

## REGION 3 MEXICAN SPOTTED OWL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INSTRUCTIONS

The U.S. Forest Service Region 3 Mexican spotted owl (MSO) Management Strategy (Strategy) provides a conservation and recovery framework for implementing the MSO Recovery Plan, First Revision (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2012). The Strategy applies to all Region 3 Forests where MSO habitat occurs. Two Regional Forester letters in 2021 provided this direction:

- 1) **Regional Forester Guidance in Implementing the MSO Strategy** (RF letter 1, 1/27/21)
- 2) **Updates to the Regional MSO Strategy Direction** (RF letter 2, 6/17/21)

The MSO Strategy contains 6 primary points:

- 1) MSO population trend monitoring
- 2) Identify and protect MSO
- 3) Assess the effects of treatments on MSO and its habitat
- 4) Track long-term trends in MSO habitat and assure retention of adequate habitat for recovery
- 5) Establish MSO Leadership Forum
- 6) Working Teams for MSO Ecological Management Units

There are 4 Strategy guidance documents discussed below (and in the RF letters) that are tools for use in project development and implementation:

- 1) When beginning a project, fill out the **MSO Habitat Environmental Analysis Project Checklist** (“MSO NEPA Checklist”)  
The purpose of this checklist is to assist and guide Interdisciplinary Teams (IDT) on how to conduct environmental analysis for vegetation management projects in MSO habitat. Fill out this document along with the analysis, noting as each component is included and where in the appropriate document the information can be found. Include this document as an appendix to the NEPA or supporting documentation, and post with public project files.
- 2) When designing treatments (at analysis stage or implementation), follow the **Step-by-Step MSO Habitat Treatment and Implementation Guidance**  
The purpose of this guidance is to address MSO management prior to and during both analysis and implementation of forest vegetation treatments in MSO habitat. In situations during NEPA planning where site-specific data on MSO habitat is not yet available, this document should be included as a design feature appendix in the project record and in the Decision. This document includes ***Guidelines for Forest Vegetation Data Collection in MSO Habitat.***
- 3) Prior to implementing treatments, fill out the **MSO Pre-implementation Compliance Review Checklist** (“MSO Pre-implementation Checklist”)  
The purpose of this checklist is to ensure all vegetation management projects in MSO habitat with signed NEPA decisions are compliant with the appropriate MSO Recovery Plan (either 1995 or 2012). These checklists should be added to the project record, as well as posted with the public project files. Multiple checklists may be filled out throughout the life of the project.
- 4) For additional information, refer to the **MSO Strategy Frequently Asked Questions**  
This document provides additional guidance and answers to common questions for those individuals and teams working on a new or ongoing project in MSO habitat. It also includes instructions for posting documents to the Forest Service Planning Appeals and Litigation System (PALS).

As living documents, these may continue to be revised as appropriate – updated versions are on the WFRP SharePoint.

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