

MONITORING OF FOREST SCHOOL SITES

STAGE 1

Suggested programme

Open a site monitoring file where you can keep all your records. Aim to undertake a series of fixed point photographs and at least two transects. If you are happy recording vegetation then have a go at the quadrats as well. This booklet contains all the record sheets you should need for this work.

FIXED POINT PHOTOGRAPHY

Identify 5-8 places within your site that you can photograph regularly (3 or 4 times) throughout the year. Perhaps this could be done with some of your the groups.

You will need to describe in your records where you stand to take your photo and the direction in which you take them, and mark this position on a map.

Also note the weather when you are taking the photos and describe briefly the weather you have experienced since the previous photos – e.g a dry May, very wet June and July – all this will affect the ability of the site to withstand impact.

The best thing is to take the first photo with you when you take the second so you can check you are taking it in the right direction and that the two will be comparable.

Label and store your photos carefully, making sure they are accessible and meaningful to others as well as your self!

Suitable locations include:

- main entrance to site – the view into the site and access
- boundaries so you can compare the vegetation one side of the fence with the other. Are there any differences?
- fire pits
- other well used areas within the site – paths, steps, banks, shelters etc

It is suggested that you photograph these areas **every 3 months** or so in the first two or three years, so that you become familiar with the changes in the site throughout the year. You will then be able to observe how vegetation can or cannot recover. Review the frequency of the records after that time.

Each time you take you photos complete one row of the form below for each location, use a new form for each data that you record this information.

FIXED POINT PHOTOGRAPHY – EXAMPLE

Name of Forest school site:

Date	Location within your site	Direction in which you take the photo	Today's weather	Weather since the last photo – note anything unusual -	Notes on activities in this area since last photos
<i>22nd Sept 07</i>	<i>fire pit</i>	<i>south</i>	<i>mild and cool</i>	<i>wet August, dry September</i>	<i>Large group last week and long fire session so it does look a bit battered</i>
<i>22nd Sept 07</i>	<i>fire pit</i>	<i>north</i>	<i>mild and cool</i>	<i>wet August, dry September</i>	<i>See above</i>
<i>as above</i>	<i>path to main shelter</i>	<i>east</i>	<i>as above</i>	<i>as above</i>	<i>Few sessions in August, and lots of growth because of rain, large group last week, so vegetation on edge of path looks a little damaged</i>
<i>as above</i>	<i>fence line on west boundary</i>	<i>north</i>	<i>as above</i>	<i>as above</i>	<i>Little activity over the summer here, but we plan to use this area for coppicing this winter</i>

FIXED POINT PHOTOGRAPHY - template

Name of Forest school site:

Date	Location within your site	Direction in which you take the photo	Today's weather	Weather since the last photo – note anything unusual -	Notes on activities in this area since last photos

TRANSECTS

Transects are useful where you want to be able to record any changes in vegetation along a given line, such as the width of a path, or line out from a shelter, or from a boundary. You need to be able to identify the exact line of your transect so as to make meaningful repeat visits. Again you may be able to do this with your groups. Think about how you will do this.

Identify two areas within your site where you feel that it would be useful to monitor the impact of activities using a transect – such as across a path, or a line out from a shelter or den.

Depending on the length of transect you choose and the vegetation along it, you may want to record the type of vegetation and its height every 20 –40 cms. You can of course vary from this.

Use the sheet below to record information about the transect you monitor. Use as separate sheet for each transect.

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF FS ACTIVITIES - TRANSECT RECORDING - example

Name of transect, and location, also show this on a map:

Reason for choosing it to monitor – concerns:

Type of activities going on around the transect:

Level of activity in the period prior to monitoring:

Weather prior to monitoring:

Any other relevant information:

Date of monitoring:

Recorders:

Results:

Name of transect: *streamside path from the large oak to the holly bush – see plan **EXAMPLE***

Distance along transect	0cms	40cms	80	120	160	200	240	280	320	340
Dominant species	<i>bramble</i>									
Approx height of vegetation	<i>45cms</i>									
Comments	<i>Bramble over grass, and some moss</i>									

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF FS ACTIVITIES - TRANSECT RECORDING – template form

Name of transect, and location, also show this on a map:

Reason for choosing it to monitor – concerns:

Type of activities going on around the transect:

Level of activity in the period prior to monitoring:

Weather prior to monitoring:

Any other relevant information:

Date of monitoring:

Recorders:

Results:

Name of transect:

Distance along transect	0cms	40cms	80	120	160	200	240	280	320	340
Dominant species										
Approx height of vegetation										
Comments										

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF FS ACTIVITIES - RECORDING QUADRATS - example

Depending of the type of vegetation you are wanting to record, you may either choose to work with 1m x 1m quadrats, or you may want to use 2m x 2m quadrats.

We are investigate the impact of activities on the ground flora, so we need to look for any changes in the vegetation – percentage composition of different species or vegetation height, and overall condition, that may occur over time according to how much the site is used. You need to be able to monitor the same quadrat on the ground all the time. Give some thought as to how you will record the position of your quadrat so you can to return to that exact spot.

Quadrat location:

Quadrat size:

Overall condition of vegetation – how does it look?

Date:

Results:

Species	%composition
grass a	
grass b	
mosses	
bramble	
enchanter's nightshade,	
wild strawberry	
barren strawberry	
violet	
bare ground	
leaf litter	

NBThe total cover recorded can be over 100% because of layering effect of vegetation – moss under bramble etc.

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF FS ACTIVITIES - RECORDING QUADRATS – template form

Quadrat location:

Quadrat size: **Overall condition of vegetation – how does it look?**

Date:

Results:

Species	%composition

NB - The total cover recorded can be over 100% because of layering effect of vegetation – moss under bramble etc.