

B. Sustainable Multiple Forest & Range Benefits

Sub-Issue 1. Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Guidance from the NFMA under this sub-issue states the forest should:

- Determine if the desired recreation uses, opportunities, and aesthetic values are being achieved (36 CFR 219.27(b)(6), 219.21(a)(2) and (3)).
- Determine if the Forest Plan visual quality objectives are being met (36 CFR 219.27(c)(6), (d)(1)).
- Monitor off-road vehicle use to determine if planned use levels and management requirements are sufficient to protect the land and other resources, promote public safety, and minimize conflicts with other uses on NFS lands (36 CFR 219.21(g)).

Species or Issue: *Fishing Opportunities.*

Findings: Although there are some fishing access problems due to aquatic vegetation, opportunities appear to still be benefiting from earlier aggressive stocking and habitat improvements. There are probably fewer opportunities to catch consumptive size fish in volume, but there are more opportunities to catch very large fish. For the fourth year in a row, the NFGTs yielded a largemouth bass larger than 10 pounds and a 12.4 pound female caught out of Ratcliff Lake was the largest of any reported in the Region or Service-wide. There is still active management of six recreation-area lakes, but others are falling into decline because of encroaching vegetation.

Fertilization of Boykin Springs Lake on the Angelina NF occurred twice in late spring and once per month through September or early October to maintain water quality to support a fishable population. Results were monitored by use of seechi disk to monitor water clarity, which is an indicator of fertility (zooplankton and phytoplankton production) in the water.

In order to increase fishing opportunities, catfish stocking occurred in Boykin Springs and Bouton Lakes during 2002. Employees observed increased fishermen using the lakes and increased catches. Trout stocking for fishing in the winter-spring period in Boykin Springs Lake was also successful.

Grasslands employees reported that Lake Fannin (approximately 40 acres) was fertilized in FY 2002 and Windmill Lake (approximately 12 acres) was fertilized in FY 2003. Both lakes have been fertilized continuously for the past four to five years to improve nutrient levels (that in turn improve habitat for the fry and fingerling fish.)

Evaluation: Most of our lakes are too small to maintain balanced populations under the stresses of concentrated recreation. We have sought to address this by requesting that many of our lakes be designated “Community Fishing Lakes” by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. This classification restricts harvest of catfish and bass. Managing small lakes for quality fishing requires labor-intensive measures.



Figure 11. Fishermen at Scott's Ridge.

Species or Issue: *Visual Quality Objectives (VQO).*

Findings: Management activities on the NFGT are generally meeting the VQOs and Scenery Management objectives set forth in the *Plan* because the forest continues to address the *Plan* standards and guidelines in environmental documentation for projects.

In FY 2003, the Landscape Architect for the NFGT was heavily involved in the President's Healthy Forest Initiative for the Boswell Creek project on the Sam Houston NF where a decision is expected to be signed for the Environmental Assessment (EA) in FY 04.

However, two special projects should be recognized for improving visual quality. They are:

- ◆ **1998 Windstorm Damaged Areas** - In the past, natural causes have created the greatest impacts that changed the visual quality of an area. In the recent past, however, there have been few

natural disaster events. The greatest in recent history was the straight-line windstorm in 1998. The areas affected by this storm included the Sam Houston, Angelina and Sabine NFs. The most heavily affected forest was the Sabine. In most cases, these areas are showing much improvement in the quality of the scenery.

The dramatic change in the visual quality in some of the areas (especially on the Sabine NF) affected by the windstorm continues to improve after five years of growth and good burning seasons. It will take many more years of growth and management to obtain the existing form, line and texture that existed prior to the event.

- ◆ **Cedar on the Grasslands** – The lack of prescribed fire from the 1980's – 1997 on the Grasslands has allowed cedar to encroach into

the landscape. In 2003, approximately 1609 total acres of cedar on the Caddo/LBJ NGs were sheared. Removal of this encroaching vegetation greatly improves the visual quality of the area.

Evaluation: In general, management activities are meeting the VQO and Scenic Objectives within an appropriate length of time. Better communication between employees writing prescriptions (the management activity instructions) and the Forest Landscape Architect should occur to assure that VQOs in environmental documents are written into each prescription. In addition, field employees need to work closely with the Forest Landscape Architect to assure that appropriate project monitoring occurs.

Species or Issue: *Public Private Venture (PPV) Studies & Other Partnerships.*

Findings: A study outlining Alternatives for Reducing Services at Caney Creek was completed in July of 2002. Several alternatives were examined including closing one or more camping loops, offering only primitive camping (no water or sewer) and offering only a boat ramp. The Forest Service continues to examine its various options.

The Forest Service continues its partnership with the Sabine River Authority (SRA) operating five areas on the Sabine NF (Ragtown, East Hamilton, Indian Mounds, Lakeview and Willow Oak.)

In FY 2002, the SRA completed the following projects:

- ❖ Extended and dredged the Willow Oak boat ramp.

- ❖ Extended the East Hamilton boat ramp.
- ❖ Extended and dredged the Ragtown boat ramp.
- ❖ Constructed the Indian Mounds camping area boat ramp.
- ❖ Collected \$14,748 in recreation collections.

The SRA also completed the following projects in FY 2003:

- ❖ Reconstructed the Ragtown jetty, cleaned boat channel to the ramp and covered the jetty with additional rock.
- ❖ Placed “no shooting boundary” around all parks.
- ❖ Placed new signs and plexi-glass at East Hamilton bulletin board.
- ❖ Cut hazard trees in parks.
- ❖ Repairs road at Ragtown and Indian Mounds campgrounds.
- ❖ Completed reconstruction of tent pads at Willow Oak.

The Sam Houston’s partnership with Cradle of Forestry in America Interpretive Association (CFAIA) was continued during FY 2002.

Evaluation: The NFGT is continuing to pursue partnerships when Forest Service goals match those of our partners. Partnership opportunities will also be explored for future purposed multiple-use motorized trails on the Angelina NF.

Species or Issue: *Customer Card Summaries.*

Findings: As the publics' understanding of computers has grown, e-mail became the mode of choice in submitting comment cards for FY 2002. The trend toward using e-mail instead of the traditional post card comment is likely to grow because the public receives a quick

response to questions. Mailed cards, which have no place for a name or address of the submitter, don't offer a way for a response to be made and this hard copy may give the public the impression that comments may not reach the right person. With the electronic comment card available on the NFGT website, the public now has a more direct connection with the National Forest. Every e-mailed comment card receives a response and Rangers and staffers take the comments seriously. The NFGT has been successful in providing a quick turn-around with answers.

By the close of FY 2002 and 2003, the NFGT received 150 and 96 comment cards, respectively, that were either mailed or received electronically. It is expected that number will continue to grow as more people gain Internet access. But for those who do not own computers, the mail-in comment cards continue to be a vital link between the public and the National Forest. No recommendation to eliminate the mail in option is being made at this time.

Evaluation: The NFGT will utilize electronic comment cards to its full potential in providing thoughtful answers to the public in a timely manner. The use of e-mailed comment cards is an easy way for the public to let managers of the NFGT know how they feel about the forest and management's actions.

Species or Issue: *Visits & Operations Costs.*

Findings: In FY 2003, National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) for the NFGT began in October will end September 30, 2004. The Forest Service entered into a Challenge Cost Share agreement with Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) to complete over 200 surveys of recreation users leaving the Forests and

Grasslands. The survey includes questions about the purpose of the visit, time spent on the forest, participation in various activities, socio-demographic questions, and questions about the satisfaction with various attributes and facilities found on the forest. Results of the survey will be compiled in FY 2004 and will provide an estimate of the total number of NFGT recreation visits. Specifically, the project will provide:

- Average length of stay at day use sites;
- Number of annual site visits and NF visits;
- Average group size;
- Visitor satisfaction information; and
- Estimates of the number of recreation visits to the Wilderness.

The project will not provide:

- Estimates of the amount of visitation or visitor descriptions for a specific site; or
- Area or descriptive information for particular subgroups or visitors (campers, dispersed users, OHV riders, etc.).

