United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Ouachita National Forest
Caddo-Womble Ranger District
1523 Highway 270 East
Mount Ida, AR 71957
870-867-2101
Fax: 870-867-3338

File Code: 1950; 2800; 1560
Date: January 31, 2020

Dear Interested Party:

This project announcement letter serves to initiate scoping, "an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed" (40 CFR 1501.7). I request your input on the following proposed action regarding the Non-native Invasive Plant Species (NNIPS) Project.

Proposed Action
The Forest Service proposes to control known NNIPS infestation and future occurrences throughout the Caddo-Womble Ranger District in Garland, Montgomery, Pike, Polk, Howard and Hot Spring Counties in Arkansas using a combination of manual, mechanical, cultural, and chemical treatment methods. Although known infestation would be treated initially (see enclosures), treatment of new locations and/or newly recognized species is also proposed.

Purpose of the Action
The purpose of this action is to reduce, minimize, or eliminate the potential for introduction, establishment, spread, and impact of non-native invasive plant species (Southern Regional Framework for NNIS, p.1) by using an integrated pest management approach to prevent or reduce damage to forest resources from pest organisms, including non-native, invasive species (Revised Forest Plan, p. 58).

Need for the Action
NNIPS infestations have been documented across the unit, commonly occurring in areas of soil disturbance (timber sale areas and wildlife openings) and migration pathways (trails, riparian corridors, roadsides, and utility corridors). Some NNIPS species, such as Japanese honeysuckle and privet, are found throughout the general forest area.

There is no tool in place to quickly treat new infestations. Early Detection Rapid Response (EDDR) is a critical component of a NNIPS management program. When new NNIS infestations are detected, a quick and coordinated containment and eradication response can reduce environmental and economic impacts. This results in lower cost and less resource damage than implementing a long-term control program after the species is established. (Southern Regional Framework for NNIS, p.7) The Southern Region's priority NNIPS list would use EDDR (US Forest Service, 2013).

Invitation to Participate in Project Planning
Scoping is not limited to a single point in time; we will continue to accept and consider comments until an implementation decision is made. With that said, your comments will be most helpful if they are received early in the process. They will help us identify environmental

issues associated with implementation, and alternative ways to meet Forest plan objectives and desired conditions. Your involvement will enable us to better assess concerns of the public.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will become a part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents.

Objection Process

This project is subject to subparts A and B of *36 CFR Part 218 Project-Level Predecisional Administrative Review Process* (objection process); it is not authorized under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA).

The designated opportunity for public comment in response to this solicitation is ***January 31, 2020*** to ***February 28, 2020***. Providing specific written comments during this time will afford you standing to later file an objection to the project, should you desire (see Upcoming Project Planning Steps).

Pursuant to §218.2, specific written comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider.

How to Comment

Specific written comments must be submitted to: Shalonda Guy, District Ranger, 1523 Hwy 270 E, Mt. Ida AR 71957 or fax to 870-867-3338. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Send electronic comments, in a common digital format, to comments-southern-ouachita-caddo-womble@fs.fed.us. Please state "Non-native Invasive Plant Species Project" in the subject line when providing electronic comments, or on the envelope when replying by mail.

Upcoming Project Planning Steps

As stated above, your comments will help us identify issues and they will be used to formulate alternatives to this proposal. An environmental analysis will be conducted and the results will be documented in an environmental assessment (EA).

Upon completion, the EA will be released for public review and comment. A 30-day notice and comment period pursuant to 36 CFR 218 will be initiated. This comment period will afford you another opportunity to obtain standing to later file an objection to the project, should you desire.

