

Chapter I. INTRODUCTION

National Forests in Mississippi Monitoring and Evaluation Report

Fiscal Years 2000-2003
(October 1, 1999 to September 30, 2003)

National Forest staff in Mississippi annually monitor and evaluate programs and projects to determine how well they meet direction established in the Land and Resource Management Plan for National Forests in Mississippi (Forest Plan). This report documents the results of this monitoring and evaluation accomplished during the last four years.

Monitoring and evaluating Forest Plan implementation is done to inform the decision maker of progress toward achieving the goals, objectives and standards and guidelines. Monitoring more specifically determines: if the management prescriptions are applied as directed; if standards are being followed; if the Forest is achieving the objectives of the Forest Plan; if the issues are being resolved by the management prescriptions; if the effects of implementing the Forest Plan are occurring as predicted; and if management practices on adjacent or intermingled non-forest land are affecting Forest Plan goals and objectives. Monitoring activities can range from day-to-day inspections of contract operations to long-term research projects. Chapter 5 of the Forest Plan lists expected monitoring activities. Evaluation of monitoring results is used to determine if we need to change how we implement projects and if changes in Forest Plan direction are needed.

The current Forest Plan for National Forests in Mississippi was adopted in September 1985. A comprehensive 10-year review of the Plan was published in August 1996. This review identified significant changes to the resource conditions and social context of Mississippi national forests since the Plan was written. It recommended modifications to current Forest Plan direction. Based on the findings of this review, preparations for revision of the Forest Plan began. Following some congressionally imposed delays, Forest Plan revision was initiated in December 1999 with the publication of a Notice of Intent to revise the Forest Plan in the Federal Register (FR 69686, December 19, 1999). However, following the initial public scoping, Forest Plan revision efforts were again delayed due to changes in national planning priorities and reduced funding. Subsequently, a revised Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register (FR 55576, September 26, 2003) in anticipation of plan revision funding becoming available in

fiscal year 2004. Until revision is complete, reports like this one will continue to track implementation of the current Forest Plan, while providing additional input to revision efforts. Reports similar to this one were also published for fiscal years 1998 and 1999.

This report is organized into four chapters. Chapter I is the **INTRODUCTION**. In the second chapter, **MONITORING RESULTS AND FINDINGS**, we report and evaluate monitoring results for each element of our monitoring program. Results are organized under three headings: 1) **Ecosystem Condition, Health, and Sustainability**; 2) **Sustainable Multiple Forest and Range Benefits**; and 3) **Organizational Effectiveness**. The third chapter highlights our **EVALUATION** of what outcomes our work had on the condition of the land and the experience of the forest visitor. Evaluation is the process of synthesizing monitoring data into useful information that helps provide managers with feedback they need to make sound decisions. In the fourth chapter, **ACTION PLAN**, we present an action plan developed using recommendations resulting from evaluation of monitoring results.

In addition, appendices contain valuable background information. **Appendix A** lists those specialists involved in preparing this report. **Appendix B** provides a summary list of all amendments made to the Forest Plan since its adoption in 1985. **Appendix C** updates status of actions listed in the Action Plan from the “1999 Monitoring and Evaluation Report.” **Appendix D** lists the individual reports of monitoring projects that are summarized in this report. **Appendix E** describes status and findings of current research being conducted on national forests in Mississippi, along with identified needs for future research.

A form is attached for readers to use to comment on this report. Citizens have a stake in understanding the effects and effectiveness of national forest management. Only by hearing from you can we know whether we are providing the information and program benefits they desire. Comments can also be delivered by phone to Bob Bradford at (601) 965-4391, or by e-mail at bbradford@fs.fed.us.