



File Code: 1920
Date: May 16, 2016

Dear Interested Party:

I am approving administrative changes to the forest plan monitoring programs associated with the 2003 Revised Forest Plan for the Caribou National Forest ("Caribou Revised Forest Plan"), 2002 Final Land and Resource Management Plan for the Curlew National Grassland ("Curlew Resource Management Plan"), and the 1997 Revised Forest Plan for the Targhee National Forest ("Targhee Revised Forest Plan") in order to comply with the Forest Service's 2012 planning rule.

1. Background

The 2012 planning rule, codified at 36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 219 (36 CFR 219), guides forest plan monitoring across the Forest Service. All forest plan monitoring programs are required to conform with the Forest Service's 2012 planning rule within 4 years of its effective date. The strategy we used to identify the modifications focused on addressing the purpose of the forest plan monitoring program as described in 36 CFR 219.12(a)(1), which includes the need for monitoring information that will enable the responsible official to determine if a change in plan components is necessary.

Each forest plan monitoring program must contain one or more monitoring questions and associated indicators addressing each of the following eight requirements, which are noted at 36 CFR 219.12(a)(5):

1. The status of select watershed conditions.
2. The status of select ecological conditions including key characteristics of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.
3. The status of focal species to assess the ecological conditions required under 36 CFR 219.9.¹
4. The status of a select set of the ecological conditions required under 36 CFR 219.9 to contribute to the recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species, conserve proposed and candidate species, and maintain a viable population of each species of conservation concern.²
5. The status of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives.
6. Measurable changes on the plan area related to climate change and other stressors that may be affecting the plan area.
7. Progress toward meeting the desired conditions and objectives in the plan, including for providing multiple use opportunities.

¹ At this time, focal species have not yet been identified for the Caribou-Targhee National Forest and the Curlew National Grassland. Therefore, the forest plan monitoring programs will not address focal species.

² At this time, species of conservation concern have not yet been identified for the Caribou-Targhee National Forest and the Curlew National Grassland. Therefore, the forest plan monitoring programs will not address species of conservation concern.



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)).

This administrative change is a modification to monitoring elements found in Chapter 5 of the Caribou Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 5 of the Curlew Resource Management Plan, and Chapter 5 of the Targhee Revised Forest Plan. We retained all elements of the original monitoring programs, addressing all eight requirements listed above, and developed monitoring questions for those elements which did not have them. None of the existing monitoring items were deleted. Further, nothing in this decision modifies the monitoring items identified in all plan amendments applicable to the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. This includes, but is not limited to, the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Plan Amendment, the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction, and Forest Plan Amendment for Grizzly Bear Habitat Conservation for the Greater Yellowstone Area National Forests.

The forest plan monitoring information will be evaluated every two years. The monitoring evaluation report must indicate whether or not a change to the plan, management activities, the monitoring program, or a new assessment, may be warranted based on the new information. The monitoring evaluation report must be used to inform adaptive management of the plan area. The expected publication date of the first biennial monitoring evaluation report is expected to be no later than two years from the date of this letter of approval.

2. Public Comment

The 30-day public comment period began on March 31, 2016. A letter describing the proposed monitoring realignment plan was emailed to the Caribou-Targhee National Forest mailing list and posted to the Caribou-Targhee National Forest website as well. Additional information provided on the website included Chapter 30 of Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, which outlines the requirements we must meet for our monitoring program, and the final 2012 planning rule (36 CFR 219).

Seven comments were received in response to the request for public comment. Those comments were evaluated and considered by the interdisciplinary team and myself in this process. Some of the comments received were beyond the scope of this administrative process. Consistent with 36 CFR 219.13, this administrative change is limited to changes to the monitoring programs for the Caribou Revised Forest Plan, Curlew Resource Management Plan, and the Targhee Revised Forest Plan. The modifications to the monitoring programs being approved are subject to the administrative procedures as provided in the Forest Service's 2012 planning rule found at 36 CFR 219.13(c).

3. Approval of Monitoring Realignment

Based on the proposed realignment discussed in my March 31, 2016 letter requesting public comment and the comments that were received, and incorporating changes suggested by planning specialists at the Intermountain Region office in Ogden, Utah, and an interdisciplinary team on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, I approve the administrative changes for the monitoring plan modification. The modified plan monitoring programs included in the forest plans now align with the 2012 planning rule and are found in Chapter 5 of the Caribou Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 5 of the Curlew Resource Management Plan, and Chapter 5 of the Targhee Revised Forest Plan. Information specific to the monitoring realignment process can be found at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=49181>

If you have questions about the administrative change or would like more information, please contact Doug Herzog, Forest Planner, at robertdherzog@fs.fed.us or (208) 557-5763. Thank you for your interest in the management of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Garth Smelser". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

GARTH SMELSER
Forest Supervisor