

# USDA Forest Service Update

## July 2014

### Subject: National Best Management Practices Program

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**Topic:** Status Update on the Forest Service (FS) National Best Management Practices (BMP) Program for the Protection of Water Quality.

**Issue:** The Forest Service has developed a National BMP Program to help ensure implementation of appropriate BMPs to protect water quality from ground-disturbing activities on National Forest System (NFS) lands. Some components of the program are currently being implemented, while other components are progressing in the stages of review and development.

#### **Key Points:**

- The National BMP Program was rolled out through a letter from the Deputy Chief in the spring of 2012 and the National Core BMP Technical Guide was distributed that summer.
- BMP monitoring began in FY 2013 as a part of a two-year phase-in process to full implementation, per the FS FY 2013 program budget direction. Approximately 90% of the administrative units accomplished the target for BMP monitoring in FY13.
- The draft National Core BMP Monitoring Technical Guide is currently in review and publication is expected by the end of 2014.
- Directives are needed to require implementation of the National BMP Program and the new planning rule requires that these directives be established. The revised directives were published in the Federal Register for public notice and comment on May 6, 2014.
- The interim National BMP Monitoring Database was completed in November 2013. Data entry for FY13 data was completed by April 2014.
- Involvement in the National BMP Program is needed by all affected program areas Agency-wide for the program to be successful.

#### **Background:**

The FS has a long history of working with States and other partners to protect water quality through implementation of BMPs to control nonpoint source pollution. Protection of water resources is a foundational responsibility of the Agency from the Organic Act and is required by the Clean Water Act. In the mid-2000s, the FS committed to OMB and EPA to put a system of national BMPs in place to improve consistency, comparability, and accountability. The National BMP Program was developed in response to this commitment and consists of four main components: 1) the National Core BMP Technical Guide (Volume 1, FS-990a, April 2012); 2) the National Core BMP Monitoring Technical Guide (Volume 2, FS-990b, in prep); 3) revised national direction; and 4) a national data management and reporting system. The National Core BMPs are written in broad, non-prescriptive terms, such that applicable State, Tribal, and local requirements and BMP programs, FS regional guidance, and unit Land Management Plans provide the criteria for site-specific BMP prescriptions.

The National Core BMP monitoring protocols are designed to determine whether the National Core BMPs are being implemented as planned and whether they are effective. The interim MS Access database will be used to manage the BMP monitoring data until a corporate data management and reporting system can be developed. Additional information is available on the National BMP Program [website](http://www.fs.fed.us/biology/resources/pubs/watershed/index.html), (<http://www.fs.fed.us/biology/resources/pubs/watershed/index.html>).

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