After the initial survey, the NFGT will be re-surveyed every five years and the data will be stored in the integrated corporate database named INFRA.

Preliminary results of the NFUM survey indicated 602,000 annual National Forest visits to the NFGT and 687,000 site visits; a National Forest visit may be comprised of one or more individual recreation site visits.

Evaluation: The NVUM results will offer good baseline data on NFGT visits. The market study being completed by

SFASU will also add to our knowledge of visitation at specific recreation areas. Efforts will continue to further reduce operation costs and gain efficiencies, while offering opportunities that the NFGT is uniquely well-suited to supply, that are demanded by the public, and that can be supplied within our environmental and financial constraints.

Species or Issue: *Recreation Construction.*

Findings: All proposals for construction at NFGT recreation areas, trails, and trailheads are required to go through a financial investment decision process, regardless of the proposed funding source. The process requires filling out a three-page Financial Investment Project Proposal form; these forms are generally submitted to the Supervisor’s Office each year in August and the projects normally cover a five-year time period. All proposals are reviewed by a team (including representatives from Engineering, Landscape Architecture, Public Affairs, and Recreation.) A few worthy projects are then selected to compete for Regional funding.

Several decommissioning projects were accomplished in FY 2002 on the Angelina NF including removal of a non-functioning well house at Bouton Lake and a non-functioning water tank and well house at the Bayou Boat Ramp.

In FY 2003, wells at both the Townsend Recreation and Harvey Creek Recreation areas on the Angelina NF were properly plugged and decommissioned; both areas are currently under a special use permit to San Augustine County. This action was taken as a move toward decommissioning non-functioning facilities at these sites.

See the topics **Public Private Venture (PPV) Studies & Other Partnerships** earlier in this section and **Fee Demo** later in this section for additional information. Otherwise, no big recreation construction projects were completed during the FY 2002-2003 time period.

Evaluation: Recreation construction has been limited due to funding constraints. Focal points for recreation construction on the NFGT include Scott’s Ridge (on the Sam Houston NF), and deferred maintenance needs. All recreation projects will continue to be planed through a rigorous financial investment decision-making process.

Species or Issue: *Trail Work.*

Findings: The following Texas Recreational Trails grants were received on the NFGT in FY 2002 and 2003:

Table 6. Grant Monies for Trails

<u>Forest/ + Agreement or contract #</u>	<u>Trail</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Project</u>
<u>FY02</u>			
Sam Houston NF 02_CO_11081304_030	Equestrian Trail	\$100,000	Construct
<u>FY03</u>			
Sam Houston NF/ 03_CO_11081303-020	Multiple-Use Trail	\$56,000	Maintain
Davy Crockett NF/ 03_CO_11081303_030	ADA Trail, Ratcliff	36,756	Improve

In addition to the grants received by the Forest Service, the LBJ NGs entered into partnership with the TADRA Horse Trail Group during FY 2002. The TADRA group received a grant for \$48,100. The grant period began December 2001 and ends December 2003. The purpose of the grant was to construct an additional 25 miles on the existing TADRA multiple-use non-motorized trail on the LBJ NGs.

Evaluation: Most trail work on the NFGT is completed through volunteer efforts and partnerships due to limited trail funding. Districts should proceed with caution in adding new trail miles as maintenance funds are limited; plan on using volunteers as well as grant dollars to maintain the trails.

Species or Issue: *Shooting Area.*

Findings: In November 2002, the Acting Forest Supervisor signed a Decision Memo and Forest Supervisor’s Closure Order to Manage the Use of Shooting Areas on the Sam Houston NF. After establishment of Wildlife Management Areas on the Sam Houston NF, use of areas originally designated for hunters to “sight in” their rifles grew until the Forest Service received complaints from people living nearby. During recent years, large amounts of garbage and many other items were brought to these sites and used for targets, then left behind until the areas began to look like dumps. Ammunition cases from shotguns, rifles, and pistols were left on the ground in large quantities. This was unsightly and in several instances caused people using the shooting areas to have flat tires.



Figure 12. Shooting area before restrictions.



Figure 13. Area during clean-up efforts.



Figure 14. Area after clean-up efforts.

The closure order eliminates the year-round use of the designated shooting areas on the Sam Houston NF and (1) seasonally closes the existing shooting areas from January 10-September 30 each year; (2) requires all ammunition cases be removed from the area following target practice; (3) sets legal shooting hours to be between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.; and (4) limits targets to paper and clay products.

Evaluation: The restrictions included in the decision have improved the Sam Houston NF’s ability to manage the shooting areas and address many of the public’s concerns about their continued use.

Species or Issue: *Fee Demonstration Program (Fee Demo).*

Findings: The following table shows funds collected by districts during FY 2002 and 2003.

Table 7. Fee Demo Funds

Forest or Grassland	FY 02	FY 03
Angelina	\$62,081	\$61,799
Caddo/LBJ	\$19,738	\$22,884
Davy Crockett	\$60,631	\$54,296
Sabine	\$28,597	\$24,086
Sam Houston	\$155,595	\$123,645
Total	\$326,642	\$286,711

The Fee Demo program allows 95 percent of all recreation fees collected to stay in Texas to fund and improve areas where the fees were collected. In 1999 when the program was started, the Fee Demo report indicated \$65,506 was collected by the NFGT. Since then, as shown in table above, these receipts have been steadily increasing.

A complete listing of projects completed with FY 2002 and 2003 Fee Demo funds is on file in the Supervisor’s office. Below are just a few examples:

Sam Houston NF:

- Serviced port-a-potties
- Mowed recreation areas
- Collected trash
- Removed hazard trees

Sabine NF:

- Repaired ½ mile of walkways at Red Hill Lake
- Installed gravel at host site at Red Hill Lake
- Fixed beach and added sand at Red Hill Lake
- Repaired waterlines at Boles Field

Angelina NF:

- Improved fee station information/ bulletin board information
- Improved security at fee stations
- Improved visual quality at host site
- Improved visual quality and safety by felling hazard trees

Davy Crockett NF:

- Re-roofed 2 bathrooms & replaced shingles on 2 shelters.
- Repaired concession stand wiring.

- Repaired/replaced one lift station electrical panel box and leveling indicators.
- Repaired several water leaks.

Caddo/LBJ

- Graveled and graded access to Black Creek Lake
- Installed accessible sidewalk to restroom at Black Creek
- Installed entrances to Bois D'Arc day use and overnight trailhead
- Installed pipe fence at TADRA

A few of the Fee Demo Projects accomplished in FY 2003 included:

Sam Houston NF:

- Fee station at Cagle
- Bulkheads at Cagle & Scott's Ridge
- Picnic tables at Cagle & Scott's Ridge
- Fire Rings at Cagle & Scott's Ridge

Sabine NF:

- Repair sinks at Red Hill Lake
- Mowing and hazard tree removal at Red Hill Lake and Boles Field
- Sewer Plant electrical repairs at Red Hill Lake
- Dam Maintenance at Red Hill Lake

Angelina NF:

- Finish Host site at Boykin Springs
- Repair CCC shelter at Boykin Springs and replace logs in walls and log rails
- Trash Collection
- Construct and install fire dogs and rain cap for fireplace in CCC shelter at Boykin Springs

Davy Crockett NF:

- Repair/replace roofs on 2 bathrooms
- Resurface boat ramp road
- Purchase and install a safe in the fee hut
- Mileage for 2 volunteers

Caddo/LBJ NGs

- Plan replacement for existing sidewalks with concrete pathways at Black Creek
- Plan financing a portion of group use pavilion at TADRA
- Plan expansion of water system at Bois D'Arc Trailhead
- Plan replacement of some picnic tables at all recreation areas

In FY 2002, the following areas were added to the Fee Demo program:

- ❖ Black Creek Lake Recreation Area on the LBJ National Grasslands added a \$2.00 day use fee.
- ❖ Cagle Recreation Area on the Sam Houston opened a camping area with a \$20.00 per night camping fee.

In FY 2003, the 54-mile Piney Woods Horse Trail on the Davy Crockett changed the use fee to \$10.00 (per day/night) to cover camping at either of the two trailheads and/or use of the trail. An annual pass is now available for \$50/vehicle.

