

Chapter I. Introduction

Purpose

Forest Plan monitoring and evaluation is an ongoing process. The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and numerous other laws require this annual evaluation of monitoring results of whether or not the Forest Plan is in need of change. The report informs the Forest Leadership Team, other federal, state, and local agencies, Indian tribes, and the public of progress in implementation of the 1996 Revised Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas (the *Plan*). This is a tool for tracking the quality of implementation efforts and documents changes in course direction and the rationale behind any necessary course corrections. The focus is on findings and evaluations or recommendations resulting from analysis of the monitoring data. The purposes for developing an annual Forest Monitoring and Evaluation Report include:

- Report on *Plan* implementation.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of actions.
- Provide a tool to improve internal communication and feedback.
- Identify new issues.
- Identify need for *Plan* amendments or revision.
- Provide greater accountability to the public.

Earlier reports can be found at: <http://southernregion.fs.fed.us/texas>

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation is intended to assess progress in implementing the *Plan* and whether projects designed to implement the *Plan* are achieving the Desired Future Condition (DFC) envisioned when the *Plan*

was developed. It is not rigorous scientific research. *Plan* monitoring and evaluation is the tool that allows us to gauge the level of production of goods and services the *Plan* originally anticipated, and ultimately to determine if projects and activities are executed according to project design and associated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents. It also allows us to determine whether mitigation measures are preventing or minimizing undue environmental hazards. Data used in this report comes from the fiscal years (FY) 2002 and 2003 (which means it was compiled for the time period beginning October 1, 2001 through September 30, 2003) and comes from specialists and individuals units. The amount of information submitted is voluminous and cannot always be shown in complete detail within this annual report. The information used is on file at the Forest Supervisor's Office (S.O.) in Lufkin, Texas or the appropriate district offices.

Report Organization

This report is divided into chapters that address major issues and sub-issues, and by topics the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas (NFGT) Leadership Team chose to address each issue. At the beginning of each issue and sub-issue, bulleted statements are added to indicate requirements found in the National Forest Management Act (NFMA).

The report's format is as follows: **Chapter I** explains the monitoring and evaluation process; **Chapter II** provides monitoring findings, evaluations or recommendations; **Chapter III** contains an overview of the evaluation of issues, and **Chapter IV** contains the Action Plan developed to address areas where change may be needed. Appendices to this report provide material to assist the reader's understanding and additional information has been incorporated through references.