

Monongahela National Forest

Administrative Correction 12

June 27, 2011

Updates in text or numbers on pages I-5, I-6, I-8. Typo corrections on pages I-8 and II-4.

Administrative corrections are defined at 36 CFR 219.7(b) and may be made at any time and are not plan amendments or revisions. Administrative corrections include the following:

- 1) Corrections and updates of data and maps;
- 2) Corrections of typographical errors or other non-substantive changes;
- 3) Changes in the monitoring program and monitoring information;
- 4) Changes in timber management projections or other projections of uses and activities;
- 5) Other changes in the plan document or set of documents that are not substantive changes in the plan components.

CORRECTIONS

Forest Plan Chapter I, page I-2

Forest Service Planning Rules, Second Paragraph, Second and Third Sentences: However, the Forest Service has recently released a new 2005 Planning Rule. Subsequent revisions or amendments to the Plan will be developed under the new rule.

Change to: However, the Forest Service is working on a new planning rule. Subsequent revisions or amendments to the Plan would likely be developed under the new rule.

Rationale for Change: This update reflects the fact that the 2005 Planning Rule no longer exists, but the Forest Service is developing a new planning rule that would govern how future revisions or amendments to Forest Plans would be completed.

Forest Plan Chapter I, page I-5

Location and Description of the Forest, First Paragraph, Second Sentence: The Forest has over 919,000 acres within the Allegheny Mountains of the Appalachian System.

Change to: The Forest has over 921,000 acres within the Allegheny Mountains of the Appalachian System.

Rationale for Change: There are now over 921,000 acres of NFS lands on the Forest as a result of land acquisition between 2006 and 2011.

Forest Plan Chapter I, page I-6

Second Paragraph, First Sentence: Now the Monongahela encompasses more than 919,000 acres of federal ownership in 10 counties of the Potomac Highlands region of West Virginia.

Change to: Now the Monongahela encompasses more than 921,000 acres of federal ownership in 10 counties of the Potomac Highlands region of West Virginia.

Rationale for Change: There are now over 921,000 acres of NFS lands on the Forest as a result of land acquisition between 2006 and 2011.

Forest Plan Chapter I, page I-8

Fourth Paragraph, Fourth Sentence: Auto touring attractions include the 22 mile-long Highland Scenic Highway, and spectacular fall leaf color.

Change to: Auto touring attractions include the 43-mile Highland Scenic Highway, and spectacular fall leaf color.

Rationale for Change: The corrected mileage includes the State Highway 39/55 portion of the Highland Scenic Highway, which was unintentionally omitted from the original statement.

Forest Plan Chapter I, page I-8

Fourth Paragraph, Fifth Sentence: The national importance of the recreation resource has been recognized with Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area, five wilderness areas, three Scenic Areas, a National Scenic Highway, a National Recreation Trail, and two visitor centers.

Change to: The national importance of the recreation resource has been recognized with Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area, eight wilderness areas, three Scenic Areas, a National Scenic Highway, a National Recreation Trail, and two visitor centers.

Rationale for Change: The number of wilderness areas has been updated to reflect congressional designation of 3 new areas in the 2009 Wild Monongahela Wilderness Act (Public Law 111-11).

Forest Plan Chapter II, page II-4

Definitions, First Paragraph: There five types of direction used for the Forest resource programs—desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines—are described in detail below.

Change to: The five types of direction used for the Forest resource programs—desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines—are described in detail below.

Rationale for Change: Corrects the typo “There” to the originally intended “The”.

The above corrections are either data updates or typographic errors [36CFR 219.7(b)(1) and (2)]. Corrected pages I-2, I-5, I-6, I-8, and II-4 are attached.

- The type of activities that are allowed or not allowed to best address management strategies and related Management Prescription (MP) emphasis and direction;
- The intensity, duration, and limitations on management actions needed to manage risks and threats to resources and the social and economic environment, while maintaining or moving toward achievement of desired conditions.

Forest Service Planning Rules

Under the 1982 planning rule stated in CFR 219, the Forest Supervisor is required to review conditions of the land every five years to determine if the Forest Plan needs to be revised. If monitoring and evaluation indicate that immediate changes are needed, and these needed changes cannot be handled by amendment, then it would be necessary to revise the Plan.

This Forest Plan revision is being conducted under the 1982 version of the Forest Service planning rule. However, the Forest Service is working on a new planning rule. Subsequent revisions or amendments to the Plan would likely be developed under the new rule.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE FOREST PLAN TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

Organic Administration Act

The Organic Administration Act authorized the creation of what is now the National Forest System. The law 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 the use and necessities of citizens of the United States.”

Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act

In this Act, Congress affirmed the application of sustainability to the broad range of resources over which the Forest Service has responsibility. This Act confirms the authority to manage the national forests “for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes.”

Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act

The Monongahela Forest Plan was developed and revised within the framework of national and regional Forest Service direction. The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) and its implementing Program set direction and output levels for National Forest System lands. Goods and services are distributed based upon detailed, site-specific information concerning the capability and suitability of National Forest System lands being assigned various management activities and prescriptions at the Forest level. The Plan provides information for the RPA assessment and program updates.

Chapter IV – Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Presents a plan for monitoring and evaluating the effects of management practices, and describes how the Plan will be amended or revised in the future.

Chapter V - Glossary

Includes definitions of key terms, and commonly used acronyms.

Appendix A – Vegetation Management Practices

Describes forest types and harvest methods and silvicultural treatments that can be used to manage them.

Appendix B – Old Growth

Describes existing old growth, defines old-growth characteristics, and identifies the distribution of potential old growth areas on the Forest.

Appendix C – Analysis of the Management Situation Summary

Describes the Need For Change in management direction for selected resources, the current condition of those resources, and how the Plan addresses the Need For Change.

Appendix D – Management Indicator Species

Describes the revised list of MIS on the Forest and the disposition of MIS from the 1986 Plan.

Appendix E – Communication and Electronic Sites

Describes the communication and electronic sites on the Forest and designates their users.

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE FOREST

The Monongahela National Forest is located in east central West Virginia (see Figure I-1), in portions of Barbour, Grant, Greenbrier, Nicholas, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Randolph, Tucker, and Webster Counties. The Forest has over 921,000 acres within the Allegheny Mountains of the Appalachian System. The Supervisor's Office is located in Elkins, West Virginia, and the Forest is divided into four Ranger Districts: Cheat-Potomac, Greenbrier, Gauley, and Marlinton-White Sulphur Springs. District offices are in Parsons, Petersburg, Bartow, Richwood, Marlinton, and White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. The Forest is an administrative unit of the Eastern Region (Region 9) of the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Regional Forester's office is in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The Forest is regarded as a special place by many who visit or live nearby. American Indians lived here for thousands of years, at first hunting and gathering and then later in agricultural-based villages. Three hundred years ago, the Allegheny Mountains represented the American frontier to European settlers eager for a fresh start in a new land. These mountains and their resources provided the lumber and coal to house and fuel a growing nation teeming with immigration and opportunity. However, logging methods used during the late 1800s and early 1900s left the mountains with bare slopes and flammable slash. Wildfires burned across these lands and sometimes into uncut forests. In the early 1900s, the barren hillsides could no longer

stop rainwater from flowing unchecked into creeks and streams, and flooding communities as far away as Pennsylvania. In 1915, the Federal Government began to purchase these cutover lands with the intent of reforesting them to prevent floods. When the Monongahela National Forest was created by Congress in 1920, much of the land was devoid of forest. Since then, time and resource management, such as tree planting and fire protection, have helped the land to recover.

Now the Monongahela encompasses more than 921,000 acres of federal ownership in 10 counties of the Potomac Highlands region of West Virginia. It is the largest expanse of public land in the State, and fourth largest National Forest in the 20 northeastern states. It is located in proximity to major population centers of the region, including Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. Despite being heavily affected by humans over the last two hundred years, the Forest retains a sense of seclusion and solitude. Rugged topography, expansive forest, fast-moving mountain streams, and small communities interspersed with pastoral farmland combine to create a sense of stepping back in time.

Due in large part to its geographic location in the Mid-Atlantic Region and its mountainous terrain, the Monongahela National Forest is one of the most ecologically diverse forests in the National Forest System. As prevailing weather patterns approach from the west, clouds are lifted up across the Forest and over the Allegheny Front of the Appalachian Mountains. As a result, the west side of the Forest receives around 60 inches of precipitation annually, while the east side, in the rain shadow of the mountains, may get less than half that amount. This difference contributes to the broad range of plant and animal communities within the Forest. Containing only about 6 percent of the land in West Virginia, the Monongahela is home to 13 percent of the rare plant and animal species in the State.

Because of its great diversity, the Forest is an important area for scientific research. The Fernow Experimental Forest, located on NFS lands south of Parsons, conducts long-term ecological and silvicultural research. In addition, the Forest has four candidate Research Natural Areas, 17 Botanical Areas, a Geological Area, and 5 Genetic Areas that have been set aside primarily for scientific interest and study.

The Forest contains the northern-most populations of certain southern species, and the southern-most populations of some northern species. The highest elevations in the Mountain State are on the Monongahela, including Spruce Knob, the apex at 4,863 feet. Cold soil temperatures, stands of red spruce, and populations of snowshoe hare—all more typical of northern boreal forests—occur across the Forest at higher elevations. Lower elevations contain coves with rich deep soils typical of the southern Appalachians; stands of mixed northern hardwoods typical of the northern Appalachians; and dry-site stands of oak and white pine. Prickly pear cactus grows on the eastern slopes of the Forest, along with rare species like shale barren rock cress.

Many of the 70+ species of trees found on the Monongahela are valuable for commercial wood products as well as wildlife habitat. Especially valuable are black cherry, sugar maple, and red oak. Most of the Forest is contiguously forested, containing 70-100 year-old stands that provide habitat for interior-dwelling species.