Evaluation: The Fee Demonstration program in Texas has been non-controversial since every area placed under the program had already charged a fee, with the exception of OHV trails. Fee Demo has been successful in getting projects completed on the ground that are requested by the public. Without these funds, it would be difficult to keep all recreation areas maintained to standards.

Species or Issue: *Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Use & Stamp Trend.*

Findings: There are five WMAs on the NFGT. They are:

**Alabama Creek–Davy Crockett NF
Banister WMA–Angelina NF**



Figure 15. Banister WMA entry sign.

**Caddo NG WMA
Moore Plantation–Sabine NF
Sam Houston NF WMA**

Each WMA offers a variety of habitats. According to where they are located, hunting opportunities also vary to include species such as:

- ✓ White tailed deer;
- ✓ Feral hogs;
- ✓ Squirrel;
- ✓ Eastern wild turkey;
- ✓ Waterfowl;
- ✓ Quail;
- ✓ Dove;
- ✓ Woodcock;
- ✓ Predators; and
- ✓ Furbearers.

Several units provided updated information about WMAs on their units:

Caddo NG WMA – Deer hunting is still the most popular hunting that occurs on the district, followed by waterfowl hunting on Coffee Mill and Crockett Lakes. Eastern wild turkey has been stocked in Fannin County and the number of permits issued has increased incrementally each

year. Work that continues is construction of additional hunter camps and their maintenance. Three to four thousand acres have been prepared each year for prescribed burning, but has not taken place for various reasons. On hundred fifty doe permits were issued these last two years with an additional 25 youth permits. Other wildlife that are in demand for hunting are turkey, feral hogs, rabbits, squirrels and waterfowl. Ten bulletin boards are maintained each year. The district monitors 87 woodduck boxes that have been installed on the shores of Coffee Mill and Crockett Lakes. These boxes are monitored to determine use and hatching success. Fences have been constructed in units where the fences had been inoperative for years. This was accomplished to bring these units back into a management regime.

Moore Plantation, WMA, Sabine NF – In 2003, there was a dramatic increase in the prescribed fire program with more acres burned than in previous years. This prescribed fire program serves several purposes. It improves wildlife habitat within the WMA for game species, promote habitat improvement for RCW and new growth of fire-dependent sensitive species. During this period there was also an initiation of gobbler call counts. A comparison of burned versus unburned areas when analyzing the gobbler call counts will allow biologists to compare productivity.

Sam Houston NF WMA - The whole national forest is within the WMA. During 2002, antlerless deer permit issuance was increased to 1,000 permits (that included 100 permits that were designated as youth only permits.) Hunters reported an antlerless harvest of 196 (20 percent permit utilization rate). The number of permits issued in 2003 increased 1,400 in an effort to maximize

hunter opportunity and increase antlerless harvest. Buck harvest is limited to one buck per hunter per season, but there are no limits on the number of hunters that may hunt on the area. In 2002, data indicated the buck harvest increased to 3.2 bucks per 1,000 acres on this WMA. The average buck harvest rate on private lands nearby was 4.5 bucks per 1,000 acres. An estimated total of 714 deer were taken during the 2002-2003 seasons. The continuing management strategy is to provide maximum hunting opportunity while protecting the resource. Waterfowl and squirrel hunting are also favored. Turkey sightings by deer hunters continue to decline. Spring gobbler harvest has been less than 8 birds per year since the season was opened. Controlled burns will continue to be the main focus of habitat management efforts on the WMA. Prescribed fire is the most beneficial and cost-effective technique available that will also benefit the broadest number of species. The recent decision in Federal

Court to remove the injunction restricting prescribed burning should allow for more acres to be burned in the future.

Food plots on the WMA are highly visible to the public and will continue to be maintained and a planting schedule calls for using selected species based on season, location and soil types. Some experimental mechanical control of vegetation with a hydromulcher that grinds vegetation to the ground level will be used in selected RCW colonies.

Historic blackland prairie sites have also been identified and evaluated for restoration. Future plans are for encroaching woody species to be cut, allowed to cure, and then the entire prairie site will be summer burned to restore prairie vegetation integrity and promote stand vigor.

All 2002-2003 hunting season figures have been added to the following table.

Table 8. Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Trends

WMA	Year	# Hunters	# Trips	# Days	% of Highest Year*
Caddo Grassland	96/97	1,601	8,185	10,659	100
	97/98	1,346	8,698	5,907	55
	98/99	1,538	8,262	9,595	90
	99/00	854	7,118	7,925	74
	00/01	978	9,555	11,783	100
	01/02	1,794	10,833	13,174	100
Moore Plantation (Sabine NF)	96/97	888	5,756	7,655	89
	97/98	607	3,998	5,907	69
	98/99	1,098	6,360	8,557	100
	99/00	638	4,969	7,521	88
	00/01	639	6,136	8,632	100
	01/02	1,072	7,423	10,748	100
Bannister (Angelina NF)	96/97	682	3,348	4,762	86
	97/98	600	2,665	4,749	86
	98/99	879	4,337	5,538	100
	99/00	502	5,236	6,518	118
	00/01	493	5,258	7,253	100
	01/02	893	5,424	7,591	100
Alabama Creek (Davy Crockett NF)	96/97	744	2,728	4,564	100
	97/98	482	1,774	3,765	82
	98/99	651	2,757	4,137	91
	99/00	337	2,149	3,840	84
	00/01	383	3,168	4,607	100
	01/02	637	3,268	5,744	100
Sam Houston NF	96/97	2,702	17,748	21,157	69
	97/98	2,487	21,999	27,368	90
	98/99	3,262	25,674	30,548	100
	99/00	1,860	23,290	27,620	90
	00/01	2,132	35,136	40,290	100
	01/02	3,745	28,837	35,478	88

*Highest year established by pinpointing number of days in individual areas showing 100 percent use. Note: Data obtained from TPWD *Public Hunting Lands Map Booklet, 2001-2002*. At the time this report was prepared, data for 2002-2003 was not available.

Evaluation: Use increased in almost all areas over previous years. The WMAs remain very popular with hunters.

Species or Issue: *Designated Campsites/Hunter Camps*

Findings: Individual units reported the following information.

Angelina NF: In FY 2002, there were 20 designated campsites on this forest. Two

were for Bannister WMA (including Townsend Park) and 18 were located outside the WMA. In 2003, there were 23 designated campsites. Three of these were within the Bannister WMA and 20 outside.

Sabine NF: Thirteen unimproved hunter camps were maintained by mowing. Six of these are now in recreational areas and three are being maintained in the Moore

Plantation WMA. Camps within the Moore Plantation are slightly larger than other areas and have amenities such as dumpsters and port-a-johns.

Davy Crockett NF: Twenty-five hunter camps were monitored and maintained during this reporting period.

Sam Houston NF: Ten hunter camps have been established in various areas of the forest and one site can now be found in a recreational area.

Evaluation: Prior to implementation of designated hunter campsites, camping was dispersed across the forests. Thus, trash and campfires were left scattered in unknown locations and notification of campers during high fire danger, family emergencies, and for law enforcement contacts were difficult. The development of designated campsites or hunter camps has helped protect the public during gun deer season and protects the forests during periods of hazardous fire conditions. All forest WMAs have designated camping sites.

Sub-Issue 2. Infrastructure

One NFMA requirement is assigned to this sub-issue.

- Ensure that any roads constructed are designed according to standards appropriate to the planned uses [36 CFR 219.27(a)(1), (b)(7)].

Transportation System

Species or Issue: *Transportation System.*

Findings: The following contains data reported for FY 2002:

- ✓ 13.99 miles of road reconstruction occurred to meet travel and road management objectives.
- ✓ 12.5 miles of roads were either obliterated or decommissioned.
- ✓ Road maintenance contracts amounting to approximately \$80,750 each were signed on all four forests.
- ✓ There were no contracts for the Caddo/LBJ NGs.
- ✓ The second phase of reconstruction of Forest Highway (FH) 87 on the Sabine NF started in FY 2002.

