

FEMC Regional Project: Impacts of Recreation to Forest Health

Recreation Monitoring Working Group Opportunity - 2023



Project Background

Forest-based recreation activities are increasing with more people taking part in both motorized and non-motorized activities. Different types of recreation activities place varying levels and types of pressure on forests. These pressures can be concentrated (e.g., mountain bike trails) or diffuse (e.g., cutting for ski glades), with potential impacts on forest hydrology, soils, invasive species propagation, wildlife movement, tree regeneration and health. Monitoring and analysis of forest health impacts by recreational activities in the Northeast is limited, but of rising interest to land managers.

Project Objectives

The overall purpose of this project is to assess connections between recreation and forest health, and to identify monitoring efforts that are being conducted or could be conducted to capture these interactions across the region. One part of the project will use recreation trail maps to identify locations at high risk for forest health impact. Relative impacts of different recreation types will be analyzed to provide land managers with information about what types of forest health impacts may result from recreation. Another part of the project, and the one this working group will advise, will identify monitoring methods that could be used to assess the impact of recreation on forest health, with the goal of piloting a few of these methods in a few sites across the region in 2024.

Working Group Objective

The Recreation Monitoring Working Group will consist of 5-7 individuals who have interest and expertise in monitoring and managing land for recreation. A variety of types of monitoring methods will be considered that capture how recreation impacts forest health. A data census among working group members or their network will also be conducted to gather any monitoring data that is already available.

FEMC staff will use the guidance provided by the Working Group to develop a list of monitoring recommendations to answer different questions about recreation impacts.

Working Group Expectations

The Working Group will follow the [FEMC Working Group guidelines](#).

The Working Group will make decisions about the specific schedule of when to meet and identify opportunities to work asynchronously. This working group will convene throughout 2023. Due to the nature of the objectives for this group, we expect monthly one-hour meetings to plan for field activities. Pilot field monitoring will require approximately two hours/week, which may receive some support from FEMC staff. Meetings will be reduced following the field season to bi-monthly.

Working Group Outputs

The Working Group will conduct a review of monitoring methods to identify and implement pilot monitoring at field locations. The monitoring results will be shared back to the FEMC for inclusion in the development of a monitoring recommendations document. The monitoring data will also be gathered in a data census, along with any other available data, to begin developing a data resource.

FEMC may have some resources to support pilot programs in the implementation of monitoring methods, but will be dependent on timing and other needs.

The Working Group will review final products to ensure they meet the Working Group recommendations and provide an accurate analysis of the results.