

## CHAPTER 3

### **PLAN RESPONSES TO ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND OPPORTUNITIES**

National Forest land and resource management planning is "issue oriented". NFMA regulations, 36 CRF 219.12(f)(4), state:

Alternatives shall provide different ways to address and respond to the major public issues, management concerns, and resource opportunities identified during the planning process.

This chapter will describe how the National Forests in Mississippi Land and Resource Management Plan responds to major public issues, management concerns and resource opportunities (ICO's).

The "issues, concerns and opportunities" phase of the National Forests in Mississippi land and resource management planning process resulted in the identification of seven planning questions incorporating 41 issue facets. (This phase of the planning process is detailed in the process records on file in the Forest Supervisor's Office in Jackson, MS.)

Planning Question #1 - How can the National Forests in Mississippi best develop, operate, and maintain a transportation system that will be compatible with present and future resource management objectives?

1. The plan provides that only roads needed for resource management will be constructed or reconstructed to the standard required to serve the resource activity.
2. Roads not needed will be removed from the system and obliterated. Roads which are needed for future use may be physically closed to all vehicles with mounds of dirt. Permitted access will be controlled with gates on those roads when deemed necessary.
3. Only the roads that are included in the Transportation Analysis will be built. The analysis is based on resource needs which include public access needs for hunting and recreation as well as removal of timber and administration of other resources. In most cases the roads will provide for more than one need.

Planning Question #2 - Are the acreage and location of the National Forest land in Mississippi adequate to efficiently meet resource goals? What should be the priority for land adjustments and right-of-way acquisition?

1. The ownership will be adjusted as needed to support resource management goals. This will usually mean consolidation to make management more cost efficient.

2. Public access is necessary to accomplish administration of the National Forest and use and enjoyment by the general public. In this plan priority is given to right-of-way acquisition for resource management and then to facilitate recreational access by the general public.
3. Land exchange will be considered with a goal of increasing efficiency, increasing the value to the public and to maintaining productivity.

Planning Question #3 - How much and what types of recreational opportunities should be provided on National Forests in Mississippi?

1. Existing facilities will be rehabilitated and periodic evaluations made to determine if expansion of existing facilities is needed or new facilities are required at different locations. Study the feasibility of installing electrical hookups at fee areas.
2. The trail system will be expanded by 20 miles primarily through cooperative efforts. "Trails South," the field guide developed to provide useful information needed to meet the challenges of trail planning, development, and operation will be utilized.
3. Potential Special Interest Areas and Research Natural Areas will be studied as they are identified or dropped from the inventory.
4. The visual quality will be maintained and improved by favoring the highest level of visual quality consistent with multiple use objectives in the Forest plan.
5. The plan provides for coordination with State and City governments to make available near-urban forests for urban users.
6. As provided by the plan, surveys for cultural resources will be made and inventories be kept in conjunction with the State Historic Preservation Officer.
7. Off-Road Vehicles will be permitted except in areas specifically closed to them.
8. Two areas totaling 5500 acres have been designated as wilderness: Leaf 940 acres, Black Creek 4560 acres (4520 acres National Forests; 40 acres private).

Planning Question #4 - How should the range resource be managed on the National Forests in Mississippi?

1. The plan calls for evaluation periodically to determine if there is competition with wildlife for forage or if livestock are damaging young plantations. In either case

adjustments will be made in management practices and/or term grazing permits modified to avoid possible resource conflicts.

2. Necessary range fencing or other improvement costs will be shared with the permittee where possible.

Planning Question #5 - How can the National Forest meet future demands for hardwood lumber, pulp, fuel, and other uses while maintaining the hardwood portion of wildlife habitat necessary to carry desired wildlife game and non-game populations?

1. Artificial hardwood regeneration may be done where there are critical hard mast shortages.
2. The Forest will be managed to allow up to 30% basal area of hardwood in pine stands. Forty percent of the hardwood stands will be managed for a hard mast component. A pine component will be retained in hardwood stands if it is present.
3. There will be conversion both hardwood to pine and pine to hardwood that nearly equals out except on the Bienville District and De Soto Districts where conversion to hardwood will predominate due to the small amount of hardwood forest type on these districts.
4. Unlawful fuelwood cutting will be controlled by increased law enforcement. In some areas salvage cutting and dead and down fuelwood permits will be limited to reduce the loss of snags and den trees.
5. Strive for 2-1/2% each 1000 acres in the late seral stages at all times.
6. This plan calls for a prescribed burn on a 2-4 year cycle in pine stands.
7. Currently, the red-cockaded woodpecker, American alligator, sandhill crane, and indigo snake are the only federally listed threatened and endangered species on the Forests. Chapter 4, Standards and Guidelines, will be used as the guide for management of habitat for these species.

Species listed by the State of Mississippi as threatened and endangered are considered under sensitive species classification.

Planning Question #6 - What silvicultural system or combination of systems will meet multiple use needs while providing an even flow, non-declining yield of timber?

1. This plan calls for the use of the even aged system in all working groups. This provides for high timber production with relatively early entry ages for the final harvest. The requirements of the NFMA regulations for regeneration cutting size, re-establishment of new stands, etc., will be followed.

2. The soil resource inventory is used as a tool for making management decisions for the protection and improvement of soil site productivity. Guidelines are found in the Forest Service Manual, and specific documents such as Management Guidelines for Streamside Areas (Filter Strips), and Erosion Control and Wildlife Planting Guide are all used as guidelines in this Plan.
3. Management of wet coastal plain soils will include bedding and fertilizing some slash pine sites.
4. All use of pesticides will be in accordance with label instructions and approved pesticide safety plans. No pesticides or herbicides shall be used on land or water which would endanger the public, Forest Service personnel involved in the application of such chemicals, or any known population of endangered or threatened species of animals or plants.
5. The standards and guidelines, mitigation measures, and the wide range of practices provides diversity within multiple use management objectives.

Planning Question #7 - What standards and guidelines are needed to coordinate special uses, waste disposal and mineral leases?

Generally, these areas will be handled in a manner that is in the national interest and benefits the public. See the standards and guidelines in Chapter 4 for specific responses to this question.