Also during FY 2002, the Grasslands unit reported that it evaluated its all-weather accessibility. The objective of the review was to determine how to improve access and how to avoid resource damage on county access roads. In the findings, it was reported that gravel was supplied through a co-op agreement with Fannin County to improve surfacing on 1.5 miles of county roads accessing the unit. The county could not afford gravel and access to the Grasslands was prevented during wet weather. Gravel was purchased by the Forest Service, and spread or put down by Fannin County employees. This work performed now enables all-weather access to portions of the Grasslands.

Data reported for FY 2003 included:

- ✓ 13.31 miles of reconstruction was accomplished.
- ✓ 18.58 miles of roads were decommissioned.
- ✓ 1 mile of new road was constructed on Forest Development Road (FDR) 353.
- ✓ Maintenance contracts amounting to approximately \$83,500 each were authorized on all four forests.

- ✓ The Caddo/LBJ NGS had one contract for approximately \$48,000.
- ✓ The area of reconstruction of Forest Highway (FH) 87 on the Sabine NF was opened to traffic in FY 2003.
- ✓ Work began on the road loops and parking pads at Cagle Recreation Area. This project is scheduled for completion in FY 2004.

In order to meet NFMA and *Plan* requirements, in most cases all disturbed road areas involved in a contract or permit are revegetated within one year of termination of the contract or permit. The sales administrator or the engineering technician in the field verifies the actual placement of seed and fertilizer. Personnel working in these areas monitor these road areas on a continued basis. Any erosion problems discovered by field personnel is reported to district offices.

Evaluation: The NFGT continues to obliterate or decommissioned roads that are unneeded for public use or for the administration of public lands. The NFGT will also continue to conduct road and transportation analysis on all units. Also see information provided in the next topic, **Road Management Policy**.

Road Management Policy

Species or Issue: *Road Management Policy*.

Findings: As described in an earlier M&E Report, the newest Road Management Policy requires responsible officials to conduct a science-based road analysis to help make better decisions on all new construction, reconstruction and decommissioning activities. However,

maintenance of roads is exempt from this type of analysis.

The NFGT requested additional time to complete its forest-scale roads analyses. In FY 2002, analysis was started for the Sabine and Davy Crockett NFs and as of May 2003 and July 2003 respectively, these analyses were completed. Work is continuing on the Angelina and Sam Houston NFs, and Caddo-LBJ NGS Roads Analysis Reports (RAPS). These should all be completed in FY 2004.

Also, see the information under **Issue C. Organizational Effectiveness, Sub-Issue 2. Evaluating New Information** where information about the **Roadless Rule** is provided.

Evaluation: Each national forest analysis contains Forest-Scale Recommendations and Opportunities as well as Project-Scale Recommendations and Opportunities that should be considered during planning for site-specific projects.

Dams

Species or Issue: *Dams*.

Findings: Sincere dams on the NFGT are on an every other year schedule, no dams inspected in FY 2002. During 2003, all dams on the NFGT were inspected. Due to their age, all NFGT dams have some deferred maintenance needs.

Also in FY 2003, an agreement was signed with the NRCS for the replacement of the spillway for the Davy Crockett Dam located on the Caddo/LBJ NFs. The estimated total costs for replacement is \$300,00. The Forest Service will provide 25 percent of estimated costs or about \$75,000. Work is expected to be completed in FY 2004.

Evaluation: Deferred maintenance needs should be addressed on an “as needed” basis and as funding becomes available.

Roads, Bridges & Major Culverts

Species or Issue: *Roads, Bridges and Major Culverts.*

Findings: In FY 2002, design plans for replacement of bridge 527 was started and continued into FY 2003. Completion of this project will possibly be in FY 2004 (contingent upon available funding).

Five bridges and nine major culverts were inspected to determine their maintenance needs in FY 2002. Some restoration work began in FY 2002 for bridge 215 on the Sam Houston NF. This work was completed in FY 2003 through a co-op agreement. A survey to determine if actual replacement of bridge 215 is necessary was conducted in FY 2003. Once again, having available funding plays a role in whether this project can be completed.

Personnel from the Texas Department of Transportation (TCDOT) Lufkin District Office also inspected 23 Forest Service bridges to determine if they meet National Bridge Inspection Standards (NBIS) during FY 2003.

Also in FY 2003, two old bridges on the Sabine NF were removed (decommissioned).

Evaluation: Bridge and major culvert maintenance and replacement work is an ongoing process. All bridges and major culverts have deferred maintenance needs. Deficiencies are addressed on an “as needed basis” and as our funding allows. Any bridge or culvert that presents a

safety issue is closed until its maintenance needs are resolved.

Water & Wastewater Systems

Species or Issue: *Water and Wastewater Systems.*

Findings: In FY 2002, no water system inspections were performed and two water systems were inspected and/or evaluated for possible maintenance needs in FY 2003.

One wastewater system inspection occurred in FY 2002 and six wastewater systems were inspected and evaluated during FY 2003. A gravity sewer line for the new Davy Crockett Ranger District Office was also completed.

Evaluation: Most of our water and waste water systems have deferred maintenance needs. These needs are addressed as funding allows and when an actual need arises. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) monitors our water and waste water systems and these systems must meet their standards.

Structures (FA&O and Recreation)

Species or Issue: *Structures (FA&O and Recreation).*

Findings: Construction of the Davy Crockett NF new administrative office began in FY 2002 through a unique cooperative program between the NFGT and the Department of Navy’s Third Naval Construction Brigade, similar to that used in construction of the Angelina’s District Office. The Navy provided skilled labor to construct the facility and it was completed in September 2002. The district now has a 6,000 plus square feet office in a forest setting. As mentioned

earlier, the gravity sewer line was completed in FY 2003. Other contracts such items such as paving, road asphalt and furniture will be completed in early FY 2004. Then the office will be ready to be occupied.



Figure 16. Ceremony for Navy Seabees after main construction was completed on the Davy Crockett District Office.

As authorized by public law, the following properties were sold in FY 2002 and FY 2003.

- FY 2002 Hogg
- FY 2002 Arney
- FY 2002 Rasbeary
- FY 2002 Trammel
- FY 2002 Fussell
- FY 2002 Brashear
- FY 2002 Gulf Coast Trade Center (GCTC)
- FY 2003 Old Zavalla Work Center

Property to be sold in the future includes:

- 1) Old Yellow Pine Work Center
- 2) Yellow Pine Work Center
(Note: No appraisal has been done. Employees are still using the facility.)

In addition, deferred maintenance inspections and evaluations were accomplished on a total of 48 buildings in FY 2002 and 18 buildings in FY 2003. The roof on the concession building at Ratcliff Lake Recreation Area facility was also replaced.

A building to house Project Analysis Team (PAT) members stationed on the Sam Houston NF was planned, designed and completed in FY 2003.

In FY 2002, a demolition project occurred on the Angelina NF involving a heritage area known as the Old Aldridge Mill site. Forest Service experts performed the demolition because the area was a safety concern. The project succeeded in lowering the height of existing walls to prevent possible collapse that could potentially result in injuries to visitors.

Evaluation: Most structures are in need of deferred maintenance; this is an ongoing operation of repairing, maintaining, and on occasion demolition of structures. The work needed is done as funding becomes available. Any structure that presents a safety issue is closed to the public until the safety issue is resolved or the structure is replaced or demolished.

Species or Issue: *Land Acquisition.*

Findings: No lands were acquired in 2002 or 2003. The NFGT is currently developing its lands program because the unit has been without a Lands Specialist for some time. Work towards generating support from third parties and other organizations to meet *Plan* goals and objectives of acquiring important ecosystems and resources that will enhance National Forest System lands is moving forward.

Evaluation: More emphasis in the form of support and funding will be required to make land acquisition a success.

Species or Issue: *Rights-of-ways Acquisitions for Better Public Access.*

Findings: Since a road analysis is being prepared prior to most proposed projects, a review of potential access problems is occurring. The analysis, once completed, can provide recommendations for improvement for Forest Service management and for the public access issues.

Evaluation: The NFGT should continue its *Plan* implementation, monitoring and road analyses to identify areas where rights-of-ways acquisitions may be needed.

