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Forest Service Manual 2600 – Wildlife, Fish, And Sensitive Plant Habitat Management
Chapter 2630 - Management of Wildlife and Fish Habitat

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Approved by: Tina Terrell, Associate Deputy Chief, NFS

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Responsible Staff:

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Superseded Document(s): 2630, Amendment 2600-90-1, June 1, 1990

Digest: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

2636.3: Deletes reference to Wilderness Management Handbook 2309.19.

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2630 - Management of Wildlife and Fish Habitat

2630.1 - Authority

See FSM 2601.

2630.2 - Objective

To maintain and improve wildlife and fish habitat as identified in the Forest Plan.

2630.3 - Policy

1. Carry out direct habitat improvement projects to achieve wildlife and fisheries objectives.

2. Coordinate with other uses and activities to accomplish habitat management objectives and to reduce detrimental effects on wildlife and fisheries.

3. Mitigate the negative effects of other resource projects upon wildlife and fish habitat.

4. Cooperate with States, other Federal agencies, and private groups to plan and accomplish habitat management.

2630.4 - Responsibility

2630.41 - Regional Forester

The Regional Forester shall:

1. Develop guidelines and procedures to achieve the objectives for wildlife and fish habitat management identified in the Forest Plan.

2. Train employees to use the Regional guidelines and procedures for resource coordination and direct habitat improvement. Provide refresher training as changes occur.

2630.42 - Forest Supervisor

The Forest Supervisor shall:

1. Approve all plans for habitat development projects to be conducted on the forest by the Forest Service or cooperators. Authority to approve may be delegated to District Rangers.

2. Train employees to use the guidelines and procedures for resource coordination and direct habitat improvement. Develop Forest supplementation to accommodate local differences. Provide refresher training as changes occur.

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2630.43 - District Ranger

The District Ranger shall:

1. Supervise and coordinate habitat development activities on the District.

2. Ensure compliance with approved development plans and guidelines when habitat modification is done by others.

3. Monitor compliance with Forest Plan and project objectives and standards.

2631 - Habitat Management

Accomplish Forest Plan objectives for wildlife and fish habitat improvement through direct management and integrate wildlife and fish habitat improvements into other resource project activities, as well.

2632 - Direct Habitat Improvement

Use direct habitat improvement to increase the amount and quality of wildlife and fish habitat to the level or standards specified in the Forest Plan.

2633 - Planning and Funding Direct Habitat Improvement

2633.1 - Planning

Follow procedures in FSH 1909.15, Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook, in developing plans for direct habitat improvement work.

2633.2 - Funding

Use the following sources of funds to accomplish fish and wildlife habitat improvement:

1. Regular appropriations for wildlife, fish, and threatened and endangered species.

2. Volunteer efforts or funding from private groups and individuals.

3. Knutson-Vandenberg (K-V) funds. See FSM 6510 and FSH 2409.19, Renewable Resource Uses For Knutson-Vandenberg (K-V) Fund Handbook, for appropriate use of K-V funds.

Set priorities for K-V wildlife and fisheries projects as follows:

a. Improve habitat for Federally listed threatened and endangered plant and animal species.

b. Improve habitat for sensitive or State-listed rare, threatened, or endangered species.

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c. Improve habitat to meet the Forest Plan objectives for management indicator species.

d. Improve habitat for other wildlife and fish species.

2634 - Coordination With Other Resources and Mitigation of Impacts on Fish and Wildlife Resources

Coordinate fish and wildlife habitat requirements with other resource needs in all Forest Service planning activities. Determine how resource management activities can be conducted to meet wildlife and fish habitat objectives. Mitigate adverse impacts of resource management activities (FSM 1960). Examine projects that affect wildlife and fish prescriptions, and evaluate the effects of alternative proposals in relation to the desired habitat conditions.

2634.03 - Policy

1. Conduct habitat examinations when proposed resource activities or uses would affect fish or wildlife habitat objectives.

2. Include opportunities to accomplish fish and wildlife habitat objectives in all resource project proposals.

3. Use journey level wildlife and fisheries biologists to conduct or approve habitat examinations.

2634.04 - Responsibility

2634.04a - Regional Foresters

Regional Foresters shall establish procedures for conducting wildlife and fish habitat examinations and for preparing management prescriptions.

2634.1 - Minimum Requirements for Habitat Examinations and Fish and Wildlife Resource Prescriptions

Use the most current information available about the area, information from field examinations, and the Regional wildlife and fish habitat relationships information system to record the following for each alternative action or proposal:

1. Determine the existing and projected wildlife and fish management indicator species (MIS) likely to be found within the proposed analysis area.

