

**DECISION NOTICE
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 12**

LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST

OCTOBER 1993

PROPOSED ACTION

The Lewis and Clark National Forest proposes to add goals, objectives, standards, and monitoring items to the Forest Plan to add emphasis to the Sensitive Species program.

BACKGROUND

The Sensitive Species program was initiated by the Forest Service after the approval of the Lewis and Clark Forest Plan (June, 1986). The Northern Region and the Lewis and Clark National Forest are presently functioning under a Sensitive Species list that was reviewed and revised by the Regional Forester in June, 1991. This list is dynamic. As new information becomes available, species can be added or deleted upon approval of the Regional Forester.

LEWIS AND CLARK FOREST PLAN

Currently, the Forest Plan has a **management standard** providing general guidance for wildlife and fish habitat management on National Forest lands (FP, 2-30,C-1(1)). While sensitive species are not specifically mentioned, this general guidance can be interpreted to encompass the sensitive species program.

The **long range goal** (see Forest Plan p. 2-2) of the Forest Plan in terms of wildlife management is to "promote high quality, wildlife, and fish habitat to insure a desired mixture of well-distributed species and numbers for public benefit..."

Objectives that support this goal (see Forest Plan p. 2-5) are: "Management will emphasize...the maintenance of current populations of...coldwater fish throughout the Forest. Programs will also be conducted to provide for...viable populations of other existing wildlife and fish species."

There are no goals and objectives that specifically address sensitive plants. However, **Management Standard N-2** (see Forest Plan p. 2-48) was developed to address the needs of rare plants that were identified during the development of the Forest Plan, and that they may require special consideration in land management to maintain diversity within the species gene pool. As stated above **Management Standard C-1(1)** provides direction for wildlife and fish habitat which includes sensitive wildlife and fish species.

Based on the Forest Plan goals, objectives, and management standards, viable populations of all species would be maintained across the Forest, and Forest populations would contribute to a viable Regional population.

Because the Sensitive Species program was initiated after the completion of the Forest Plan and the signing of the Record of Decision, the Forest Plan contains no expectation specifically addressing Sensitive Species. The exception is some plant species that were addressed as rare plants in Management Standard N-2 became Sensitive Species. Although the term sensitive species was not used, the desired future condition does state that wildlife populations should not change on both the Rocky Mountain and Jefferson Divisions in the first decade and into the fifth decade (see Forest Plan pp. 2-18 to 2-21).

Even though the Forest Plan states that viable populations will be maintained, no monitoring has been developed to aid in this effort for Sensitive Species.

Currently, the Forest Service Manual provides the direction for management of sensitive species. Under the FSM 2672.1 "There must be no impacts to sensitive species without an analysis of the significance of adverse effects on the populations, its habitat, and on the viability of the species as a whole. It is essential to establish population viability objectives when making decisions that would significantly reduce sensitive species numbers." It is difficult to determine population viability because the necessary inventory to determine the extent of the populations is lacking.

Lacking an adequate population inventory, the most effective method of ensuring Forest Management Practices do not move a species toward Federal listing is to defer or modify the project so no adverse impacts occur. This strategy would result in reducing outputs projected in the Forest Plan.

Although no specific standards providing direction for Sensitive Species appear in the Forest Plan, a connection between the Forest Plan and Forest Service Manual direction is provided (Standards C-1(1) and N-2). Adding Forest Plan standards would not change the Forest's current process for implementing decisions. However, Forest Plan standards would heighten the importance of the Sensitive Species program.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

The Forest proposes to add goals, objectives, standards, and monitoring items to the Forest Plan to add emphasis to the Sensitive Species program.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A: The No-Action Alternative would defer a change in the Forest Plan until the 10-year revision.

Alternative B: Add the following goals, objectives, standards, and monitoring items to the Forest Plan:

Goal: Add "Give special emphasis to Sensitive Species (plant, animal, and fish) management", at the end of Goal Statement 3 (FP p. 2-2).

Forest-Wide Objective: Add "Emphasis in the Sensitive Species program (plant, animal, and fish) will center on gathering inventory data and providing coordination with other programs to insure maintenance of Sensitive Species populations." (FP p. 2-5)

Standards: Add the words "Sensitive Species" to the existing Management Standards C-2(2), C-2(4) and C-2(11) (FP pp. 2-32 to 2-34).

Delete existing Standard N-2 (FP 2-48).

Add a new standard C-2(13) that states, "There are sensitive plants, as listed by the Regional Forester, of limited distribution that occur on the Forest and may require special consideration in land management to maintain diversity within the species gene pool. Assessments of suitable habitats for sensitive plants will be conducted before surface disturbing activities are permitted."

Monitoring Items: Add monitoring item C-14 Sensitive Wildlife and Fish, and monitoring item C-15 Sensitive Plant Program.

C-14 Sensitive Wildlife & Fish

OUTPUT, MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTION, EFFECTS TO BE MEASURED	REPORTING PERIOD	VARIABILITY (+/-) WHICH WOULD INITIATE FURTHER EVALUATION
Determine distribution of sensitive wildlife & fish species on the Forest. Monitor annual trends in wildlife & fish habitat and species populations.	Annually	Failure to record any information within a two year period.

C-15 Sensitive Plant Program

OUTPUT, MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTION, EFFECTS TO BE MEASURED	REPORTING PERIOD	VARIABILITY (+/-) WHICH WOULD INITIATE FURTHER EVALUATION
Determine distribution of sensitive plants on the Forest. Conduct demographic monitoring & taxonomic studies to assess population viability.	Annually	Failure to record any information in a two year period.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The additional goal, objective, standards, and monitoring items have no environmental consequences. The Forest is currently operating under the manual direction and tradeoffs may have to be made to consider the effects on sensitive species. The amendment adds information to the Forest Plan and keeps it current with management direction. The selected alternative is **Alternative B**.

NON-SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT

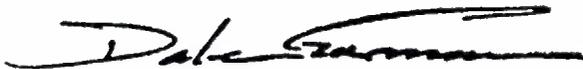
This amendment does not result in a significant change in the Lewis and Clark National Forest Plan. The determination that this is a non-significant amendment is made in accordance with the requirements of 16 U.S.C. 1640(f), 36 CFR 219.10(e) and (f), 36 CFR 219.12(k), and Forest Service Manual 1920 - Land and Resource Management Planning. Actions under this amendment do not significantly alter the multiple-use goals or objectives for long-term land and resource management nor significantly change the planned annual outputs for the Forest.

REVIEW PERIOD

Following receipt of this amendment there will be a 30 day review and comment period. Please send any comments to Lewis and Clark Forest Supervisor, Post Office Box 869, Great Falls, Montana 59403, by September 7, 1993. I will use any comments received during the review period to finalize the amendment. Copies of the final amendment will be sent to all respondents.

RIGHT TO ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of Notice of Appeal" including the reasons for appeal and must be filed with: Regional Forester, Northern Region, Post Office Box 7669, Missoula, Montana 59807, within 45 days from the date of publication of notice in the legal section of the Great Falls Tribune newspaper. It is anticipated that the publication date will be October 12, 1993.



JOHN D. GORMAN
Forest Supervisor

DATE: 10-12-93