoring cycle this go-round, but there was a decision signed on January 28, 2021 called Emmons Ridge Trail which approved 6.32 miles of trail in the Foys to Blacktail area.</p>
<p>GA-SM-OBJ-01</p> <p>Construct and designate approximately 1 to 4 miles of motorized trail connectors that provide high-elevation loop opportunities outside the NCDE primary conservation area and Salish demographic connectivity area, where consistent with desired recreation opportunity spectrum settings.</p>	<p>IND-REC-10. Construction and designation of motorized trail connectors that provide high-elevation loop opportunities</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>None completed or planned.</p>
<p>GA-SM-OBJ-02 Construct a non-motorized trail that connects the Whitefish Trail through NFS lands</p>	<p>IND-REC-11. Construction of a non-motorized trail that connects the Whitefish Trail (Whitefishlegacy.org) to NFS lands</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>Decision document signed which includes such a trail (Taylor Hellroaring) but not implemented yet.</p>

Discussion of Results

The only recreation objective to report during this 2 year monitoring period is related to FW-OBJ-REC-01. The Van Lake Improvement Project (CE Signed 7/12/2019), within the Swan Valley Geographic Area, authorized the improvements and upgrades to the road and 6 existing dispersed campsites. The intent of the project was establish 6 developed sites and improve the road that accesses the site in order to prevent further resource damage to the soil and riparian vegetation by defining the sites and address sanitation issues along the lake. In addition, managing the site as a developed campground will help reduce food storage issues and impacts to grizzly bears with the installation of food storage boxes and the information and education that is present at developed sites. Van Lake Campground moved from a series of dispersed camping areas (Development Scale 1 to 2) to a Development Scale 3 Campground.

This project satisfies 1 out of the 8-10 Dispersed sites rehabilitated or improved as identified in FW-OBJ-REC-01.

Evaluation of Results for Adaptive Management Finding

The following findings and recommendations resulted from the evaluation of monitoring results as documented above.

Table 6. Summary of Findings for Monitoring Item MON-REC-03

<p>1. Plan Monitoring Results: Does the monitoring question and indicator(s) provide the information necessary to understand the status of the associated plan component listed above?</p>
<p>Yes,</p>
<p>Recommendations – correction to the list of plan components monitored under this item needs to occur in the plan monitoring program</p>
<p>2. Plan Implementation Status ¹: Do monitoring results demonstrate progress of the associated plan components for with this monitoring item?</p>
<p>Yes – (E) Implementation of Plan Component(s) ARE trending, progressing, and/or conducted as desired with the Van Lake Improvement Project and other plan objectives are planned for implementation.</p>
<p>Recommendation –</p>
<p>3. Type of change under consideration ²: If corrective action/change was indicated under either #1 or #2, <u>where</u> might that change might be needed?</p>
<p>Forest plan monitoring program correction – list the correct plan components that are actually being monitored under this item: FW-OBJ-REC-01; FW-OBJ-REC-03; FW-OBJ-REC-04; GA-NF-OBJ-02; GA-SV-MA7-Crane-OBJ-01; GA-SM-OBJ-01; GA-SM-OBJ-02; GA-SM-MA7-Blacktailski-OBJ-01</p>

¹ **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STATUS:** (A) **Uncertain** – Availability of data or Interval of data collection beyond this reporting cycle (*indicate date of next time this monitoring item will be evaluated*); (B) **Uncertain** - More time/data are needed to understand status or progress of the plan component(s); (C) **Uncertain** - Methods inadequate to assess the status or progress toward achieving plan component(s). (D) **NO** - Implementation of plan component(s) ARE NOT trending, progressing, and/or conducted as desired; (E) **YES** - Implementation of plan component(s) ARE trending, progressing, and/or conducted as desired

² **CHOICES for where change may be needed include:** Monitoring program, plan component, management activity, plan assessment, program strategy or approaches documents, public engagement strategy

MON-REC-04. Are current recreation settings and opportunities meeting or moving toward desired recreation settings and opportunities?

Introduction

Desired conditions in the plan call for providing a range of summer and winter recreational opportunities, consistent with the desired recreation opportunity spectrum settings and management plans. Management actions are designed to maintain or move recreation conditions towards this desired condition.

