

OZARK CONNECTION

ISSUE 6

MARCH 2004

Update On Forest Plan Revision

THE PLAN REVISION PROCESS CONTINUES

Since the plan revision public meetings were held last fall, the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests' Planning Team has been reviewing comments, analyzing public input, determining the key issues that need to be addressed in the revised plan, and drafting proposed alternatives. Later this month, the planning team will host four additional public meetings in communities across the forests to update you on the plan revision process and to discuss with you the five proposed alternatives that will be analyzed over the next several months.

The five proposed alternatives feature different management emphases and strategies for addressing five key issues identified by the public and Forest Service personnel. The issues were described in the January 2003 newsletter. This **OZARK CONNECTION** briefly previews the proposed alternatives. Alternatives display different ways of managing the lands and resources of the forests. As a result, each alternative proposes an array of goods and services for the public, and a different combination of resource outputs and environmental effects. Broad comparisons of the alternatives show the differences in management emphases by category.

The upcoming public meetings will be designed to provide you an opportunity to stop at various information stations and visit with Forest personnel before and after viewing a presentation that will explain the proposed alternatives to the Forest Plan. Additional detailed information about the alternatives, including maps, will be available. Each alternative will propose different land allocations with varied management needs or focus.

Inventory information on Special Interest Areas (SIAs), Roadless Inventories, species viability, recreation opportunities, and other topics relating to plan revision will be discussed at the public meetings.

The last page of this newsletter displays a **schedule of upcoming public meetings** showing locations, dates, and times. The names and telephone numbers of the Planning Team members are listed should you need more information.

This Fall (2004), there will be an opportunity for you to review and comment on the draft Forest Plan and accompanying draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). The draft Plan and DEIS will address the issues in much greater detail and will display the anticipated effects of the alternatives. We will share more about that phase of the planning process in a later edition of the **OZARK CONNECTION**.

We look forward to visiting with you at the upcoming public meetings.

Planning Team
Ozark-St. Francis National Forests



PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A	Continue to follow the 1986 Land and Resource Management Plan for the Forests as amended
Alternative B	Produce cost-effective goods and services beneficial to local communities and economies
Alternative C	Restore natural processes and ecosystems
Alternative D	Balance age classes in major forest types
Alternative E	Combination of alternatives B, C, and D

ISSUE/ALTERNATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Issue	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C
Mix of Recreation Trails, Campgrounds, Day-Use Sites, Rifle Ranges, Visitor Centers, Scenery	Continues existing management direction.	Increase high use/low cost trails, day-use sites, and campgrounds and other recreation opportunities if tourism is benefited.	Increase in single-use trails and day-use sites to provide interpretation in restoration areas.
Access Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs), Road Density	Continues existing management direction. OHVs are allowed on open roads and designated trails.	Emphasis on increasing OHV trail miles/system on the western portion of the forest if tourism is benefited.	Decrease in total road miles. Provide access in restoration areas if it is consistent with goals.
Special Areas Includes Special Interest Areas (SIAs), Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Scenic Byways	Continues existing management direction. Only existing designations would be included.	Slight increase in total acres of SIAs. Add North Fork Illinois Bayou as Wild and Scenic River. Add additional scenic byways.	Same as Alternative B
Ecosystem Health and Sustainability Wildlife Management, Timber Management, Watershed Health, Ecosystem Restoration	Continues existing management direction.	Emphasis on even-aged management on highly productive lands. Manage for high value forest products.	Emphasis on restoring Oak Savanna, Oak Woodland, and Pine Bluestem to pre-settlement conditions. Wildlife focus on both game and non-game species.
Economic and Communities	Continues existing management direction.	Emphasis on multiple forest products beneficial to local communities. High emphasis on tourism related recreation.	Emphasis on recreational opportunities relating to restoration goals. Timber products are the result of achieving restoration

The Indiana Bat



The Ozark National Forest provides valuable habitat for the ***federally endangered** Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*); aptly named because the first specimen was discovered and described in Indiana in 1928. This small bat has fur that ranges from nearly black to chestnut on its back with lighter gray or cinnamon fur on the belly. Its wingspan is about 9.5 to 10.5 inches. The Indiana bat's diet is insects. The bats help to keep insect numbers under control and eat nuisance and pest insects like the gypsy moth. Their presence not only benefits our environment but also adds to the biological diversity of the forest communities.

On the Ozark National Forest, the bat is found scattered from the Sylamore Ranger District near Mountain View to the Boston Mountain Ranger District at Devil's Den State Park. They hibernate in caves during the winter. After hibernation, they disperse from their caves and form separate male, female, and juvenile colonies. Females form maternal colonies which roost under peeling bark of dead or dying trees, usually near water, to have their young (called pups).

The Forest Service strives to improve habitat for this endangered species while consulting with other agencies on projects that maintain or enhance the bats' conservation and recovery.

***Endangered species:** Animals and plants that are in danger of becoming extinct throughout all or a significant portion of their range.

Alternative D	Alternative E
Same as Alternative A	Increase in recreational opportunities that are cost effective. Aimed at meeting the needs of projected trends. Mix of natural appearing and highly managed scenery.
Same as Alternative A	Decrease in total road miles. OHV trail miles/system on the western portion of the forest if cost effective.
Continues existing management direction. Only existing designations would be included.	Same as Alternative B
Emphasize full range of silvicultural tools to balance age classes & promote regeneration. High increase in prescribed burn acres. Would provide habitat for game species.	Combination of balancing age classes and ecosystem restoration. Moderate to high emphasis on prescribed burning. Moderate emphasis in managing Oak Decline.
High emphasis on forest products and energy production, revenues from consumptive wildlife species. Low emphasis on developing tourism.	High emphasis on forest products and generating revenues from game and non-game species. High emphasis on tourism-related recreation.

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Upcoming Public Meetings

LOCATION	FACILITY	DATE/TIME
Marianna	Chamber of Commerce 67 West Main Street	3/23/04 - 6 to 8 p.m.
Jasper	Newton County Senior Center 100 Clark Street	3/25/04 - 6 to 8 p.m.
Springdale	Holiday Inn 1500 S. 48th Street	3/29/04 - 6 to 8 p.m.
Russellville	Lake Dardanelle State Park 100 State Park Drive	3/30/04 - 6 to 8 p.m.

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