Species or Issue: *Landownership Adjustments.*

Findings: During 2002-2003, the NFGT conveyed and disposed of six residential houses, one Angelina Work Center Administrative Site, and the New Waverly Gulf Coast Trade Center. This resulted in a net boundary reduction and the need for deferred maintenance dollars to be spent annually for maintenance needs for these facilities.

Also, efforts were made to identify tracts that would aid in consolidation of Forest Service land through use of the Geographic Information System (GIS).

Evaluation: The NFGT should continue to pursue land exchanges that aid in consolidation and dispose of isolated tracts.

Species or Issue: *Landline Boundaries.*

Findings: National Forest lands are identified by red boundary line paint, which is marked and maintained. High

use recreation areas are properly signed. Forest Development Roads (FDRs) are also signed and identified with road numbers. Boundary lines in some areas may not be marked as well as others. Several districts have tried to cluster their landline maintenance program into workable and consolidated areas. This has led to boundary lines that were originally maintained on a 10-year rotation to be postponed to a 15-year cycle. It is inevitable that some lines will not be clearly marked or defined.

The entire unit currently has about 3,188 miles of landline boundaries that need to be maintained to standards. In 2003, a painting contract was issued and completed for 266 miles of landline boundaries. However, the contract did not include the maintenance of witness bearing trees (because of contractual constraints.) Witness trees were to be maintained at the same time by Forest Service employees on the districts; but this was not accomplished. If work on these witness trees had been completed along with the boundary line maintenance, this would have computed to an eight (8) percent accomplishment of the landline miles. This falls short of the ten (10) percent maintenance level recommended in the *Plan*.

All lands-related functions are funded from budget fund code NFLM dollars. This code includes monies for land acquisition, landline maintenance, land exchanges, and special uses. Special Use Application processing is typically the higher priority on each district. Better tracking of how and where dollars are spent is needed to ensure target accomplishments.

Evaluation: Consider increasing funding allocations for landline maintenance. If landline maintenance is contracted in the

future, contract costs need to be increased to include corner and witness tree maintenance. Landline funding should be separated out of the general NFLM dollars to better tract the landline targets and to ensure the work is completed on the ground.

Species or Issue: *Right-of-way Acquisition to Facilitate NFS Management.*

Findings: Two permanent perpetual easements were obtained during FY 2002-2003. One provides access across International Paper lands for Forest Service Road 121c in Sabine County. The second acquisition (98 acres) is a perpetual easement established through cooperation with TXDOT in re-routing FM 201. Federal Highway funds were expended for this project.

Evaluation: As projects are developed, the NFGT needs to address whether new rights-of-ways are needed.

Accessibility Changes

Species or Issue: *Accessibility Changes.*

Findings: In 2002, the following projects were accomplished:

- Davy Crockett NF finished another section of the trail and started the boardwalk within Ratcliff Lake Recreation Area. A volunteer trail group helps with the project and a major portion of the funding for this project is from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Grant (TEA 21 funds).
- Angelina NF upgraded the signage within Boykin Springs Rec. Area.

The contrast in color improved the visibility of the signs.

- The LBJ NGs improved the walkway to a recently modified vault toilet at Black Creek lake Recreation Area. A 25-year old section of paved path to the restrooms at Black Creek Lake Recreation Area was replaced using Fee Demo funds to improve access to these facilities. Approximately 100 feet of paved path was replaced by concrete path. Labor was provided by a Wise County Sheriff's Department Inmate Crew.
- The LBJ NGS also installed two single vault and one double vault toilet at horse use trailheads.

In 2003, the following occurred:

- Davy Crockett District Office was completed. Move-in will take place when access and other features for the building are completed in early 2004.
- Davy Crockett NF finished the trail project in Ratcliff Lake Recreation Area.
- Sabine NF signage was improved at Indian Mounds, Haley's Ferry and East Hamilton Recreation Areas by the Sabine River Authority (special use managers at several Sabine NF recreation areas).
- The Sam Houston NF officially opened the Cagle Recreation Area. The campground was constructed over many years and to then existing accessible standards. Five

spurs are now being updated to current accessible standards.

- Supervisor’s Office employees stationed at the Sam Houston NF were provided with a remote office structure.
- Supervisor’s Office employees completed the Forest Program Transition Plan for Recreation and a 508 Complaint Website for Texas. Elements brought into compliance were text images, colors, and special effects.

Evaluation: The NFGT is continuing its efforts to meet accessibility guidelines.

Sub-Issue 3. Human Influences

There are no NFMA requirements under this sub-issue.

Population/Demographics of NFGT Counties

The State of Texas is still the second most populous state in the nation. Its geographic position provides convenient access to expanding markets in Mexico and Latin America. Texas surpassed California during the first three quarters of 2002 to become the leading exporting state in the nation.

As stated in earlier reports, three of the 10 largest U.S. cities are in Texas: Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio. Both the Sam Houston NF (near Houston) and the Caddo/LBJ NGs (near the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex) are directly affected by these very large cities.

The U.S. Census Bureau identified the 100 fastest growing U.S. counties between April 1, 2000 and July 1, 2003 - based on housing unit estimates. Once again, Montgomery County (containing the Sam Houston NF) was in this top 100 because of its 13.2 percent increase.

Annual estimates of population for the 15 counties that have national forest land are as follows:

Table 9. Population Estimates

Unit	County	Population Estimate
Angelina NF	Angelina	80,935
	Jasper*	35,509
	Nacogdoches	59,584
	San Augustine*	8,913
Davy Crockett NF	Houston	23,109
	Trinity	14,151
Sabine NF	Jasper*	35,509
	Newton	14,869
	Sabine	10,379
	San Augustine*	8,913
	Shelby	25,882
Sam Houston NF	Montgomery	344,700
	San Jacinto	23,917
	Walker	62,038
Caddo/LBJ NGs	Fannin	32,276
	Montague	19,416
	Wise	54,465

Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau
 *County where more than one national forest unit is found.

Evaluation: Texas is one of the fastest growing states in the nation and marked population growth continues for all NFGT counties. This growth creates challenges for managers dealing with smoke management concerns near residential areas, increasing demands for access and recreation uses, and the difficulty in wildfire suppression efforts.

Also see the topics **Population/Urbanization Issues Affecting National Forest Land Management and Fire Management Implications.**

Population/Urbanization Issues Affecting National Forest Land Management

Species or Issue: *Off-road Vehicle Use.*

Findings: See the discussion for this topic under **Sub-Issue 3. Watershed Conditions** earlier in this report and in the **Visitor and Resource Protection** section under this sub-issue.

Species or Issue: *Urban Interface.*

Findings: The urban wildland interface (UWI) community exists where humans and their development meet or intermix with wildland fuel. There are three categories of communities that meet this description. Generally, the Federal agencies will focus on communities that are described under Categories 1 and 2. For purposes of applying these categories and the subsequent criteria for evaluating risk to individual communities, a structure is understood to be either a residence or a business facility, including Federal, State, and local government facilities. Structures do not include small improvements such as fences and wildlife watering devices. The categories are numbered as follows: Category 1. Interface Community; Category 2. Intermixed Community; and Category 3. Occluded Community. For more information about the categories and the additional criteria that is used for evaluating risks to communities, see the Federal Register Notice at pages 752-753 at <http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getpage.cgi>.

Evaluation: All NFGT lands are being evaluated to see if they meet the criteria for the UWI classification. Risks to nearby communities are evaluated as management actions are planned for nearby NFGT lands.

Species or Issue: *Visitor and Resource Protection.*

Findings: Law Enforcement Officers spent many hours dealing with various issues affecting the forests and its visitors. The NFGT continues to be affected by intermingled ownership patterns and problems from increasing populations in nearby urban areas. As an example, according to the National Visitor Monitoring Study (the results of which should be published soon), the NFGT receives an estimated 602,000 visitors per year. The following are some highlights of issues handled during this reporting period:

- ◆ Methamphetamine lab dump-sites increased on the NFGT. Many of the dump-sites discovered had hypodermic needles testing positive for methamphetamines. Coffee filters containing residue from chemicals that had been mixed to make methamphetamines were also found at these sites. Many times, dumpsites were found in or near stream sites affecting more than just the immediate areas.
- ◆ Arrests were made on a regular basis for marijuana, cocaine, and methamphetamine use.
- ◆ OHV violations continued to affect the Angelina, Sabine and Davy Crockett NFs (with the majority of the problems occurring on the Angelina NF). OHV riders continued to create new trails with most of them going through endangered species areas (including RCW colonies and eagle nesting sites) as well as into sensitive areas such as bog sites, stream zones, lakeshores,

and other areas closed to off-road vehicles. This creates erosion problems in sensitive sites.