The geology of the Forest provides the setting for 40-50 natural gas wells, which are a regionally important and a valuable natural gas resource. It is expected that future leasing and development will continue to discover and produce natural gas for public use. In addition, there is a natural gas storage field located beneath the Forest that serves an important role in making natural gas available to eastern U.S. population centers in times of high demand.

Headwaters of six major river systems are within the Forest boundary, and water is an important resource for both on-Forest and off-Forest users. The steep slopes of the Monongahela give rise to nearly 600 miles of coldwater streams that become the Tygarts Valley, Potomac, Cheat, Greenbrier, Elk, and Gauley Rivers. More than 90 percent of the high-quality trout waters in West Virginia are said to be within the Forest boundary.

The Forest receives some of the highest acid deposition rates in the country because of its location downwind from coal-fired power plants the Ohio River Valley. This deposition has raised management concerns relating to loss of aquatic species from stream acidification, and to changes in soil chemistry, which could impact the productivity of Forest soils.

The Monongahela contains an estimated 52 percent of the publicly available recreation land in West Virginia and draws users from local areas, across the State, and surrounding States. Recreation opportunities range from hiking on over 800 miles of trails, angling in high-quality trout streams or on small warm-water impoundments, hunting, nature watching, camping in both primitive and developed settings, visiting historical and cultural sites, rock climbing, caving, and driving for pleasure. Mountain biking occurs on Forest roads, many trails, and on former railroad grades. Auto touring attractions include the 43-mile Highland Scenic Highway, and spectacular fall leaf color. The national importance of the recreation resource has been recognized with Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area, eight Wildernesses, three Scenic Areas, a National Scenic Highway, a National Recreation Trail, and two visitor centers.

Economic contributions to the local and national economy from the Monongahela include receipts, fees, and employment opportunities from timber harvest, mineral development, livestock grazing, recreation, and special uses, and the availability of products such as firewood and medicinal plants. One of the other important economic contributions to the local economy is to serve as the backdrop for local businesses, tourism, and guiding services, and as an added attraction for those coming to ski or golf in the area.

Our management philosophy is based on the belief that public land in the Appalachians is scarce and precious. As surrounding population centers expand, the Monongahela National Forest will become increasingly rare and valuable as a place of ecological, historic, cultural, and economic importance in the region. We believe we should manage the Forest for its special features, and in ways desired by today's public and future generations.

Changes, including increased development, are expected to continue on private lands around the Forest, and these changes will likely create more demand for, and impacts on, Forest resources. To meet this challenge, the Forest will protect or restore soil and water resources, use vegetation management to sustain healthy forests and diverse wildlife habitat, contribute to the recovery of

Fire - The Forest cooperates with West Virginia Division of Forestry and local fire departments to protect NFS lands and adjacent land ownerships from wildfire.

The National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) - The Forest coordinates with the NRAO on any application for special use permit located within the NRAO Quiet Zone, and on activities within one mile of the NRAO sites that might produce incidental radio emission.

Search and Rescue – The Forest cooperates with state and local authorities, who bear the primary responsibility for search and rescue. In those cases where state and local officials have not had time to organize and act, the Forest Service may initiate search and rescue operations to reduce suffering and to save lives.

Highland Scenic Highway - The Forest cooperates with the Federal Highway Administration, West Virginia Department of Highways, and other agencies in the improvement, operation, and management of the Highland Scenic Highway, including law enforcement and traffic regulation.

Research – The Forest consults and coordinates with the USDA Northeastern Research Station, universities, and other state and federal agencies to conduct research into Forest management activities and impacts, develop and improve management techniques, and apply the best scientific information and technology to management practices.

DEFINITIONS

The five types of direction used for the Forest resource programs—desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines—are described in detail, below.

Desired Conditions are descriptions of how Forest resources should look and function to provide diverse and sustainable habitats, settings, goods, and services. Taken together, the desired conditions should present an integrated vision of a properly functioning Forest that supports a broad range of biological diversity and social and economic opportunity.

Goals are statements that help describe desired conditions, or how to achieve those conditions. Goals are designed to maintain conditions if they are currently within their desired range, or move conditions toward their desired range if they are currently outside that range. Goals are normally expressed in general terms that are timeless, and there are no specific dates by which they must be achieved. Goal statements form the basis from which objectives are developed.

Objectives are concise time-specific statements of actions or results designed to help achieve goals. Objectives form the basis for project-level actions or proposals to help achieve Forest goals. Like goals, objectives are designed to maintain conditions if they are currently within their desired range, or move conditions toward their desired range if they are currently outside that range. The timeframe for accomplishing objectives, unless otherwise stated, is generally considered to be the planning period, or the next 10 to 15 years. More specific dates are not typically used because accomplishment can be delayed by funding, litigation, environmental changes, and other influences beyond the Forest's control.