

Climate Change

Climate change is already altering our nation's forests in significant ways and those impacts are very likely to accelerate in the future -- in some cases dramatically. Adaptive management and a vibrant monitoring program will become critical in the uncertain environment of climate change.

Restoring the health and maintaining the resiliency of our public lands, including the Cherokee National Forest, is crucial for adapting to the effects of climate change. Forests work as carbon sinks – trapping carbon dioxide in the trees and the soil.

Mitigating and adaptively managing for climate change impacts present challenges for land stewardship and restoration for our national forests. A sensible, science-based management approach, which takes into account the important services these forests provide, will emphasize carbon storage and result in a healthy, resilient landscape with greater capacity to endure natural disturbances and large scale threats to sustainability -- especially under changing and uncertain future environmental conditions such as those driven by climate change and increasing human uses.

The principles provided here are designed to reflect and incorporate current science and provide for resilient forests and also holds great promise for secondary benefits to wildlife, water and recreation.

We expect that management approaches will be updated as science evolves and policy develops. At this time, the following is a list of items recommended to be addressed at the planning stages when developing restoration projects:

1. Continue to use the best available science on climate change that is at the most local geographic scale relevant to the planning unit and the issues being considered in planning.
2. Address climate change during project planning so that the project unit will continue contributing to the diversity and health of the forest.
3. Forests should be managed in ways that will increase their capacity to sequester and store carbon and reduce their carbon emissions.
4. Place increased value on monitoring and trend data to understand actual climate change implications to local natural resource management.
5. Integrate restoration planning to Forest Land Management Rule and CNF Forest Plan climate objectives and guidance.
6. Implement an adaptive management approach as more information is gained and better tools become available.
7. Allow for connectivity of habitats, allowing species to move up or down slope over time as climate conditions shift.