

USDA FOREST SERVICE



Pike/San Isabel National Forests and Cimarron/Comanche National Grasslands ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM GUIDEBOOK

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4.3.1 - ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS

ISO 14001 REQUIREMENTS

This element identifies the Forest's environmental aspects and determines which of those aspects could have significant impacts to the environment. Environmental aspects are elements of an organization's activities, products, or services that can interact with the environment.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to describe the process the Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands used to determine significant environmental aspects as required by ISO 14001: 2004, clause 4.3.1. Additional significant aspects will be added when the PSICC completes the EMS for the Pike and San Isabel NF units of this Forest and National Grassland. The process relies heavily on professional judgment of resource specialists on the PSICC and activities of concern identified by the public during project scoping and Forest Plan revision public meetings.

SCOPE

All programs and activities implemented in accordance with the PSICC Land and Resource Management Plan that apply to the Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands.

DEFINITIONS

Programs – Program area (examples include timber, minerals, recreation).

Aspects – Any activity that is authorized, funded or carried out by the PSICC.

Environmental Impact – Impacts from management activities (aspects) on natural resources including;

- soil
- water
- air
- vegetative diversity
- species of concern
- species of interest

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- scenery
- heritage resources
- paleontological resources

Vegetative Diversity (as defined in the Revised Grassland Plan Glossary) – the distribution and abundance of different plant and animal communities and species in the area covered by a land management plan.

Canyonland Ecosystem – On the Grasslands, this ecosystem is distinctive for its colorful canyons and is characterized by an abundance of juniper. Canyon walls and slopes are typically covered with one-seed juniper, while vegetation similar to that of Shortgrass Prairie Ecosystem is found on the footslopes and mesa tops. The canyon bottoms may have some riparian areas.

Sandsage Prairie Ecosystem – On the Grasslands, this ecosystem is dominated by sand sagebrush, which prefers sandy, well-drained soils, provides food and cover for wildlife, and stabilizes dune landscapes. Some other native plants in this ecosystem are blue grama, big bluestem, switchgrass. Sandsage prairie provides habitat for lesser prairie chicken.

Shortgrass Prairie Ecosystem – On the Grasslands, this ecosystem has loamy soils and is typified by buffalograss and blue grama, which are well-adapted to drought, fire, grazing, and cold temperatures and are forage for livestock and wildlife. Shortgrass types (such as buffalograss and blue grama) are found with medium-height grasses (such as galletta, purple threeawn, and western wheatgrass). This ecosystem provides habitat for a variety of grassland wildlife.

Riparian and Aquatic Ecosystem – On the Grasslands, this ecosystem is made up of drainage ways, ponds, and playas which are distributed as small patchy or linear components within the other three Grasslands ecosystems. Among those that are large enough to be identified spatially are: the Cimarron River, the Purgatoire River, and Timpas Creek. This ecosystem makes up less than 10% of the overall landscape, but it has a large role in grassland biodiversity.

PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The 4.3.1.1 Process for Identification and Selection of Significant Environmental Aspects for the PSICC Environmental Management System describes the procedure used to:

- Identify environmental aspects and related impacts that the organization can control or have an influence over.
- Determine which of those aspects are significant to the organization.

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Modifications in programs or activities that result in changes in the existing significant environmental aspects are identified during annual review by the EMS Management Representative, Leadership Team members and/or resource specialist. Any proposed changes from this review are brought forward to the FLT for their review and approval.

The EMS Management Representative:

- Maintains the Environmental Aspects list (Reference 4.3.1.1 Process for Identification and Selection of Significant Environmental Aspects for the PSICC Environmental Management System – Approved Significant Environmental Aspects and Environmental Effects).
- Compiles input on aspects including new processes or technology, and input from PSICC employees, interested parties, special use permittees, and contractors.
- Annually reviews and/or follows the procedure described in Environmental Aspect Process Document (4.3.1.1 Process for Identification and Selection of Significant Environmental Aspects for the PSICC Environmental Management System).
- Submits recommendations for revision to the Environmental Aspects List to the FLT for their consideration under EMS Guide 4.6 - Management Review.

The Forest Leadership Team:

- Reviews recommended changes to the environmental aspects, developed by the EMS Management Representative, Leadership Team members and/or resource specialist, taking into consideration any other information presented during the annual Management Review.

The Forest Supervisor:

- Approves the list of significant environmental aspects that was reviewed and edited (as needed) by the FLT.

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