2. Determine whether the project complies with Regional and Forest Plan standards and guidelines for the maintenance of viable populations and with the habitat objectives for MIS.

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3. Describe treatments required to provide desired species mixes and habitat capability for MIS to achieve short- and long-term fish and wildlife objectives.

4. Determine if project modifications are necessary to reduce potential negative effects and to meet MIS habitat objectives.

5. Describe modifications to resource prescriptions necessary to achieve fish and wildlife objectives.

6. Propose the monitoring necessary to determine if the wildlife and fish and other resource objectives are being met.

2634.2 - Incorporation of Wildlife and Fish Habitat Coordination and Mitigation Needs into Project Proposals

Document coordination needs identified by the biologist or botanist in project proposals and ensure an interdisciplinary approach is used to evaluate alternatives.

2635 - Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management Areas

2635.01 - Authority

Wildlife and fisheries habitat management areas are established jointly by the Forest Service and State wildlife and fish agencies under a memorandum of understanding or by cooperative agreements pursuant to the Sikes Act (U.S.C. 670a-670g) (FSM 2601). Habitat management areas are funded by the Forest Service and by monies appropriated by State legislature and receipts from the sale of Sikes Act habitat stamps.

2635.02 - Objective

To demonstrate that increases in high quality hunting and fishing opportunities are possible through cooperative intensive habitat management.

2635.03 - Policy

1. Use existing management areas to gain public support for Forest Service wildlife and fish habitat management.

2. Encourage Forest-wide application of wildlife and fisheries habitat management using existing habitat management areas as demonstrations and proving grounds.

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2636 - Management of Special Areas

2636.1 - Wildlife Game Refuges

Wildlife game refuges were initially established to protect game populations during re-stocking efforts. As these populations became established, they became a source for stocking adjacent National Forest System areas.

2636.11 - Authority

The Wildlife Game Refuges Act of 1916 (39 Stat. 446, as amended: 16 U.S.C. 683) authorizes the President to establish wildlife game preserves on National Forest System areas purchased under the Weeks Law of 1911 (36 Stat. 961). The Act also directs the Secretary of Agriculture to issue regulations governing the harvest of wildlife and fish from these areas.

2636.12 - Objective

To provide a refuge and a source of game populations to stock adjacent National Forest areas.

2636.13 - Policy

1. Adopt similar management goals and strategies for managing wildlife and fish harvest on refuges to those applied on surrounding areas.

2. Use State regulations and procedures to determine harvest levels on refuges. Apply similar regulations as on surrounding areas unless there are obvious special regulations needed.

3. Consult with the State(s) when writing refuge regulations.

4. Discourage the establishment of new refuges.

2636.14 - Responsibility

2636.14a - Regional Foresters

Regional Foresters shall document the authority and responsibilities applicable to refuges within their Regions by supplements to Forest Service directives.

2636.2 - State Wildlife Refuges

2636.21 - Authority

State wildlife refuges are created by acts of State legislatures or regulations of State wildlife and fish agencies.

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2636.22 - Objectives

Objectives for State refuges vary, but are generally to provide no hunting areas.

2636.23 - Policy

Manage State wildlife refuges located on National Forest System lands in a manner similar to surrounding areas. Work with the States to discourage establishment of additional refuges.

2636.3 - Wilderness and Primitive Areas

Use the direction in FSM 2323.3 and the "Policies and Guidelines for Wildlife and Fish Management in Wilderness and Primitive Areas," adopted by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in September 1976 for managing these areas.

2636.4 - Riparian Habitats

Use the direction in FSM 2526 to manage riparian habitats while recognizing their critical ecosystem function in maintaining dependent fish and wildlife resources.

1. Develop and implement management strategies (objectives, management prescriptions, and monitoring) to meet riparian habitat goals for dependent fish and wildlife species.

2. During project environmental analysis, describe the desired riparian habitat condition at some future time in terms of specific objectives for stream surface shaded, streambank stability, streambed sedimentation, gross-forb cover, shrub cover, and tree cover needed to meet planned objectives.

2636.5 - Zoological or Botanical Areas

Regional Foresters shall establish minimum requirements for fish and wildlife management for these areas. Such requirements shall be designed to protect the values for which the area was established.

2636.6 - Estuarine Areas

National Forest lands in estuarine areas shall be managed under the concept of multiple use.

1. Take all feasible steps to protect such areas from pollution, damage, or destruction from human activities and natural forces.

2. Cooperate with other agencies and organizations in efforts to rehabilitate National Forest estuarine areas that are in a damaged condition.

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