

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Wisconsin's Northern State Forest Assessments:
Monitoring and Evaluation

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Executive Summary

Wisconsin's Northern State Forest Monitoring and Evaluation Assessment report is designed to be a guide to help planning teams through the process of developing an effective monitoring and evaluation program for their individual forest plans.

Monitoring and evaluation is an essential component of the Department's integrated ecosystem management system. Through a monitoring and evaluation program managers can learn whether they are achieving the plan's intended results, and whether their scarce funding and staff resources are being allocated most effectively. A well-constructed monitoring program provides essential data for adaptive management. That is, checking results and making management corrections when needed so as to stay on the best path to achieve the desired result and minimize adverse or undesirable impacts. New or revised master plans are required to set specific goals and measurable objectives describing a future desired state for each state forest. An on-going monitoring and evaluation program will be developed for each state forest as part of the master plan revision process.

Provided in this report are general types of master plan monitoring descriptions that are focused at implementation, effectiveness and validation monitoring. Also, included are issues that one may need to consider when determining a property plan's monitoring needs. The potential range of monitoring topics are broad. Because support resources for monitoring and evaluation efforts are in short supply, like the resources for other management purposes, a monitoring program must be focused, relevant and efficient. In most cases, monitoring of all aspects of the implementation of a forest master plan will not be possible. Therefore, specific monitoring priorities need to be carefully developed for each forest based upon the property's most critical management and use issues.

In addition, the team outlined steps to building an effective monitoring program. A successful monitoring program needs a solid foundation. The monitoring objectives must be clearly defined, and an effective monitoring protocol set. Specifically, decide how and when information will be collected, who will collect it and the standard units of measure. Leadership support for the monitoring program is important, as is involving field level staff and the public in helping select the items to monitor.

Each plan will often pose some unique monitoring challenges. Specific monitoring methods can not be predetermined or prescribed. Therefore, consultation with monitoring experts to help evaluate the plan's specific needs and to assist in study design and interpretation of results is essential. Hopefully, this report will provide the initial assistance needed to planning team members to build an effective and successful monitoring plan for state forest master plans.