- ◆ The Angelina and Sabine NFs began using “designated campsites” during hunting seasons. Although the majority of hunters used these “designated campsites”, many campsites were also found in areas closed to camping.
- ◆ There were several incidents where trees were illegally cut from national forest land adjacent to subdivisions. Landowners cleared brush and small trees in what they called their "backyard" in order to have a better view of the lake. Other incidents involved clearing trees and brush to create wildlife openings for whitetail deer hunting in "backyards."
- ◆ Another incident involved a gravel road that was built on national forest land from private property to Sam Rayburn Lake in order to launch a boat.

Evaluation: Law Enforcement Officers are dedicated and persistent in their efforts to protect people and resources. However, additional personnel are still needed in order to deal with situations in a timely manner. Continually declining budgets have prohibited additional hiring.

Fire Management Implications

Species or Issue: *Prescribed Fire.*

Findings: In 2002, weather conditions were generally favorable for safe and effective prescribed burning. In 2003,

weather conditions were wetter than usual going into the burning season. This served to hamper burning efforts in January. The remainder of the burning season was lost due to NFGT commitments to the Space Shuttle Columbia Recovery efforts.

Urban interface growth is also increasing the cost per unit of the NFGT's prescribed burning program.

Evaluation: Also see **Prescribed Fire** under **Sub-Issue 1. Biodiversity** earlier in this report and the Evaluation after **Wildland Fire Suppression.**

Species or Issue: *Wildland Fire Suppression.*

Findings: In 2002 and 2003, there was moderate fire activity. There were 41 fires in calendar year 2002 and 22 fires in 2003. This is well below the average for the previous 5 years, which were 63 fires per year.

Evaluation: The use of prescribed fire and wildfire suppression has become increasingly difficult over the past several years as staffing and budgets have declined, and urbanization has increased. Ensuring that effective and efficient cooperation occurs between the NFGT, the TFS, and the numerous rural volunteer fire departments and other federal agencies in the east and north-central Texas area is paramount to protecting the resources and people of the NFGT and its neighbors.

Sub-Issue 4. Roadless Areas/Wilderness/Wild and Scenic Rivers

The NFMA element to be addressed under sub-issue is:

- Ensure that visitor use in wilderness areas is within the estimated maximum level which allows natural processes to operate freely and not impair the values for which wilderness areas were established (36 CFR 219.18(a)).

Species or Issue: *Roadless Areas.*

Findings: The Sam Houston NF has four areas that are officially labeled as “roadless areas.” They are:

1. Big Creek Scenic Area;
2. Winters Bayou Scenic Area;
3. A 200-acre tract adjacent to Little Lake Creek Wilderness; and
4. The Big Woods Area in Compartment-80.

Although they are labeled “roadless areas” there are roads in most of these areas. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule prohibits new road construction and reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas on NFS lands (with some important

exceptions.) The rule also prohibits cutting, sale, and removal of timber (also with some important exceptions.)

These areas that are in the Sam Houston NF are very small and were designated after the *Plan* was finalized. The areas were inventoried during the planning process as potential roadless areas.

Also see the information contained under **Issue C. Organizational Effectiveness, Sub-Issue 2. Evaluating New Information** where more information about the Roadless Rule is provided.

Evaluation: The NFGT will continue to adhere to the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

Species or Issue: *Wilderness.*

Findings: The NFGT is responsible for the management of five wilderness areas and the land within these areas are administered to maintain or achieve a natural state.

Table 10. Wilderness Areas

Administrative Unit	Wilderness Area	Acreage
Angelina NF	Turkey Hill	5,286
	Upland Island	13,390
Davy Crockett NF	Big Slough	3,639
Sabine NF	Indian Mounds	11,037
Sam Houston NF	Little Lake Creek	3,810
Total Acreage		37,162



Figure 17. Entrance sign at Big Slough Wilderness.

In FY 2002, an effort was made to distribute information on the Leave No Trace program for backcountry camping ethics. Over 1,000 contacts were made at the Texas Wildlife Expo held in Austin, Texas.

In FY 2003, the Forest Service entered into a Challenge Cost Share agreement with Arthur Temple College of Forestry at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) to complete a Fire Management Plan for the Upland Island Wilderness Area on the Angelina NF. This plan will build upon the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) plan already developed for the area.

Evaluation: Past studies of wilderness use indicate low visitation and that hunting is one of the more popular activities. Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) wilderness plans have been completed for all but the Little Lake Creek Wilderness on the Sam Houston NF. At this time, a major focus is on accomplishing management actions recommended for the Upland Island Wilderness.

Species or Issue: *Wild & Scenic Rivers.*

Findings: No new information became available during the FY 2002-2003

reporting period about the Texas Committee on Natural Resources' efforts to study portions of the Neches River to see if it meets the qualifications for either of these designations. Attributes that have to be addressed include water resource development (the area must be free of impoundments), shoreline development (the area should be essentially primitive – with little or no evidence of human activity), accessibility (there should be no roads, railroads, etc), and water quality (it must meet or exceeds federal criteria or approved state standards).

Evaluation: Further information will be reported as it becomes available.

Sub-Issue 5. Timber

Six elements in the NFMA apply to this sub-issue:

- Determine if timber resource sale schedule is within the Forest Plan's ASQ (36 CFR 219.27(c)(2)).
- Determine if silvicultural practices are in compliance with the Forest Plan (36 CFR 219.27(c) & (d)).
- Determine if harvested lands are adequately restocked within five years (36 CFR 219.27(c)(3)).
- Determine if maximum harvest unit size limits are being met and should be continued (36 CFR 219.12(k)(5)(iii), 219.27(d)).
- Ensure that no timber harvesting occurs on lands classified as not suited for timber production, except for salvage sales or sales necessary to protect other multiple-use values where the Forest Plan establishes that such actions are appropriate (36 CFR 219.27(c)(1)).

- Determine if lands identified as not suitable for timber production have become suitable (36 CFR 219.12(k)(5)(iii), 219.14(d), and 219.27(c)(1)).

Annual sales may exceed 113.4 MMBF as long as the volume sold during the first decade does not exceed the ASQ (1,134 MMBF).

Timber Harvest on the NFGT

Species or Issue: *Timber Harvest on the NFGT.*

Findings: The *Plan* specifies the maximum quantity of timber, or allowable sale quantity (ASQ), that may be sold from suitable lands, which is 1,134 million board feet (MMBF) for the first decade of *Plan* implementation (see 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 219.3).

The following table illustrates the total volume sold, the total volume sold excluding the salvage volume sold, the annual ASQ, the volume of timber sold as a percent of the annual ASQ, and the difference between the annual ASQ and the actual volume sold for each year of the monitoring period. Since ASQ does not include salvage volume, the volume sold excluding salvage was used for comparison.

This quantity is usually expressed on an annual basis as the average annual allowable sale quantity. The process used to determine this volume is explained in the *Plan EIS*, Appendix B. If ten percent of the ASQ were to be sold each year of the first decade, an annual volume of 113.4 MMBF would be sold.