Plan components being monitored are the following:

FW-DC-SREC-01: Summer recreation settings provide a range of opportunities, as described by the recreation opportunity spectrum.

FW-DC-WREC-01: Winter recreation settings provide a range of opportunities as described by the recreation opportunity spectrum.

FW-DC-REC-03: The development scale of recreation facilities is consistent with the desired recreation opportunity spectrum settings and with river management and trail management plans.

Table 7. MON-REC-04 plan components, indicators, data source, data collection interval and point of contact

Plan Components	Indicator	Data Source / Partner	Data collection interval	Point of Contact
FW-DC-SREC-01 FW-DC-WREC-01 FW-DC-REC-03	IND-REC-12. Management actions or activities that move towards desired recreation opportunity spectrum class characteristics	Forest site-specific environmental analysis documents and decisions	Biennial	Forest recreation program manager

Methods

Review of the Forest’s site-specific environmental analysis documents and decisions that have occurred since adoption of the plan (December 2018) to determine if there were any activities that have occurred on the ground designed to move towards the desired recreation opportunity spectrum class characteristics. The recreation analysis should include an analysis of any change from existing condition for the recreation opportunity spectrum classes to the desired recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) classes. Review the ROS class characteristics to make sure management actions are aligned with the characteristics.

Results

Table 8: Monitoring results for MON-REC-04. Moving current recreation conditions towards desired conditions

Monitoring indicator	Monitoring Year 2021 (activities in FY 19 and 20)	Monitoring Year 20XX	Monitoring Year 20XX
IND-REC-12. Management actions or activities that move towards desired recreation opportunity spectrum class characteristics	Crystal Cedar and Taylor Hellroaring Projects. Both decisions address the desired ROS characteristics		

Discussion of Results

Crystal Cedar Project

The decision approved in the Crystal Cedar Project is consistent with the ROS settings for the Crystal Cedar project area. The ROS for this area is roaded natural for the summer, and a mixture of roaded natural, semi-primitive motorized, and semi-primitive non-motorized settings for the winter. Specifically, the purpose of the project was to provide sustainable trail-based recreation opportunities close to local communities that are compatible with other resources; reduce tree densities and fuel loadings within the wildland-urban interface to result in less intense fire behavior near communities and facilitate safe wildland fire operations; improve the diversity and resilience of forest vegetative communities and associated wildlife habitat; and provide a mix of forest products to contribute to economic sustainability and providing jobs and income to local economies.

Taylor Hellroaring

The decision approved for this project is consistent with the Rural ROS setting within the project area. The decision for management activities and trail improvements are within the Big Mountain (GA-SM-MA7-Big Mtn) management area. The site specific analysis directly addressed the how the management actions are consistent with the desired ROS characteristics, and are consistent with GA-SM-MA7-Big Mtn-DC 02, 03, 05 and 06.

This project analysis was ongoing when the former forest plan was in effect; however, the project was unable to get to a signed decision before the new forest plan became effective. Therefore, the project analysis had to be updated with another EA to address the new forest plan direction including the ROS desired conditions. The decision was approved November 18, 2019.

Evaluation of Results for Adaptive Management Finding

The following findings and recommendations resulted from the evaluation of monitoring results as documented above.

Table 9. Summary of Findings for Monitoring Item MON-REC-04

<p>1. Plan Monitoring Results: Does the monitoring question and indicator(s) provide the information necessary to understand the status of the associated plan component listed above?</p>
<p>YES</p>
<p>Recommendations –</p>
<p>2. Plan Implementation Status ¹: Do monitoring results demonstrate progress of the associated plan components for with this monitoring item?</p>
<p>YES - (E) Implementation of Plan Component(s) ARE trending, progressing, and/or conducted as desired as above projects are moving recreation conditions towards desired conditions.</p>
<p>Recommendation –</p>
<p>3. Type of change under consideration ²: If corrective action/change was indicated under either #1 or #2, <u>where</u> might that change might be needed?</p>
<p>NA</p>

¹ **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STATUS:** (A) **Uncertain** - Availability of data or Interval of data collection beyond this reporting cycle (*indicate date of next time this monitoring item will be evaluated*); (B) **Uncertain** - More time/data are needed to understand status or progress of the plan component(s); (C) **Uncertain** - Methods inadequate to assess the status or progress toward achieving plan component(s). (D) **NO** - Implementation of plan component(s) ARE NOT trending, progressing, and/or conducted as desired; (E) **YES** - Implementation of plan component(s) ARE trending, progressing, and/or conducted as desired

² **CHOICES for where change may be needed include:** Monitoring program, plan component, management activity, plan assessment, program strategy or approaches documents, public engagement strategy

TRAILS INFRASTRUCTURE MONITORING (MON-IFS)

MON-IFS-03. What is the status of the trail system on the Forest?

Introduction

Desired conditions on the Forest include managing for a sustainably designed trail system providing a variety of high-quality motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities during summer and winter. These trails are maintained in accordance with standards.

Objectives that are being monitored are:

FW-OBJ-IFS-04: Maintain up to 2,260 miles of NFS trails.

FW-OBJ-IFS 05: Reduce deferred trail maintenance backlog by 10-25 percent.

FW-OBJ-IFS 06: Annually, reconstruct 25 to 30 miles of trail.

Desired conditions which these objectives support include:

FW-DC-IFS-07: Road management objectives and trail management objectives are identified and current for roads and trails. Roads and trails are maintained in accordance with road and trail management objectives. The application of best management practices and other design features minimizes sediment input to waterbodies.

FW-DC-IFS-07: Road management objectives and trail management objectives are identified and current for roads and trails. Roads and trails are maintained in accordance with road and trail management objectives. The application of best management practices and other design features minimizes sediment input to waterbodies.

FW-DC-IFS-08: The Forest’s trail system provides a variety of high-quality motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities during summer and winter. Forest system trails access destinations, provide for loop opportunities that connect to larger trail systems, provide linkages from local communities to the Forest, and are compatible with other resources.

FW-DC-IFS-09: Forest system trails are sustainably designed and managed to provide a variety of high-quality motorized and non-motorized summer and winter public access that connects people to nature. Trails are maintained in accordance with trail management objectives direction

Table 10. MON-IFS-04 plan components, indicators, data source, data collection interval and point of contact

Plan Components	Indicator	Data Source / Partner	Data collection interval	Point of Contact
FW-DC-IFS-07 through 09 FW-OBJ-IFS-04 through 06	IND-IFS-09. Miles of motorized and non-motorized summer trails 10. Miles of motorized and non-motorized winter trails 11, Miles and percent of system trails meeting standards	NRM DATABASES gPAS - Instructions to acquire data summary INFRA	Biennial	Recreation program manager

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Plan Components	Indicator	Data Source / Partner	Data collection interval	Point of Contact
	12. Miles of system trails improved 13. Miles of trails maintained 14. Miles of new motorized trails constructed 15. Miles of new non-motorized trails constructed 16. Miles of trails reported reconstructed			

Methods

The data source for these indicators is the National Resource Manager (NRM) Access Travel Management (ATM) database. This serves as the official database regarding access and travel management information for NFS roads, trails, and areas. It incorporates data in Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUMs) and Over Snow Vehicle Use Maps (OSVUMs) used for local planning, management, and public information sharing.

IND-IFS-09 through IND-IFS-10: NRM ATM database. Record miles at the time of the monitoring report.

IND-IFS-11 through IND-IFS-16: Record miles accomplished for the 2 years since the previous monitoring report.

Results

Table 11: Monitoring results for MON-IFS-03. Status of the Trail system

Monitoring Indicator	Monitoring Date 2021 (actions in FY19 and 20)	Monitoring Date 20XX
IND-IFS-09. Miles of motorized summer trails	<u>1754.78 Miles</u>	
IND-IFS-09. Miles of non-motorized summer trails	<u>537.41 Miles</u>	
IND-IFS-10. Miles of motorized winter trails	<u>175.4miles motorized winter</u>	
IND-IFS-10. Miles of non-motorized winter trails	<u>41 Miles managed for xc ski and snowshoe</u>	
IND-IFS-11, Miles and percent of system trails meeting standards	<u>2019 - 1591.7miles; 69%</u> <u>2020- 922.6 Miles; 40%</u>	
IND-IFS-12. Miles of system trails improved	<u>2019 – 44.9 Miles</u> <u>2020 – 13.6 Miles</u>	
IND-IFS-13. Miles of trails maintained	<u>2019 – 1502.2 Miles</u> <u>2020 – 757.4 Miles</u>	

