

NATIONAL RESEARCH NATURAL AREA (RNA) PROGRAM

USDA Forest Service

Eastern Region ** Northern Research Station

RNA USE APPLICATION AND APPROVAL FORM

(Last updated April 20, 2021)

General Information and Instructions:

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service Research Natural Areas (RNAs) network protects some of the finest examples of natural ecosystems for the purposes of scientific study, education and maintenance of biological diversity. RNAs are managed to maintain the natural features for which they were established, and to maintain natural processes. Because of the emphasis on natural conditions, they represent a valuable ecological resource for scientists, managers and educators. The Forest Service encourages scientific and educational use of Research Natural Areas. This application and approval process ensures that all activities conducted within RNAs meet the rigorous management criteria to perpetuate these ecosystems for future generations.

In general, non-manipulative research that does not significantly impact or alter the ecological composition, structure, or function is appropriate within RNAs. The level of acceptable use varies by RNA, depending on the rarity of taxa, fragility or resilience of the ecosystems, and cumulative impacts of use.

All organized activities (including research conducted by Forest Service employees) inside an RNA require approval by a Forest Service Research Station Director and in some cases (if the RNA is located in a Congressionally Designated Area), by a Regional Forester. In addition, access to conduct research in an RNA requires approval by the District Ranger who manages the RNA. For RNAs within Wilderness or other congressionally designated areas, Regional Foresters have authority for approving research projects in coordination with a Station Director.

Applications for research, monitoring, or educational activities should be routed to a Station RNA Coordinator who will assist the applicant with the approval process. When proposed activities will involve several Research Natural Areas within one Station/Region, submit one RNA use request form, listing the RNAs. When proposed activities crosses regional boundaries, submit an RNA use request form to each Research Station for approval.

Requirements of Activity Approval:

As part of the approval process, the applicant agrees to notify the appropriate Ranger District office 48 hours prior to conducting field activities and agrees to follow safety protocol(s) outlined by the District Ranger. In addition, plant, animal or any other specimen collected during the course of a study will be deposited in a location approved by the Station Director. Additional State and Federal permits are required for collection of any wildlife species including threatened, endangered, or sensitive species.

All users of RNAs are expected to file a brief summary report with the coordinating Research Station Coordinator no later than 1 year following completion of the activity. This report may be in the form of a letter that outlines findings and observations. In addition, the applicant must provide the Station Director and Regional Forester with copies of all sampling location coordinates, data, reports, and publications resulting from the research including theses, dissertations, articles, monographs, etc. for our archives.

Please send this application, and any other correspondence regarding use of RNA's to the assigned Research Station RNA Field Rep for your state:

Northern Research Station RNA Coordinator	National Forest
Lauren Pile lauren.pile@usda.gov 559-855-5355	Hoosier, Mark Twain, Midewin, & Shawnee
Toby Petrice toby.petrice@usda.gov 517-884-8058	Hiawatha, Huron-Manistee, & Ottawa
Doug Kastendick douglas.n.kastendick@usda.gov 218-326-7131	Chippewa & Superior
John Campbell john.campbell2@usda.gov 802-656-3091	Green Mountain-Finger Lakes & White Mountain
Leila Pinchot cornelia.c.pinchot@usda.gov 740-368-0039	Wayne
Todd Ristau todd.ristau@usda.gov 814-563-1040	Allegheny

Northern Research Station RNA Coordinator	National Forest
Melissa Thomas-Van Gundy Melissa.athomas-van.gundy@usda.gov 304-478-2000	Monongahela
Heather Jensen heather.jensen@usda.gov 715-326-7133	Chequamegon-Nicolet
Northern Research Station	RNA Program
Christel Kern christel.c.kern@usda.gov 715-362-1123 or Leila Pinchot cornelia.c.pinchot@usda.gov 740-368-0039	Station Leaders
Beth Larry elizabeth.b.larry@usda.gov 443-543-5386	Station Director Designee

USDA FOREST SERVICE RESEARCH NATURAL AREA (RNA) USE APPLICATION SECTION

Application Instructions:

- Fill out the PDF use request form
- Sign and date the form electronically
- Email the completed form to the appropriate Station RNA Coordinator (see contact table or a Research Station RNA website for a list of current RNA Coordinators)

ALL PROPOSALS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE FOREST SERVICE RESEARCH STATION RNA COORDINATOR AT LEAST 30 DAYS PRIOR TO THE STARTING DATE OF THE PROPOSED STUDY. Questions regarding research on specific Research Natural Areas should be directed to the corresponding USDA Forest Service Research Station RNA Coordinator.

16. TYPE OF USE: Observation: Educational: Scientific research: Utility use:

Observation and monitoring activities (including no site manipulation, no establishment of study plots, or no samples collected): Describe (including number of days on site and specific measurements to be taken), and skip to question 18:

Educational: Describe (including the target audience, number of visitors to the RNA and nature of the educational activities), and skip to question 18:

Scientific Research:

Complete 17-a, -b, and -c and attach a detailed study plan or research proposal.

17-a Report the approximate Latitude-Longitude coordinates for your proposed research study location(s). If locations are not known, include a map of the RNA with your target study areas clearly outlined.

17-b Will there be any long-term instrumentation installed (e.g. instrument shelters, flumes, weirs, towers, etc.) in the RNA? (No or Yes)

If yes, describe installation of instrumentation and process of removal at the close of the study:

17-c What is unique about this RNA that makes it fit the needs of your research study?