Table 11. Timber Volume Sold vs. ASQ Volume (MMBF)

Fiscal Year	Total Volume Sold**	Volume Sold Excluding Salvage*	ASQ Volume*	Volume Sold as a Percent of ASQ	Difference Between Volume Sold & ASQ
1999	20.1	19.4	113.4	17%	- 94.0
2000	6.2	6.1	113.4	5%	-107.3
2001	12.6	12.3	113.4	11%	-101.1
2002	19.3	19.1	113.4	17%	- 94.3
2003	26.4	26.1	113.4	23%	- 87.3
Total	84.6	83.0	567.0	15%	- 484.0

*Volume does not include timber volumes sold from salvage sales

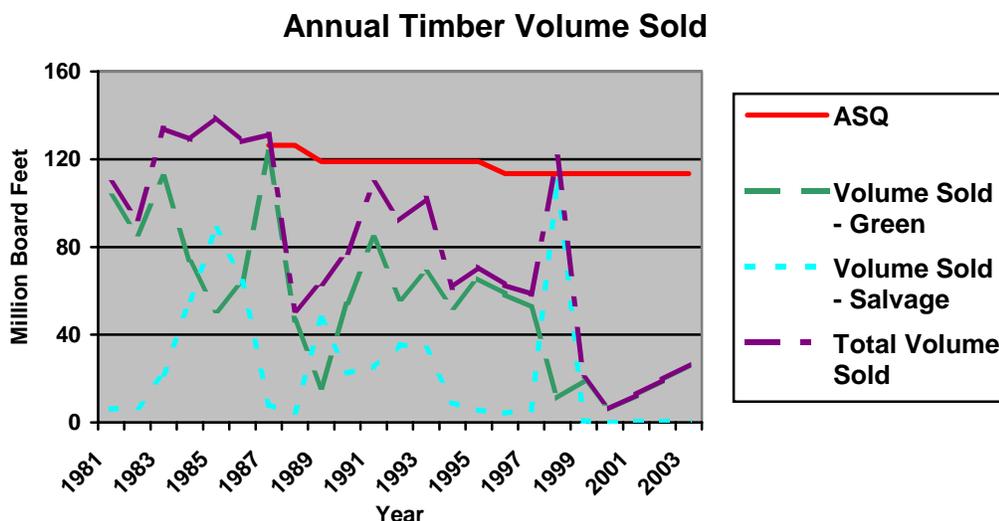
** Volume from *Timber Cut & Sold* report

Implementation of the *Plan* has been severely curtailed by the August 14, 1997 injunction on timber harvesting and the October 10, 1999 preliminary injunction on RCW habitat management on the National Forests in Texas, both issued by

U.S. District Court Judge Richard A. Schell.

The following graph illustrates how the ASQ and actual timber volume sold have fluctuated since 1981.

Figure 18



Note: Since an ASQ was first established in 1987, the graph above shows no values for ASQ prior to 1987.

The following monitoring and administrative reviews of timber management activities were conducted during this monitoring period:

- ✓ A timber accountability audit (unannounced) was held on the Sam Houston N.F. on January 8-9, 2002 by the Regional Office (R.O.) staff. See Appendix D for details.

Evaluation: The forest has been unable to implement the *Plan* due to court orders prohibiting timber harvesting and is therefore not meeting necessary habitat, forest health, and age class and restoration objectives.

Sub-Issue 6. Forage

The NFGT is required by NFMA to:

- Determine if the desired forage production objectives are being achieved [36 CFR 219.27(b)(6)].

Species or Issue: *Forage/Grazing.*

Findings: Per *Plan* direction, grazing has been de-emphasized and no longer occurs on the forested units. However, this use is still very active on the Grasslands units. The DFC for Management Area 3 (Grassland Ecosystems) is that “grasslands will occupy at least 60 percent of an area”. Estimates of the cover of grassland for the Caddo and LBJ were

made in 2003 based upon 1995 digital aerial photography.

The estimates are as follows:

- Caddo NG – 22.5% of the area is grassland (The Ladonia area of the Caddo is at 66.2% grassland)
- LBJ NG – 47.6% grassland

On the Caddo/LBJ NGs grazing opportunities for local ranchers were provided as follows:

- FY 2002 – 25 permits grazing 690 head of cattle for 6933 AUM's
- FY 2003 – 21 permits grazing 557 head of cattle for 6280 AUM's

Forage Utilization – Overall, less than 50 percent of the weight of grasses was used during both 2002 and 2003 grazing seasons. A minimum of 6-8 inches or more stubble height was left at end of growing season of the native mid and tall grasses (little bluestem, Indian grass, switchgrass and big bluestem).

Prescribed burning remains the vegetative management tool of preference but acreages burned were below what was needed in FY 2002 and FY 2003.

Acreages burned

FY 2002: 1,550 acres – (wet weather was a key factor to this low acreage)

FY 2003: 1,350 acres – (The manpower available for burning on the Caddo & LBJ was low due to the shuttle incident)

Areas mowed

FY 2003: 1,500 acres of brush and old decadent grasses were mowed on the Fannin and Boisdaric areas of the Caddo National Grassland.

Evaluation: The native prairie and Cross Timbers Oak Associations are very important ecologically in the urbanized North Texas country. The adjacent private lands are dominated by introduced plants species that have been planted as forage for cattle and horses. The maintenance of native prairies and development of true savannah oak associations are important vegetation management goals for the Caddo and LBJ NGs.

In order to hold brush and tree intrusion at bay on the prairies, prescribed burning, brush mowing, and tree shearing are all methods needed. Intense prescribed burning gives the best results, but it cannot be done everywhere (i.e. smoke management) and very intense burns that occurred historically cannot be safely managed with all the housing in the North Texas area. Some sort of treatment will be needed every 3 to 5 years in order to maintain the present openings. Without improved vegetation management treatment over current management practices, the native prairie will continue to shrink. In addition methods for developing true savannah type vegetation need to be developed and utilized such as harrowing under oak stands and thinning the oak stands.

Standard MA-3-59 of the *Plan* needs to be reworded. It states, “Retain up to 50 percent of the average annual production of desirable foraged species to maintain and improved soil cover and productivity, wildlife habitat, and plant vigor for the appropriate grazing system on each site.” This statement can be construed to mean that grazing can only leave up to 50 percent of the average annual production, so grazing at 90 percent and leave 10 percent is acceptable. In general, the warm season native bunch grasses should be grazed at a rate to improve and maintain their dominance of open areas. Grazing

in excess of 50 percent utilization is often detrimental to native grasses. On poor soils and in eroded areas, grazing should often not exceed 35 percent utilization on native warm season grasses. However, grazing at higher rates can be used in small areas to achieve wildlife vegetation structure needs.

Sub-Issue 7. Other Products

Fuelwood

Species or Issue: *Fuelwood.*

Findings: The following table reflects the volume of fuelwood sold through fuelwood permits during this and several other reporting periods.

Table 12. Fuelwood Sales

Year	Amount (Cords)
1998	284
1999	88
2000	70
2001	135
2002	178
2003	102

Evaluation: Fuelwood permits were sold to individuals and designated as personal use only. Fuelwood suitable material offered under these permits were generally limited to dead or downed individual hardwood stems or other stems previously treated in a separate management activity. Examples of these other treatment activities included RCW midstory removal and commercial timber sale units. During this period, the NFT did not offer any sales designated as only commercial firewood.

Other personal use products sold this period included an occasional permit for the use of teepee poles. These permits were generally issued to an individual associated with a recognized troop of the Boy Scouts of America.

Minerals

Species or Issue: *Minerals.*

Findings: Activity continues to increase across all Forests and Grasslands with proposals planned for the northern portion of the Sabine NF and dispersed across the Sam Houston NF, Davy Crockett NF, and LBJ NGs. The Sam Houston has a total of 32 wells proposed on both U.S. and private mineral ownership. Indications are that the Davy Crockett will be receiving approximately 14 well proposals for U.S. ownership while there are approximately 8 proposals planned for the LBJ NGs.



Figure 19. Drilling operation.

Drilling operations and associated work will be monitored weekly on the Sabine NF until the production phase is obtained. Operators have increasingly been locating well activity on adjacent private lands where feasible, as indicated by the decrease of U.S. wells. However, associated roads and pipelines are still being placed on the forests where needed and when no other option is available. Multi-well proposals on one pad (twin wells) have become a trend with operators (dependant on formations) thereby reducing environmental impacts on forest

lands. Operators have also shown an increased interest in re-entering old wells that have been plugged rather than drilling in new areas. Of the 32 proposals on the Sam Houston NF, 7 are re-entry wells, 2 are in cleared shooting areas, and 18 will be developed in new areas with some of those being twin wells. Most of the increase in activity across the forest was in the planning stages of developing new Applications for Permits to Drill (APDs.) This will not be immediately evident on the ground.