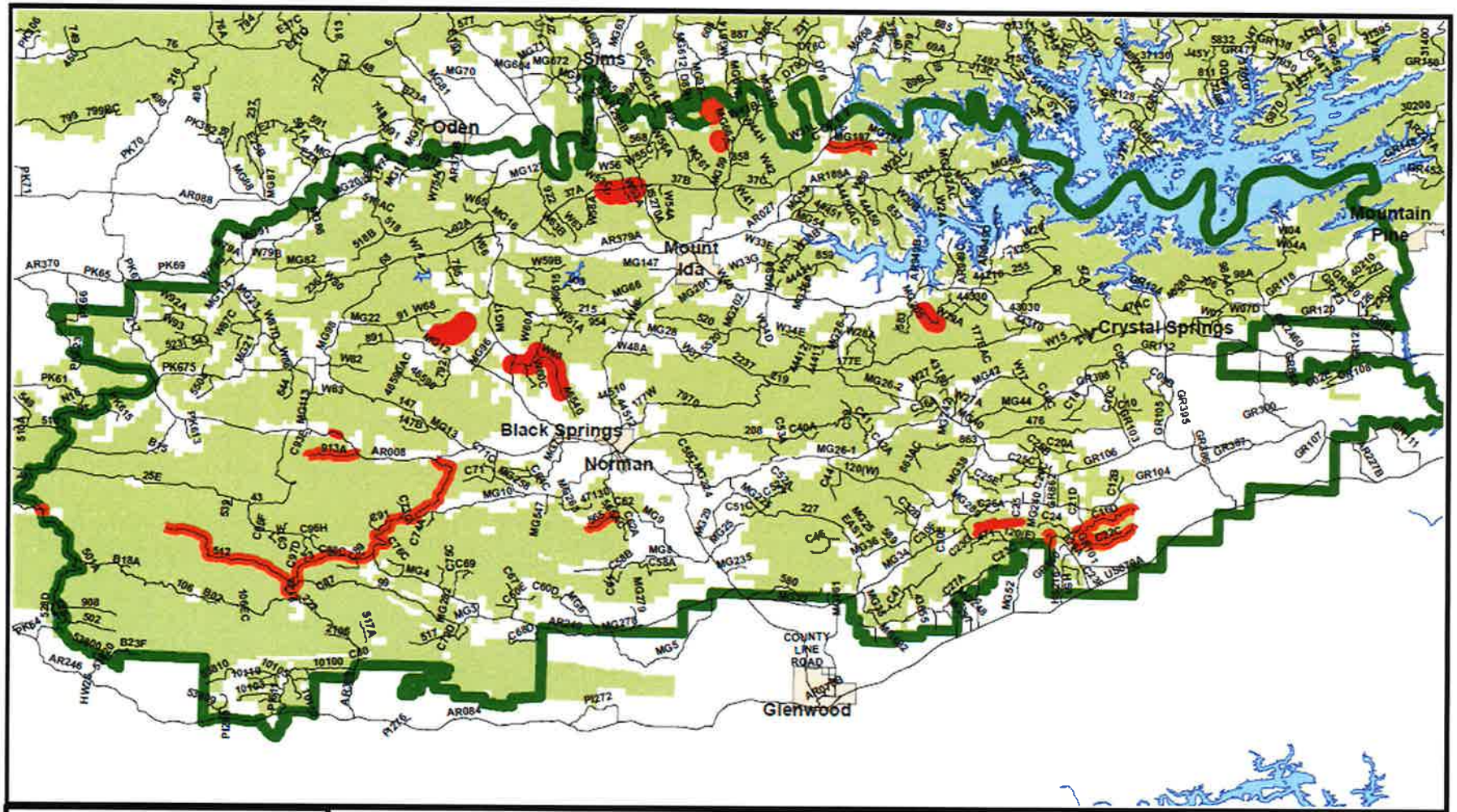
An objection period, if required, will follow the regulation found in §218.7. Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted specific written comments regarding the project and attributed to the objector, unless the issue is based on new information that arose after a designated opportunity to comment (§218.8(c)). If you have questions about this project or would like more information, please contact Mary Brown at 870-867-2101 or mary.e.brown@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

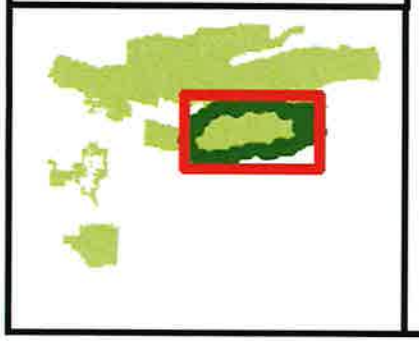
Shalonda L. Guy

SHALONDA L. GUY
District Ranger

Enclosure



Vicinity Map



The Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. They may be developed from sources of differing accuracy, accurate only at certain scales, based on modeling or interpretation, and incomplete while being created or revised, etc. Using GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were created may yield inaccurate or misleading results. This information was released on the date shown below. The Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace GIS products without notification. Designation of a road, trail or area for motor vehicle use by a particular class of vehicle under 36 CFR 212.51 is not represented on this map. It is the responsibility of the user to acquire the current Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). The MVUM identifies those roads and trails designated for the motor vehicle use under 36 CFR 212.51 for the purpose of enforcing the prohibition at 36 CFR 261.13.

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Sheet 1 of 1

Legend

- District Boundary
- Cities
- Waterbody
- USDA FOREST SERVICE
- NNIPS Treatment

Map Creation Date - Jan. 23, 2020
Map Revision Date -

Districtwide NNIPS Project

Caddo-Womble Ranger District

Garland, Montgomery, and Polk Counties, Arkansas

U.S. Forest Service - R8
Ouachita National Forest

For more information, contact the Womble Ranger District at 1523 Hwy 270 E Mt. Ida, AR or phone (870) 867-2101