

Field Directions for Monitoring Fuels Treatments for Effectiveness and Effects on Aquatic and Terrestrial Habitat, Air and Water

Questions for a “Q and A” Section (7-31-08 update)

1. How does fuels treatment monitoring relate to the provisions of HFRA and the National Fire Plan?

This monitoring effort will provide information on the effectiveness of fuels treatments and the effects those treatments have on terrestrial and aquatic habitat, air quality and water quality. The results of this monitoring will be combined with other monitoring efforts to provide a more complete report for HFRA and the NFP.

2. What will this information be used for?

The purpose is to provide monitoring information to fulfill requirements in the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy and Congress’ requirement in the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) to provide a report on treatment status five years after passage of the Act.

3. Is this effort part of any other ongoing monitoring activity?

This effort is taking place to fulfill the requirements of (1) and (2) above. Hopefully the results can be used for other purposes as well.

4. What is the difference between the “multi-party monitoring team” and the “joint fact-finding team” for the purposes of this plan?

There is no real difference between the two teams. They can be the same people but have different roles in the process. The monitoring team will be a multi-party team that does joint fact-finding.

5. Who selects the joint fact-finding team participants? Who convenes the group and arranges logistics for the group (lodging, office support, transportation, etc.)?

The unit manager will invite the participants to be on the team. The unit will schedule the monitoring date with the facilitator and arrange meeting rooms, provide office support and documentation and may provide transportation to the project area. Otherwise team members will be responsible for their own travel and transportation.

6. What knowledge and skills should joint fact-finding team members possess to enable them to accurately assess the effects of fuels treatments? Why are we inviting someone from outside our agency to attend the site visit?

The team members can be composed of a variety of interested public, state specialists, other federal agency specialists and others. The composition is at the discretion of the unit manager, but cannot **only** be composed of that agency’s employees. Examples of team members might be adjacent landowners, local environmental representatives, natural resource specialists the agency being monitored or from other agencies. We have people outside our agency assisting with our monitoring to help give us an objective look at the

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project and results. Fresh eyes may help us see things differently, and give additional perspective.

7. Who selects the monitoring facilitator, and what attributes does the monitoring facilitator need to possess to accomplish his or her duties effectively?

The facilitator is being provided by the national coordination group for this monitoring effort. The facilitator will be a person who is skilled in working with diverse groups and will provide assistance to the unit hosting the monitoring.

8. Who is responsible to select a unit’s fuels treatment projects for monitoring, and what process is used to ensure that projects are genuinely selected at random?

Projects were chosen by an automated random selection process from the National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System by the national coordination group. Only those projects that had at least one treatment consisting of Prescribed Fire or Mechanical/Manual (or both) were considered.

9. How much time should a joint fact-finding team expect the typical monitoring effort to take?

It is anticipated that no more than 1 day would be required to refer to documentation present in the local Unit and no more than 1 day actually visiting the project site.

10. Does each agency participating in multi-party monitoring bear its own costs, or does the benefiting agency pay for the monitoring work?

Each participant / agency will bear their individual costs. It is anticipated that these costs will average out nationally.

11. Does the monitoring facilitator provide the benefiting agency or unit with a copy of the monitoring report?

Yes. A complete copy will be either left with the individual unit or supplied to them within a reasonable time frame.

12. Over the life of a fuels treatment project, how often should it be monitored?

Each project should have a monitoring plan as part of the original project design. Monitoring requirements will vary by project type and agency policy / guidelines.

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13. What will happen if the monitoring visit is scheduled but fire activity prevents the Unit from participating?

The main site (Unit) contact should have a backup who can organize the Team in the event that he/she is unavailable for whatever reason. The backup person could be someone who would have visited the site anyway.

14. When is a site considered “completely treated”?

For this study a site is completely treated when all planned treatments for the acres under consideration have been completed (excluding maintenance).

15. What is the maximum or minimum size of a project for this effort?

Because the projects were randomly drawn, size is not a factor.

16. Will projects that have had livestock grazing or herbicide treatments be considered?

They would be considered only if done in tandem with mechanical / manual or prescribed fire treatments.

17. Can Regional / State Leads participate in the site evaluations?

Yes, but only as observers.

18. Why are we monitoring these resource attributes or fuel objectives when the project wasn't designed to address those issues?

A fuels treatment will have been designed with objectives for the treatment of those fuels. We are interested to know if our design methods are working to reduce or change fire behaviors. We are also concerned that our fuels treatments may have had an unintended effect upon resources such as water and air quality, terrestrial habitat and aquatic habitat. Although we design these treatments to avoid unintended effects, the only way we can be positive that those designs worked is by monitoring.

19. How does this national study define a fuels treatment project besides being a location entered into NFPORS? Does the main objective of the project have to be fuels related or just benefit fuel loading?

We chose these projects to monitor by random selection from fuels projects listed in the NFPORS database. If a project was entered as a fuels treatment, we assumed that was what it was.

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20. Some projects that were randomly selected from sites entered into NFPORS were actually subsections or one treatment phase of larger projects or sites that have multiple treatments planned. Shall we look at the overall project and all of its phases for the evaluation and the information on the forms? Some sites have treatment plans that go on for decades, so how do we define the treatment temporally (such as within a few years of the treatment being reported in NFPORS)?

Treatment units were selected as part of projects. We realize that one 50 acre unit might not show as effective, but if it is part of a project with ten 50 acre units the effectiveness can change. It is appropriate to look outside the unit at the entire treatment area when determining effectiveness. We require that the unit being visited have all treatments for that particular unit completed. Please explain in the remarks column how you reached the answer to the monitoring question.