Table 13. NFGT Minerals

	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03
Total Forest Budget	\$280,000	\$342,516	\$310,500	\$294,500	\$474,000	\$465,423	\$389,204
Returns to Counties	\$473,597	\$384,981	\$139,881	\$389,533	\$1,032,406	*	*
Total Wells	335	303	295	277	273	285	277
U.S. Wells	242	222	213	198	194	195	184
Private Wells	93	81	82	79	79	90	93
New Applications for Permit to Drill	10	0	1	4	6	14	18
Seismic Permits							
Existing	4	6	0	0	3	0	1
New	2	2	1	0	0	1	2
Common Variety Mineral Permits (County Gravel)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

*Not available. Minerals Management Service administers income generated by the Forests and that information has not been provided.

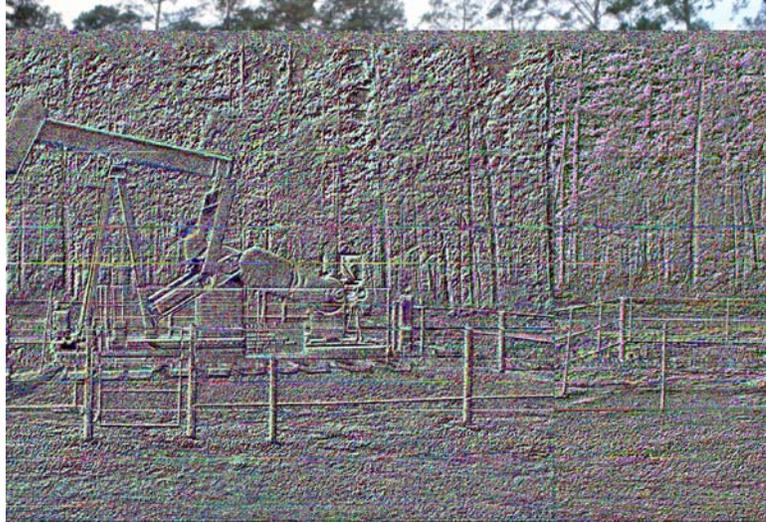


Figure 20. Well pad site.

The following table shows the number of parcels and acres offered for mineral lease and the number of parcels and acres

leased during each of the last seven fiscal years.

Table 14
Parcels and Acres Offered for Mineral Lease and Number of Parcels and Acres Leased

LEASING	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03
Parcels Offered	87	7	66	2	63*	86	57*
Parcels Leased	64	2	59	2	61	83	18
Acres Offered	81,413	531	30,598	642	51,650	33,152	46,076
Acres Leased	45,389	163	29,564	642	51,593	28,465	51,593

*Additional parcels were reported on and not offered due to split estate (i.e. private surface/US mineral ownership). These parcels must have BLM concurrence.

Evaluation: Mineral leases and operators are encouraged to work with district personnel to correct any non-compliance issues.

Sub-Issue 8. Heritage Resources

According to the NFMA, all units on the NFGT must:

- Ensure the protection of significant cultural resources from degradation and destruction (36 CFR 219/24(a)(4)).

Species or Issue: *Heritage Resources.*

Findings: In FY 2002, 4,200 acres were inventoried under the Heritage Management Plan survey guidelines. Agency archeologists recorded 27 previously undocumented archeological and/or historical sites during these surveys. None of these sites were sufficiently tested to be determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Changes in the Forest organization, personnel vacancies within the heritage resource staff, and a change in emphasis on defining areas requiring intensive heritage resource survey were responsible for the reduction of survey acres from previous years. The staff also provided heritage resource input on 68 projects on the Forest as per the requirements of 36 CFR 800.4-800.6 and the stipulations in the Forest Memorandum of Understanding with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

Three Passports in Time (PIT) projects were completed in during FY 2002, accounting for 4,456 person-hours of public participation in heritage resource management activities. Another 1,128 hours of volunteer time was also contributed during the course of the year, for a total value of \$141,406 in work contributed by heritage volunteers.

In October 2001 (FY 2002), the Forest and the Caddo Tribe in Oklahoma completed the repatriation and reburial of human remains and associated funerary objects inadvertently discovered during

excavations in April 2001. The Forest also provided assistance to the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas in defining unmarked burials within their tribal cemetery by use of Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) technology. This was the second time that the Forest provided such assistance to the tribe. Forest Heritage Management staff also assisted in GPR investigations on a tribal cemetery belonging to the Jena Band of the Choctaw in Louisiana. These types of projects provide a focal point for initiating and improving government-to-government relationships between the Agency and sovereign tribes with ancestral ties to the Forest.

Also during FY 2002, Heritage Management staff participated in 6 forest awareness and environmental education programs, reaching in excess of 1,000 school children and teachers. The staff also made numerous presentations to civic groups, local archeological societies and professional organizations. The Forest was also a co-sponsor of the Second Annual Pineywoods Archaeology Fair, which attracted over 300 participants to a day filled with educational activities and displays about Native American life ways, forest history, and cultural resource management.

FY 2002 saw the initiation of an agreement between the Forest and Oberlin College in Ohio providing for the exchange of knowledge and expertise in the areas of technology application, database management, resource management training and heritage tourism applications. Under this agreement, the Forest hosted one student who received practical experience in heritage resource management and database management.



Figure 21. Employees performing shovel tests.

In FY2003, the forest completed archeological inventory surveys on three watershed assessment projects affecting approximately 30,000 acres. Utilizing modeling strategies described in the Forest Heritage Management Plan, and with significant portions of the watersheds having been previously inventoried, approximately 5,000 acres were physically surveyed. These surveys resulted in the documentation of 26 newly discovered archeological sites, and 19 isolated finds. In addition to this work, heritage management staff provided input and consultation on 51 other projects on the Forest as per the requirements of 36 CFR 800.4-800.6 and the stipulations of the Memorandum of Understanding among the Forest, the SHPO and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

Two PIT projects were completed in FY 2003 accounting for 2,440 person-hours of public participation in heritage resource management projects. Other volunteer efforts contributed an additional 870 person-hours during the course of the year, for a total value of \$58,882 in work contributed by volunteers for the entire year.

During the recovery efforts for the Space Shuttle Columbia, members of the heritage resource management staff

contributed in a number of search team and overhead capacities.

FY 2003 saw the continuing development of a partnership with the Lake Fannin Wilderness Park, Inc. A formal Volunteer Services Agreement was signed in FY 2003, and the group made great strides in the stabilization and restoration of the lodge and caretaker's residence. During FY 2003, this group contributed 4,100 person-hours, valued at \$57,810. In addition, they raised over \$3,500 toward their work, received \$2,700 worth of donated supplies and over \$20,000 worth of donated equipment time.



Figure 22. Front view of Lake Fannin lodge.



Figure 23. Volunteers stabilizing front porch of lodge.



Figure 24. Volunteers installing a door lintel at lodge.

Consultation with federally recognized tribes has focused on project review under 36 CFR 800.4-800.6 during FY 2003. Government-to-government relations continued to evolve and grow, largely through informal contacts with the principal tribal entities with ancestral ties to the Forest.

In FY 2003, heritage management staff participate in 5 forest awareness and environmental education programs, reaching over 750 school children and teachers. The staff also made numerous presentations to civic groups, archeological societies and professional organizations.

The Forest once again was a co-sponsor of the Third Annual Pineywoods Archeology Fair, which attracted approximately 200 participants to a day of educational activities and displays about Native American lifeways, forest history, and heritage resource management. The Forest continued its relationship with Oberlin College in FY2003, culminating in the successful completion of a cultural exchange project with the Italian Ministry of Cultural Activities in July 2003, where 20 American volunteers experienced archeology and heritage tourism in the Abruzzo region of Italy.

Evaluation: During FY 2002-2003, there were no projects implementing the guidelines of the *Plan* that affected properties eligible for, or listed on, the National Register of Historic Places.