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Monitoring Indicator	Monitoring Date 2021 (actions in FY19 and 20)	Monitoring Date 20XX
IND-IFS-14. Miles of new motorized trails constructed	<u>0 Miles 2019 and 2020</u>	
IND-IFS-15. Miles of new non-motorized trails constructed	<u>0 new NFST trails constructed</u>	
IND-IFS-16. Miles of trails reported reconstructed	<u>See Miles Improved</u>	

Discussion of Results

The general trend of trail infrastructure maintenance and improvements over the 2-year period are flat to somewhat declining, due to the influence of the COVID pandemic in 2020. The forest trails maintenance program is significantly supported by partner maintenance through agreements with Montana Conservation Corps, Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation, Swan Valley Connections, SCA, Flathead Area Mountain Bikers, to name a few.

There were no new miles of motorized or non-motorized NFST trails constructed during this monitoring period. Whitefish Mountain Resort under their Ski Area Special Use Permit constructed several miles of downhill Mountain bike trails on NFS lands.

The emphasis for trails infrastructure for this monitoring period continued to focus on maintaining and sustaining the existing trails system on the forest. This is true for motorized and non-motorized trails. There continues to be a need to focus resources on standardizing trailhead signage and messaging across the forest as well as planning for improvements to minimize resources damage, crowding and sanitation issues at popular trailheads and at wilderness trail portals where messaging on ethics, rules and regulations are important.

Trail Emphasis Areas on the Forest that emerged during the monitoring period:

The designation of the Bob Marshall Wilderness and Adjacent Lands (BOB +) Trails Priority Area, under the authority of the National Trails Act, emphasizes a goal to increase volunteer and partner work on the 3247 miles of trail on the Flathead, Lolo and Helena-Lewis and Clark NF. 1806 of the Bob+ Trails Priority Area are on the Flathead NF.

The Forest has emphasized partnerships and strategic planning consistent with the National Strategy for a Sustainable Trails System and the 10-year Trails Stewardship Challenge by engaging community organizations, local governments and other agencies in working together to define community trails systems and connectivity to new and existing trail systems. The Taylor Hellroaring Project and Crystal Cedar Project both placed an emphasis on working with external partners and communities to plan, design and implement construction of 70 miles of trails that connect NFS lands to the communities of Columbia Falls and Whitefish

Evaluation of Results for Adaptive Management Finding

The following findings and recommendations resulted from the evaluation of monitoring results as documented above.

Table 12. Summary of Findings for Monitoring Item MON-IFS-03

1. Plan Monitoring Results: Does the monitoring question and indicator(s) provide the information necessary to understand the status of the associated plan component listed above?
Yes
Recommendations – It would be useful to incorporate info from other data sources related to partner accomplishments for trail maintenance/construction. Include permitted trail systems such as Whitefish Mountain Resort or partner maintained cross country ski trails (Issak Walton).
2. Plan Implementation Status ¹ : Do monitoring results demonstrate progress of the associated plan components for with this monitoring item?
YES – (E) Implementation of Plan Component(s) ARE trending, progressing, and/or conducted as desired based on continued management activities for roads and trails (table 11).
Recommendation – <i>IF the answer was NO, concisely provide information and rationale for any recommended changes related to management activities or strategies to better achieve intent of the plan component(s).</i>
3. Type of change under consideration ² : If corrective action/change was indicated under either #1 or #2, <u>where</u> might that change might be needed?
NA

¹ **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STATUS:** (A) **Uncertain** - Availability of data or Interval of data collection beyond this reporting cycle (*indicate date of next time this monitoring item will be evaluated*); (B) **Uncertain** - More time/data are needed to understand status or progress of the plan component(s); (C) **Uncertain** - Methods inadequate to assess the status or progress toward achieving plan component(s) (D) **NO** - Implementation of plan component(s) ARE NOT trending, progressing, and/or conducted as desired; (E) **YES** - Implementation of plan component(s) ARE trending, progressing, and/or conducted as desired

² **CHOICES for where change may be needed include:** Monitoring program, plan component, management activity, plan assessment, program strategy or approaches documents, public engagement strategy