18. RNA site visit(s) (date(s) and length(s) of time):

19. Crew or group size:

20. Samples to be collected:

21. Archive plan for collected samples:

22. If required, has Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approval been granted?

Yes: No: Not required:

IACUC approved protocol number if applicable:

23. If plant collections (including tree coring) are planned, has an FS-2400-1 Forest Product Removal Permit been issued? Yes: No:

24. If required, have state plant collection permit forms been submitted?

Yes: No: Not required:

State plant collection permit number if applicable:

Utility use:

25. Describe (what type of utility, longevity, area impacted):

For any use:

26. Cite NEPA decision:

By signing this Research Natural Area (RNA) User Request Form, applicants conducting research, education or monitoring on the RNA agree to:

Terms and Requirements:

- notify the District Ranger's Office of each access to the RNA and to follow the suggested safety guidelines given by the District Ranger;
- follow any additional requirements or limitations specified within the review and approval section of this form;
- not engage in any activities inside the RNA beyond the scope of those specified in this RNA use request form or, if required, the attached study plan;
- provide copies of all sampling location coordinates, data, reports and publications from this research including theses, dissertations, articles, monographs, etc. to the Station RNA Coordinator for Station archives and to distribute copies to the National Forest and Regional resource managers;
- send a final report on the results of the approved activity to the Station RNA Coordinator no later than one year following completion of activity, if such information has not been completely covered above;
- if removing flora or fauna, (1) obtain appropriate permits from State and Federal agencies; (2) carefully control approved species collection, especially those that are endangered, threatened, or rare; and (3) deposit voucher samples of plants in a herbarium or museum that is approved by the Station Director;
- follow Best Management Practices to reduce possibility of introducing non-native invasive species (NNIS) and disease pathogens;
- leave the site in a pristine condition when activity is concluded. This precludes leaving any approved monumentation, tree tags, markers, apparatus, etc.

I have read and agree to fully comply with the terms and requirements for RNA use found in the RNA use request form (above) as well as additional guidelines outlined below in the review and approval blocks associated with the final approval of this RNA Use request.

Signature

Date:

Title:

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION AND SIGNATURES ARE ACCEPTABLE PROVIDED THE SUBSEQUENT REVIEWER/APPROVER RECEIVES THE DOCUMENT BY EMAIL DIRECTLY FROM THE PREVIOUS SIGNER

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Has a scientist been consulted regarding the requested use? If so, please name the scientist and provide an email address and phone number:

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Title:

National Forest or Region:

Physical Address:

Email:

Phone:

Please route to the National Forest District Ranger (cc Research Station Coordinator)

NATIONAL FOREST DISTRICT RANGER

Date received:

Review Comments and/or additional guidelines for approval:

I understand the above proposed research or activity and recommend approval and access to the listed Research Natural Area(s).

Signature:

Date:

Title:

National Forest:

District:

Physical address:

Email:

Phone:

Please route back to the Research Station RNA Coordinator

RESEARCH STATION RNA COORDINATOR

IS THE RNA IN A CONGRESSIONALLY DESIGNATED AREA?

YES: ***The Station RNA Coordinator should route the application to the Station Director for his/her recommendation and comments then to the Regional Forester for final approval.***

NO: ***The Station RNA Coordinator should route the application to the Station Director for final approval.***

*Approval for RNAs that are **not** in designated wilderness, wild and scenic river, national recreation area, or other congressionally designated areas.*

USDA FOREST SERVICE RESEARCH STATION DIRECTOR

Approve:

Decline:

Comments:

Signature:

Date:

Title:

Forest Service Research Station:

Please return this form to the Station RNA Coordinator to email signed approved form to applicant, and cc Research Station and NFS RNA Leader(s).

Approval for RNAs that are in designated wilderness, wild and scenic river, national recreation area, or other congressionally designated areas.

USDA FOREST SERVICE RESEARCH STATION DIRECTOR

Review Comments:

I understand the above proposed research or activity and recommend approval and access to the listed Research Natural Area(s).

Signature:

Date:

Title:

Forest Service Research Station:

Please route to the appropriate Regional Forester; cc Station RNA Coordinator

USDA FOREST SERVICE REGIONAL FORESTER

Approve:

Decline:

Comments:

Signature:

Date:

Title:

Forest Service Region:

Please return this form to the Station RNA Coordinator to email signed approved form to applicant and cc Research Station and NFS RNA Leader(s).

USDA FOREST SERVICE RESEARCH NATURAL AREA USE APPLICATION

FINAL COMMENTS TO THE APPLICANT

Is the RNA use application approved? YES: NO:

YES:

This research natural area use activity as outlined in this application and, if appropriate, in the attached research study plan has been approved by either the Station Director or the Regional Forester. Your RNA activities can take place between the start and finish dates designated in this application.

NO:

This research natural area use activity as outlined in this application and, if appropriate, in the attached research study plan has not been approved by either the Station Director or the Regional Forester. Your RNA activities can not take place.

Reasons this RNA application has not been approved:

If you have any questions or changes to your original use request form, contact the Station RNA Coordinator.

RESEARCH STATION RNA COORDINATOR

Signature:

Date:

Title:

Forest Service Research Station:

Physical Address: