

DECISION NOTICE
And
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
For The
REVISED
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For the
Old Joe Project

Includes Appendix G of the Revised EA

August 2002



Forest Service
Eastern Region



United States
Department of
Agriculture

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECISION NOTICE (DN) AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Introduction	DN-5
Public Involvement	DN-6
Decision and Rationale for the Decision	DN-7
Mitigation	DN-10
Heritage Resources	DN-10
Recreation Resources	DN-11
Soil and Water Resources	DN-11
Visual Resources	DN-13
Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species	DN-13
Wildlife Resources	DN-14
Other Alternatives Considered	DN-14
Findings Required by Law and Regulation	DN-15
National Forest Management Act Compliance	DN-15
Lands Suitable for Harvest	DN-16
Appropriateness of Even-Aged Timber Management	DN-16
Optimality of Clearcutting	DN-17
Other Vegetative Manipulation Requirements Including	DN-17
Assurance of Restocking	
Endangered Species Act Compliance	DN-19
Other Relevant Laws	DN-19
Finding of No Significant Impact	DN-20
Context	DN-20
Intensity	DN-20
Appeal Rights	DN-24
Table DN-1. Summary of Alternative C	DN-26
Vegetation Management Activities by Management Area	
Table DN-2. Summary of Alternative C	DN-27
Vegetation Management Activities by Treatment Method	
APPENDIX G: Response to Public Comments	G-1
Appendix to the Revised Environmental Assessment	

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DECISION NOTICE
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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
For the
OLD JOE PROJECT
REVISED ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

USDA Forest Service
Green Mountain & Finger Lakes National Forests
Rochester Ranger District
Towns of Rochester and Chittenden, VT.

AUGUST 2002

INTRODUCTION

This document describes my decision, and the rationale for the implementation of a series of land management activities proposed for the Old Joe Project Area located on the Rochester Ranger District, Green Mountain & Finger Lakes National Forests (GMFLNF). The Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) are based on an environmental assessment of the proposed action and three alternatives to it.

The Old Joe Project Revised Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared by an interdisciplinary team (IDT) of Forest Service resource specialists as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It describes the purpose and need for action, the alternatives considered, and the potential environmental effects. It further describes the public involvement process used and the individuals, organizations, and agencies consulted during the analysis.

As described on page I-1 in the revised EA, a decision for the Old Joe proposed action was originally rendered on September 18, 1998, and was subsequently withdrawn in order to adequately assess new information in regards to threatened and endangered species, in particular, the Indiana bat. The GMFLNF staff completed an extensive analysis of its threatened and endangered species program. Documentation of this analysis was presented in the EA for the Proposed Amendment of the Green Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species, January, 2001. This was followed by a DN and FONSI for that EA on September 11, 2001 that amended the Green Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) to incorporate new information for not only Indiana bat but for all TES by way of updated standards and guidelines, resource protection objectives, and monitoring. The Old Joe Project analysis then was begun again and completed, taking into account this new TES information, and documented in the Old Joe Project Revised EA that was released for a 30-day public comment period on June 1, 2002. The Old Joe Project Revised EA is available for public review at the Rochester Ranger District, 99 Ranger Road, Rochester, Vt. 05767 (802-767-4261), or the Green Mountain & Finger Lakes National Forest, Supervisor's Office, 231 N. Main St., Rutland, Vt. 05701 (802-747-6700).

The Old Joe Project Area consists of two separate tracts of land that lie a couple miles apart. The vast majority of the lands surrounding the project sites are GMNF lands. Relatively little private land, mainly in small parcels, lies near the project sites. Approximately 316 acres of Federal land, out of 610 acres of timber stands identified for management, would be directly affected by the selected activities. These activities include various timber harvest treatments such as selection cutting, thinning, clearcutting, and shelterwood harvests, both initial harvests and final harvests (overstory removals); relocating approximately 0.6 miles of cross-country ski trail; and improving about one mile of brook aquatic and fish habitat.

The revised EA analyzed four alternatives: the Proposed Action, the No Action, Alternative B: No Overstory Removals, Reduced MA 6.2A Activities, and No Ski Trail Relocation, and Alternative C: Increased Early Successional Habitat. I felt this range of alternatives adequately addressed the purpose and need, the issues raised during the initial scoping, and the comments received during the required 30-day notice and comment period. One additional alternative action involving the ski trail relocation was considered, but eliminated from detailed analysis in the revised EA. The rationale for not analyzing this alternative is discussed on page II-1 of the EA.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public issues and management concerns related to the Proposed Action were identified by reviewing Forest Plan direction for the area and by contacting interested and affected publics and Forest Service employees in a process called “scoping” as called for in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing the NEPA (40 CFR 1500-15080, specifically 1501.7 on scoping).

Public comments for the Old Joe analysis were collected from a number of sources. The first was response to a February, 1998 scoping letter mailed for the original analysis to about 700 individuals and organizations. Twelve responses were received in the form of written letters and telephone calls. From these responses, 28 specific comments, issues, and concerns were identified. Those are shown in Appendix A of the revised EA.

The second source of public input used for this analysis was response to the mailing of the original EA for Public Comment in June, 1998. Only two responses were received. From those responses, eight specific comments were identified. Those are shown in Appendix B of the revised EA.

The project has also been listed many times in the GMNF quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions that gives information on upcoming projects on the Forest. This report is routinely mailed to a wide audience of over 400 individuals and organizations.

From the original scoping’s public comments, three major issues were identified and served as a basis for evaluating the Proposed Action and the alternatives, and assessing the environmental consequences for the original EA. These still-valid issues were carried forward in the revised EA. A fourth issue, related to TES species, in particular, the Indiana

bat, was added as a major issue. Further details on public involvement and the issues identified are found on page I-8 of the revised EA.

The last component of public involvement that played a major factor in my decision was response to the mailing of the Revised EA for Public Comment. The revised EA was mailed to 336 individuals and organizations for a required 30-day public comment period that ran from June 1 (date the legal notice appeared in the Rutland Herald newspaper) through July 1. The revised EA was also posted on the GMNF web site. Fifty-eight timely comments were received; three late responses were received, all of a similar nature, that were in support of the project and raised no additional concerns. As required, a Response to Public Comments was prepared as Appendix G of the revised EA. That document is being released along with this decision notice.

DECISION AND RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

Based on the results of the analysis documented in the Old Joe Project Area Revised EA and project file, and comments received during initial scoping and the 30-day notice and comment period (June 1 – July 1, 2002), it is my decision to select Alternative C, Increased Early Successional Habitat, for implementation. See tables DN-1 and DN-2 at the end of this document. The selected alternative will treat 316 acres by commercial timber harvesting. The revised EA fully describes the selected actions, and their site-specific locations on pages II-15 through II-19. Mitigation measures that will be followed when implementing Alternative C are described further ahead in this document on page 6. A summary of the selected actions follows:

Vegetation Management

- * Single-tree and group selection harvesting on approximately 167 acres of hardwood and softwood stands, with group opening sizes ranging from 3/4 to 1 acre.
- * Thinning on approximately 59 acres of hardwood stands.
Note: one harvest unit, layout unit 7 in compartment 125, stand 1, was reduced in size by three acres from that shown in the revised EA in the tables on pages II-17 and II-18.
- * Regenerating aspen by clearcutting two 6-acre patches.
- * Overstory removal harvesting on approximately 56 acres of hardwood stands.
- * Shelterwood harvesting to regenerate approximately 17 acres of hardwood stands.
- * Creating a five-acre wildlife opening in a partially open, blowdown area.

Ski Trail Relocation

- * Temporarily relocating approximately 0.6 mile of cross-country ski trail for use during timber sale hauling operations.

Fisheries/Stream Habitat Improvements

- * Improving approximately 3/4 miles of Chittenden Brook and 1/4 miles of Joe Smith Brook (about 6,000 total linear feet) by adding large woody debris (LWD) to the stream channel in a way that would mimic natural conditions.

NOTE: this stream habitat work is a separate action and is not linked to the actions of the timber sale. It can be implemented without reliance on the conditions or attributes produced by, or connected to, the proposed vegetation management activities. The

stream and fish habitat improvement activities have been analyzed and are hereby selected for implementation independent of the other actions of this decision.

The rationale for my decision to implement Alternative C is as follows. Based on the results of the analysis as documented in the revised EA, Alternative C implements direction found in the Forest Plan for Management Areas (MA) 2.1A, 4.1, and 6.2A, best meets the purpose of and need for the project, and addresses key issues and concerns raised by both the public and Forest Service resource staff. I believe Alternative C best moves the project area toward the desired future condition described in the Forest Plan for these MAs while minimizing adverse environmental effects. My selection of Alternative C is a reasoned, informed decision based on a complete and thorough analysis, and full consideration of public input. Although the decision may not completely satisfy all comments and concerns, and be supported by everyone, I believe that it represents a reasonable balance between the issues raised and the objectives of the Old Joe Project proposal.

Based on this, I have selected Alternative C because:

1. It best meets the need for creating early successional habitat (revised EA p. III-25, under Proposed Action, Alternative B, and Alternative C) particularly in MA 4.1 (p. I-5) and MA 6.2A (p. I-6). The two aspen clearcuts have each been enlarged from three acres to six acres to more effectively work toward the Forest's vegetative composition objectives. As stated on page I-7 of the revised EA, we are far behind in accomplishing the goals for hardwood regeneration and aspen management. This positive movement toward these goals, albeit small, nevertheless increases the amount of young, regenerating, open, or temporarily open habitat utilized by many of the vertebrate species on the GMNF. It also does the most to increase the amount of aspen, an uncommon and important early successional species that the Forest Plan calls for increasing where practical (Forest Plan p. 4.30).
2. The increased size of the group selection openings, to be done in three of the seven single tree/group selection units, will increase the amount of species diversity in these units by encouraging more and varied regeneration (see Appendix G comment B9.). These units were selected for larger opening sizes because they are close to other riparian/open areas, along Bingo Brook and the upper reaches of Joe Smith Brook, near the new permanent wildlife opening. It is hoped that by grouping these larger openings together, close to riparian zones, that animals seeking riparian/open and semi-open areas such as Indiana bats will find more opportunities and be attracted to these locations.
3. When compared to the other alternatives, it offers the greatest increase in species and age class diversity. As has been described in the Purpose of and Need For Action (revised EA p. I-3 through I-7), the project area is lacking in diversity, and increasing diversity improves wildlife habitat and promotes a healthy, vigorous forest.
4. It makes the best improvements in MA 4.1 deer wintering areas, slightly greater than would the Proposed Action. The MA 4.1 areas consist mostly of older age classes of trees and severely lacks young-aged, browse quality habitat. The regeneration cuts of

Alternative C will create browse for deer and other animals. Group selection harvests will be strategically placed around existing softwoods to encourage more regeneration of conifers for the thermal cover that is also lacking in the area.

5. It makes substantial improvements to stream habitat for two important streams in the project area, Bingo Brook and Joe Smith Brook. These beneficial improvements can be carried out with little or no adverse impacts (revised EA p. III-43 through III-48). I find that the analysis and disclosure of effects allows for implementation of the stream improvements separate from implementation of the timber sale. I also believe that the standards and guides in place for MA 9.4 stream corridors will protect the Significant Streams, Bingo Brook and Chittenden Brook, and thus will not jeopardize their eligibility for classification as Recreational Rivers (see Appendix G, Response G11 and G12).
6. While moving the project area toward the desired future condition at a rate greater than the other alternatives, it does so with a minimal amount of adverse impacts, all within acceptable levels, as has been documented throughout Chapter III of the revised EA. What I consider most important is:
 - a. That the impacts to MA 6.2A lands are minor. With low to moderate use and winter-only harvesting, impacts to cross-country skiers and others visiting the area for solitude will be minimal. I also believe concerns for skier safety from logging traffic is addressed very well by the relocation of the cross-country ski trail. Again, with the winter-only harvest and the relatively small scale of harvest operations, I believe there will be little or no adverse impacts to reclusive wildlife species in the area. The harvesting in MA 6.2 lands will improve wildlife habitat by increasing species diversity and creating young age classes that are lacking in the area.
 - b. That the clearcuts are small in size and relatively remote, thus minimizing any visual concerns (revised EA p. III-10, para. 2; p. III-11, Alternative C). All visual quality objectives can be met.
 - c. That concerns for MIS are addressed. As indicated in the extensive analysis (revised EA p. III-26 through III-35; Appendix F), there will be little or no site-specific adverse impacts to most MIS while some will benefit. I find it very important that the localized, site-specific concerns are addressed and disclosed. As stated on page III-34,

The small amount of habitat changed by the Old Joe proposal would produce, at best, minor localized risks or benefits to MIS population trends over the project level and the analysis area level. These changes (of local species abundance and local habitat availability) are of such limited risk/benefit as to hold no measurable impact, risk or benefit, at any scale beyond the analysis area level.

Therefore, as the analysis supports, there will be no effect to population trends. The analysis goes on to point out (p. III-34 through III-35) that the communities most at risk are those associated with early successional habitat. I share this

concern and am pleased that Alternative C will contribute toward improving this situation.

- d. That the analysis completely addresses concerns for threatened, endangered, and sensitive (TES) species (revised EA p. III-13 through III-14; Appendix E). I find that: (1) the quality work done on the forest over the last three to four years on the TES program that culminated with the Forest Plan amendment decision in September of 2001, (2) our collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in developing procedures to protect Indiana bat habitat and address concerns for incidental taking, and (3) the analysis presented for the Old Joe Project alleviates all my concerns for TES species, in particular, the Indiana bat. I am also confident that our monitoring efforts for the Indiana bat will continue and will put us in a position to effectively address any future concerns for the species.
- e. That the mitigation developed to address concerns and further minimize adverse impacts is based on monitoring, past experience, and good science. I am confident that all measures will function as designed. I also believe that the monitoring plan (revised EA Appendix D) developed for the Old Joe Project is a positive step toward measuring the effectiveness of our actions.

Therefore, I am convinced that Alternative C is the best combination of actions that can be implemented to work toward Forest Plan goals and objectives while minimizing adverse environmental effects.

MITIGATION

Forest Plan standards and guidelines for mitigation of potential adverse effects of management activities will be applied to the selected actions. Standards and guidelines for MA 2.1A are found on Forest Plan pages 4.95-4.97, for MA 4.1 on pages 4.109-4.114, MA 6.2A on pages 4.131-4.133. Standards and guidelines for any activities that may impact MA 9.4 lands (streams eligible for inclusion in the National Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River System) are found on pages 4.180-5 – 4.180-20. General standards and guidelines applicable to all Forest Service lands are found on pages 4.15-4.90.

Following are mitigation measures created in response to issues and concerns. Many of these measures are Forest Plan standards and guidelines or enhancements thereof, that the ID team felt should be highlighted here because of public issues and internal concerns. Others were developed to mitigate specific concerns of the public and Forest Service resource specialists, and will be applied in addition to standards and guidelines. Further details on mitigation for the selected activities is found in Appendix C of the Old Joe Project Revised EA. The following mitigation measures will be implemented to protect resources:

HERITAGE RESOURCES

- (1) The two historic sites in compartment 158 (one each in/near stands 4 and 14) will have well-marked buffer zones around them, be located on the Timber Sale map, and be brought to the attention of the contractor/operator. The nature of the site marking (e.g., flags, paint, snow fencing) will be determined by the Sale Administrator in

consultation with the Forest Archaeologist prior to the beginning of the project. The method may vary depending on the season of operation, visual/aesthetic considerations, and the size of area.

- (2) The area for locating the new landing along Bingo Brook Road/FR42 has been reviewed and approved by the Forest Archaeologist. Should it be necessary to slightly relocate that landing or expand any of existing landings along FR42, these adjustments should be reviewed with the Forest Archaeologist prior to the start of the project to ensure that they are not encroaching on any heritage resource sites.
- (3) NEW, as a result of comments received during the 30-day public comment period: Adjust the boundary of layout unit 7 (stand 1 in compartment 125) to avoid entry into a small area deemed historically important to the Abenaki tribe. This reduces the size of the harvest unit by three acres.

RECREATION RESOURCES

- (1) To reduce safety concerns of cross-country skiers encountering log trucks, warning signs would be posted for the duration of the timber sale, at the parking area at the beginning of FR45, and along the relocated ski trail just before it enters back onto the plowed road. Additional signs stating “Hauling Operations Under Way,” would be posted each day operators are present, and then removed as the loggers leave for the day.
- (2) To further reduce the potential for accidents, log trucks would be prohibited from operating on FR45 during weekends, holidays and after 5:00 pm on weekdays.

SOIL AND WATER RESOURCES

- 1) All harvest areas would be logged only in winter. Skidding and landing operations would be limited to the generally accepted winter logging period running from approximately December 1 through March 31, and when the soils are frozen or have an adequate cover of snow, so that compaction and rutting would be minimized.
- 2) Landing for Compartment 158, stand 4 – These actions would be implemented to minimize the risk of sediment from the landing getting into Bingo Brook:
 - a) Leave a 30 foot undisturbed buffer strip between the Bingo Brook Road and the landing, except at the short access road to the landing.
 - b) Maintain a snow or earthen berm between the landing and the small, ephemeral stream 30 to 50 feet east of the landing.
 - c) Hay bales would be placed, if needed, to prevent runoff from the landing from going into the Bingo Brook Road ditchline, which eventually empties into Bingo Brook.
- 3) Landing at Compartment 158, stand 14 – This landing is well drained but surrounded by poorly drained, wetland soils. To minimize adverse impacts to the wet areas, the skidder would cross the wetland at only one location, in the driest part of the wetland,

at the west edge of the landing. The wetland soils at the crossing would also be strengthened using corduroy (logs placed perpendicular to the road).

- 4) Skid trail in stand Compartment 158, stand 4 –In order to address the steep sections of some of the skid trails in this unit, water bars on these sections would be spaced 50-75 feet apart instead of being normally spaced about 100-200 feet apart. Water bars would be installed before winter so they are better able to freeze up and maintain their shape during skidding. In addition, a water bar would be located just above each stream crossing, to divert water from the skid trail away from the stream.
- 5) Skid trail in stand Compartment 158, stand 4 – This skid trail would be relocated for approximately 150 feet, beginning right after the first stream crossing above the landing. The skid trail will be relocated further away from the stream to reduce the risk of sedimentation.
- 6) Compartment 125, landing at stand 1 – a 50 foot undisturbed buffer strip would be maintained between the small stream at the south edge of the landing and landing activities. A soil or snow berm in this location would be added to divert water away from the stream, if necessary, to prevent sedimentation. A box culvert would be used where this stream crosses the skid trail heading south of the landing.
- 7) Compartment 125 skidder bridges – bridges will be installed at skid trail stream crossings at the very eastern end of stand 9 (to access stand 19); and in stand 21, in two locations.
- 8) Compartment 125, stand 21 skid trail grades - The main skid trail through this stand also has grades of 15-25 percent over varying distances. As noted above for compartment 158, stand 4, water bars on the steep sections would be spaced more closely, about 50-75 feet apart instead of the normal spacing of about 100-200 feet apart, installed before the ground freezes, and installed above stream crossings so that water from the trail does not drain into streams.
- 9) Compartments 158 - stands 4, 11, 14, and 19; Compartment 125 - stand 19; and Compartment 118 – stand 12. In the few areas where there are 40-50 percent slopes, a dozer would be used to bunch trees and construct skid trails (unless waived by the Sale Administrator). Constructing excavated skid trails results allows for more effective control of water on the hillside by using water bars.
- 10) Use of existing skid trails – existing skid trails would be used wherever possible, rather than building new ones. This will minimize the need for new trails, and thus reduce the amount of new ground disturbance that would be needed to open up new trails.
- 11) Whole tree harvest would not be allowed. Leaving the tops and branches will help maintain long-term soil productivity and prevent erosion on steep slopes in the Old Joe project area.

VISUAL RESOURCES

- 1) Comp 125, stands 18 and 19: to best blend the harvest treatments to the landscape (Forest Plan p. 4.51), feather the seen area of the upper slope edges of these stands. Use the computer model titled “oldjoe – oldview2” that shows the specific locations.
- 2) Comp 158, stand 14: To further minimize evidence of timber harvest on FR 42, the Proposed Action and Alternatives B and C should include establishment of a no cut zone of at least 50 feet back from the road and require branches to be lopped and scattered in this roadside stand. Tree tops should be lopped and scattered to lie within three feet of the ground for the next 150 feet in, where visible from the road.
- 3) Comp 158, stand 4: Do not locate a group cut (as part of the individual tree/group selection unit) on the north end of Compartment 158, stand 4 where the landing and associated skid trail appear to run into the unit when viewed from FR42. The existing evergreen (conifer) stand, and the landing and skid trail to the north of stand 4, visually creates a dramatic cathedral effect. Placing a group cut in the center of this would focus attention on this cut area. Avoiding this area of the unit would provide a more natural appearing setting.
- 4) Landings and associated skid trails would be closed to access after use by a combination of earthen berms, boulders, logs, and vegetation designed to blend with the surroundings. The sale administrator should consult with the Forest Landscape Architect to aid in design prior to the closures.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, SENSITIVE SPECIES

- (1) To mitigate the possible loss of potentially suitable roost trees for Indiana bats, the Reasonable and Prudent Measures and Terms and Conditions found in the *Biological Opinion of the Effect of the Land and Resource Forest Management Plan and Other Activities on Threatened and Endangered Species in the Green Mountain National Forest and Incidental Take Statement* issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on February 16, 2000 are to be followed. This is in accordance with direction found in the recently approved Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Amendment of the Green Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species, September 11, 2001 (TES Forest Plan Amendment). New and revised Forest Plan standards and guidelines resulting from this amendment are to be applied to ensure that adequate numbers of potentially suitable roost trees will be retained in the project area.

At least five trees per acre, applied on a stand basis, are to be retained within the project area. The “leave” trees may be found among the harvest sites and among the remainder of the unharvested stand areas. They may be scattered over the entire area of the stands, or clumped where desirable, to provide the greatest potential benefit for roosting.

- (2) In order to eliminate or minimize damage to potential roosting habitat for Eastern small-footed bat, the Reasonable and Prudent Measures and Terms and Conditions

found in the Biological Opinion (2/00) and the new and revised Forest Plan standards and guidelines are to be applied as described above for the Indiana bat.

- (3) Some potential exists that northern goshawk could nest in the project area. Those sites that deemed suitable for nesting in the project area should be surveyed at the appropriate season for nesting goshawks. If an occupied nest is located, follow procedures developed cooperatively with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service calling for a six hundred and sixty foot radius zone of unaltered habitat around the nest site with an additional six hundred and sixty foot buffer area.

WILDLIFE RESOURCES

- (1) In order to address concerns regarding denning female bears with cubs, the following mitigation will be applied to the Old Joe project: In the rare case that a sow with cubs is disturbed by harvest operations and leaves the den, timber sale activities will cease. Restrictions to avoid the area at risk (den site) will be put into place to allow re-entry by the disturbed sow. Forest Service and State of Vermont Wildlife Biologists will work together closely to determine the length of time and size of area for which to restrict operations. Minimum time before allowing timber sale operations to resume would be two or three days to see if the sow will return to the den and to allow Biologists time to make a determination of further restrictions, both time and area. The maximum time of restriction could be the remainder of the winter harvest season.
- (2) Follow Forest Plan standards and guides for retention of mature beech trees that show signs of habitual bear use.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative is required by NEPA. Under this alternative, the existing situation would remain unchanged. Minor maintenance and routine activities (such as road blading and trail maintenance) would still continue. Any activities covered by past Decision Notices or Decision Memos would also occur. None of the proposed vegetative management activities would be implemented, the ski trail would not be relocated, and the stream and fisheries improvements would not be done. This alternative responds to those who desire that no management activities, particularly timber harvesting, take place.

I did not select the No Action Alternative because it does not meet the objectives described in the purpose of and need for action and would not move the project area toward the desired future condition. There would have been no increase in vegetative diversity in an area lacking young age classes, aspen, and open areas; no improvement in the abundance and quality of wildlife food and cover, particularly in the MA 4.1 deer wintering areas, that would result from the harvest treatments; and no increase in the amount of softwoods (conifers) that would result by properly placing the group selection harvests. There would be no improvements in the age class distribution and stocking levels in the MA 2.1A forests; opportunities would be lost to promote the growth of high quality sawtimber while treating areas damaged by insects, disease, ice, and winds. Wood products would not be made available for public consumption. Opportunities to improve stream and fisheries habitat would be forgone at this time.

I understand that the No Action Alternative, by its nature, results in the least amount of adverse environmental effects. However, based on the Old Joe project analysis, I believe that the outcomes that would result from implementation of Alternative C (revised EA p. II-16, para. 2) can be accomplished with a minimum of adverse effects within acceptable limits and without significant impact, individually or cumulatively, and therefore, does not dictate a need for “no action”.

Proposed Action

I did not select the Proposed Action because it does not meet the purpose and need as well as Alternative C. Although similar positive gains would result from implementation of the Proposed Action, this alternative provides less movement toward the desired future condition of the project area than would Alternative C and, in particular, does not address the need for increases in early successional habitat (revised EA, p. I-5 through I-7, II-15) as well as Alternative C. At the same time, I believe the analysis shows that there would only be a slight, almost negligible increase in adverse impacts resulting from implementation of Alternative C instead of the Proposed Action.

Alternative B

I did not select Alternative B because of all the action alternatives, this alternative does the least to meet the purpose and need, the objectives of the proposal, and move the area toward the desired future condition. It improves less wildlife habitat and species diversity, and foregoes the needed overstory removals.

Alternative B, with its reduced harvesting, provides a good baseline among the action alternatives for measuring the difference in effects. Although the amount of adverse effects produced by this alternative is less than those resulting from Alternative C, the analysis shows that this difference is small. Of particular concern to me were the impacts on MA 6.2A lands, mainly to people and their desire for solitude. The analysis demonstrates that with the relatively small amount of use of specifically these MA 6.2A lands and the timing of the harvesting activities, the overall impacts are minor and within acceptable limits. Our standards and guides and the proposed mitigation measures will reduce negatives impacts even further.

Therefore, I believe the outcomes resulting from implementing Alternative C can be effectively accomplished with only this slight increase in adverse effects, and Alternative C is the best choice.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY LAW AND REGULATION

Stated below are my findings in regards to compliance with the appropriate laws and regulations. This includes compliance with the National Forest Management Act (five components), the Endangered Species Act, and other relevant laws.

NATIONAL FOREST MANAGEMENT ACT COMPLIANCE

FOREST PLAN CONSISTENCY 16 U.S.C. 1604(i) (Sec. 6, NFMA)

The actions of Alternative C are consistent with the GMNF’s Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision and related Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

(Forest Plan). Alternative C will move the project area toward the desired future condition for MAs 2.1A, 4.1, and 6.2A (Purpose of and Need For Action section of revised EA, p. I-3 through I-7). The stream improvement work is consistent with Forest Plan direction for significant streams and can be accomplished without jeopardizing eligibility for inclusion into the National Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River System. This decision is consistent with both the forest wide standards and guidelines (Forest Plan, pages 4.15-4.90), and the standards and guidelines for MA's 2.1A (p. 4.95-4.97), 4.1 (p. 4.109-4.114), 6.2A (p. 4.131-4.133), and 9.4 (p. 4.180-5 – 4.180-20). All of the expected impacts from this project are consistent with, and within the range of, the expected impacts disclosed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Forest Plan.

LANDS SUITABLE FOR HARVEST

16 U.S.C. 1604(k), 36 CFR 219.14, and 36 CFR 219.27(c) (1)

I have determined that the land on which harvesting will be done is suitable for timber production.

1. The land is forest land (as defined in 36 CFR 219.3) which is at least 10% occupied by trees of any size. This has been verified through on-the-ground examination of the stands proposed for harvest. Documentation of these examinations is found in the project file.
2. Technology is available to ensure timber production from the land without irreversible resource damage to watershed conditions. This is documented in the Environmental Effects sections of the revised EA on Soil, Water, and Wetland Resources (p. III-35 through III-43) and Fisheries (p. III-43 through III-48).
3. The lands proposed for timber harvest have not been withdrawn from timber production by an Act of Congress, the Secretary of Agriculture, or the Chief of the Forest Service.
4. The land has not been deemed inappropriate for timber production due to assignment to other resource uses or considerations of cost efficiency.

APPROPRIATENESS OF EVEN-AGED TIMBER MANAGEMENT

16 U.S.C. 1604(f) (Sec. 6, NFMA)

Even-aged management has been selected as an appropriate method to meet the vegetation management and wildlife objectives in the Old Joe project area. The following reasons were used to determine the appropriateness of even-age management:

1. Forest Plan prescriptions for MA 4.1 encourage even-aged techniques to create browse, maintain stocking levels and tree vigor, provide for a mixture of species within stands, ensure adequate management and creation of permanent openings, and promote softwood development (Forest Plan p. 4.107-4.112).
2. Forest Plan direction for MA 6.2A states that the primary silvicultural system will be even-aged (Forest Plan p. 4.131).

3. Overstory removals, thinnings, clearcutting, and shelterwood harvesting are appropriate to achieve our objectives of improved wildlife habitat diversity, aspen and hardwood regeneration, increasing the amount of early successional habitat (i.e. improving age class diversity), and producing high quality sawtimber for species such as northern hardwoods, aspen, and conifers (Forest Plan p. 4.62-4.67; revised EA p. II-3, para. 2).
4. The Forest Plan states that delayed shelterwood harvests are appropriate and effective methods to allow regeneration of more shade tolerant species where the second cut of a standard shelterwood should be delayed for 40 to 60 years, where large trees need to be maintained in areas of high visual sensitivity, and where selection cutting cannot be applied economically (Forest Plan p. 4.64).
5. The selected silvicultural methods for each stand identified in Alternative C are consistent with the rationale for using these methods provided for in Appendix A of the Forest Plan (pages A-03 to A-09). Each stand prescription has been reviewed by a certified Silviculturist.
6. Forest Plan Appendix A, under Selection of Harvest Methods (p. A-08), states that “clearcuts will be used” to create habitats of pioneer species, such as aspen and paper birch, that need full sunlight to regenerate.

OPTIMALITY OF CLEARCUTTING 16 U.S.C. 1604(f) (Sec. 6(f), NFMA)

In accordance with Forest Plan direction (pages 4.65 and A.08), I have determined that clearcutting is the optimum harvest method to regenerate aspen in layout units 7 (six acres) and 12 (six acres) of Compartment 125, stands 1 and 9. Clearcutting of aspen stimulates root suckering and increases stocking and early growth. Aspen is a very shade intolerant species and will not regenerate under the shade of other trees. Research has shown that for effective sprouting to occur, there must be full sunlight. Field surveys of these units show that aspen has historically been a component of these sites and that aspen clones are present, but are sparse and declining. Because of this, optimum conditions of full sunlight are required to get successful root and stump suckering. It has been demonstrated previously on the Rochester Ranger District that aspen can be regenerated while having only a small amount of clone stock on site.

Other harvest systems will not provide the conditions needed for optimal aspen regeneration. Seed tree (the Forest Plan, page A.03, considers this to be the same as clearcutting) and shelterwood harvest methods (standard and delayed) were considered. However, these methods would not leave the area in the desired "open" condition to the same extent as clearcutting. The shade of the residual overstory that would remain with these techniques would hinder, and most likely prohibit, the regeneration of the limited aspen clones found on the site. Thinning was also considered as this is the harvest treatment being used in the surrounding portions of these stands. However, the shade of the residual overstory would, likewise, not allow adequate regeneration.

OTHER VEGETATIVE MANIPULATION REQUIREMENTS INCLUDING ASSURANCE OF RESTOCKING 36 CFR 219.27(b)

Based on my review of the Old Joe Project EA, I find that the selection and location of the proposed activities, the application of standards and guidelines from the Forest Plan, and site specific mitigation measures will ensure the vegetative management activities in this

project will comply with the requirements of 36 CFR 219.27(b). According to these requirements, projects involving manipulation of tree cover shall:

1. Be best suited to the multiple use goals established for the area, with potential environmental, ... impacts, being considered in this determination. I find that the EA and analysis demonstrate that Alternative C is consistent with the multiple use goals and objectives stated in the Forest Plan. Reference revised EA, Forest Service Authority, Policy, and Management Direction (p. I-2); Purpose of and Need For Action (p. I-3 through I-7); outcomes produced by each alternative: see Proposed Action (p. II-3, para. 1), No Action Alternative (p. II-2, para. 2), Alternative B... (p. II-11, para. 3), and Alternative C... (p. II-16, para. 2).
2. Occur on lands where adequate restocking within five years can be assured. All silvicultural prescriptions for treating stands were approved by a certified silviculturist and meet direction of the Forest Plan. Review of forest stocking records has clearly shown successful restocking by applying the standard silvicultural and site prep methods identified in this analysis. Soil conditions, moisture regimes, and present vegetative stocking levels are the same or very similar to other areas on the Forest where restocking has been successful. First and third year stocking surveys will be scheduled for all regeneration harvests and will be conducted in the Old Joe Project Area to monitor regeneration in appropriate harvest areas.
3. Not be chosen primarily because they will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest output of timber, although these factors shall be considered. Alternative C was chosen based on a combination of factors including the protection of other resource values, management to achieve Forest Plan objectives, creation and maintenance of a diversity of wildlife habitat, fishery habitat improvement, and commodity output needs, as well as economic considerations. Refer to the section of this document entitled Decision and Rationale for the Decision on page 3. Refer also to the revised EA, pages III-50 through III-53 for details on the Economic Analysis.
4. Be chosen after considering potential effects on residual trees and adjacent stands. To the degree that they are related to specific Old Joe Project issues, effects on vegetation are disclosed in the Environmental Effects section of the revised EA (Chapter III). In particular, the discussion of cumulative effects takes into consideration the actions occurring on, and effects to, stands adjacent to those being manipulated, both on NFS lands and private lands. The general effects of activities on vegetation is disclosed in the Forest Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement, chapter IV, pages 4.01-4.80.
5. Avoid permanent impairment of site productivity and ensure conservation of soil and water resources. Reference the revised EA, Chapter III (Environmental Effects) for Soil, Water, and Wetland Resources pages III-35 through III-43; Fisheries pages III-43 through III-48; Project Mitigation Measures, Appendix C; and Forest Plan standards and guidelines.
6. Provide the desired effects on water quantity and quality, wildlife and fish habitat, regeneration of desired species, forage production, recreation uses, aesthetic values,

and other resource yields. These considerations are addressed throughout the Environmental Effects section, chapter III.

7. Be practical in terms of transportation and harvesting requirements, and total costs of preparation, logging and administration. I am basing this determination on the fact that the selected activities are consistent with Forest Plan direction and are similar to those that have been or are currently being practiced on the Green Mountain National Forest, Rochester and Middlebury Ranger Districts and the Manchester Ranger District. All harvest activities are close to existing roads and will require no extraordinary investments or expenditures in order to complete harvest operations. Refer also to the revised EA, pages III-50 through III-53 for details on the Economic Analysis.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT COMPLIANCE

16 U.S.C. 1531-1536, 1538-1540

The actions of Alternative C are in full compliance with the Endangered Species Act. A Biological Evaluation (BE) was completed (Appendix E of the revised EA). The conclusions of the threatened, endangered, and sensitive species analysis may be found in the revised EA on pages III-13 through III-14, and again on page E-1. In summary, no Threatened or Endangered plants are listed for the GMNF. None of the TES animal species tracked for the GMNF are known to have documented occurrences within the project area, either currently or historically, and no critical habitat has been identified in the project area (revised EA p. E-1). Therefore, a determination of “no effect” to threatened and endangered species has been made in the BE (p. E-39). One federally listed species (Indiana bat) and one Regionally Sensitive species (Eastern small-footed bat) have been identified as having potential or suitable habitat in the project area. As stated in the Biological Evaluation, it has been determined that both these species are “unlikely to occur” in the project area, and that for the Regionally Sensitive species, implementation of the Proposed Action or any of the alternatives will not likely contribute to a trend toward federal listing or a loss of viability to the population or species.

The GMFLNF recently completed a thorough analysis of its TES program (September, 2001). The result was an amendment to the Forest Plan that incorporated new information for not only Indiana bat but for all TES species by way of updated standards and guidelines, resource protection objectives, and monitoring (see revised EA, p. I-1). I believe that this extensive effort, compliance with terms and conditions of the Biological Opinion (BO) issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the developed mitigation (revised EA p. C-4 and discussed throughout the BE, Appendix E as noted), and continued monitoring (revised EA Appendix D, p. D-2) both within the project area and as appropriate across the Forest, allows us to implement the actions of Alternative C without fear of jeopardy to any TES specie.

OTHER RELEVANT LAWS

I have considered other relevant laws and regulations that this decision may affect. These include, but are not limited to, the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960, the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. I have fully considered the effects

of this decision on the public, as well as the public's issues and concerns brought forward during the comment periods and feel that these issues have been adequately addressed in the Old Joe Project Revised EA, its appendices and in this Decision Notice. I have determined that my decision to implement the Old Joe Project meets all applicable laws, regulations, and policies, as well as Forest Service direction and guidance as outlined in the Forest Service Manuals and Handbooks.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have determined that the selected activities described in Alternative C are not a major federal action, individually or cumulatively, and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination is based on the context and intensity of the activities:

(a) CONTEXT 40 CFR 1508.27(a)

The analysis of the proposal is in a localized area with implications only for this area. All irreversible resource commitments and irretrievable losses of resources are limited to the immediate project area and do not have effects beyond the immediate locale. The cumulative effects of past management, combined with the current proposal and reasonably foreseeable future actions, are displayed by the various resource sections throughout Chapter III of the revised EA. As a result of the analysis of those effects, I feel that the context of this decision, both from a biological and social standpoint, is localized. I realize that some wildlife species, for example large mammals and migratory birds, and various MIS, range outside of the project area boundary. Considering this, my decision is consistent with the management direction outlined in the Forest Plan, and with the Forest Plan EIS that analyzed, at a larger scale, the effects of the type of activities that will be implemented through this decision.

(b) INTENSITY 40 CFR 1508.27(b) (1-10)

Intensity is a measure of the severity of effects and is based on determinations for the following ten factors:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Impacts associated with my decision are disclosed in Chapter III of the EA. Both beneficial and adverse effects have been taken into consideration when making this determination of significance. Each impact, beneficial or adverse, was considered individually, and no beneficial impact was considered to offset any adverse effect in determining severity and significance. There are no direct, indirect or cumulative adverse impacts that are significant in their effect upon other resources, as they pertain to the relevant issues analyzed in the EA. Impacts from this decision are not unique to this project alone. Previous projects having had similar activities and effects were also taken into consideration when measuring severity and significance.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

There is no indication based on the environmental analysis and implementation of projects similar to this in the past that there will be serious implications to public health or safety. The proposal makes extensive efforts to minimize shared use of roads by snow travelers

during the harvest operations. The mitigation measures on page C-2 of the revised EA, and as disclosed on pages III-1 through III-7, will reduce the potential for user conflicts. Also, the project does not involve or have any implications to National Defense or Security.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area.

The EA did not identify any unacceptable impacts to any unique geographic areas. According to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR Part 1508.27(b)(3)), unique characteristics are defined "such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas."

A cultural resource inventory has been completed for the project area and all known resources will be protected by buffering from any management activities (revised EA p. III-48 through III-50; p. C-1, p. D-3). Additionally, the potential for impacting yet undiscovered sites is adequately mitigated in the Forest Plan standards and guidelines and in the standard timber sale contract.

There are no park lands or prime farm lands within the project area.

A few small wetlands exist in the project area. The effects to these wetlands areas are disclosed on pages III-35 through III-42 of the revised EA. No wetlands will be severely impacted or eliminated. Mitigation measures (revised EA p. C-2 through C-3, and discussed on p. III-35 through III-42), such as harvesting on frozen or snow covered conditions, will minimize the effects to these wetland areas. Forest Service inspectors will closely monitor operations in these areas. Based on my personal observations and those of timber sale administrators and our soil scientist, many of these areas have been harvested under winter conditions in the past with minimal or no environmental effects. It is my conclusion that there will be no significant environmental effects to wetland areas, in particular, where commercial timber harvest will occur.

Bingo Brook and Chittenden Brook are currently listed in the Forest Plan as Significant Streams (revised EA p. III-2), and portions of these streams occur within the project area. These streams are managed in accordance to the MA 9.4 Standards and Guidelines for potential Recreational Rivers. All Alternative C activities within these stream corridors are consistent with the standards and guidelines outlined for the protection of these streams, and will not jeopardize their eligibility for inclusion into the National Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River System. Impacts of selected activities on project area streams is found in the Chapter III sections for Soil, Water, and Wetland Resources (p. III-35 through III-42) and Fisheries (III-43 through III-48). See also Appendix G of the revised EA, Response to Public Comments, under the topic Acid Rain; Soils & Water Resources; Stream Improvements; Significant Streams.

Ecologically critical areas are those areas that exhibit unique ecological characteristics or, if altered, may affect the viability of threatened or endangered plant or animal species. Botanical and wildlife surveys were conducted throughout the project area and Biological Evaluations (BEs) were completed for both plants and animals (Appendix E of the revised EA). No Threatened or Endangered plants are listed for the GMNF. It has been

determined that at least some marginally good potential habitat exists for eleven Sensitive plant species (revised EA p. III-13; p. E-34 through E-38), but this habitat is not unique in any way (it is mostly “basic northern hardwoods”, p. E-36), and therefore, cannot be considered ecologically critical. None of the TES animal species tracked for the GMNF are known to have documented occurrences within the project area, either currently or historically, and no critical habitat has been identified in the project area (revised EA p. E-1). One federally listed species (Indiana bat) and one Regionally Sensitive species (Eastern small-footed bat) have been identified as having potential or suitable habitat in the project area but this habitat is also not unique or ecologically critical. No other ecologically critical areas have been identified. I conclude that there will be no significant impacts to ecologically critical areas.

Based upon these considerations, I conclude there will be no significant effects on unique characteristics within the geographic area.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The selected activities of Alternative C will contribute toward reaching the desired future condition and goals and objectives outlined by the Forest Plan. The Old Joe Project EA is tiered to the Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Forest-wide effects of actions similar to those of Alternative C have been disclosed in that EIS. All actions are of a similar type and intensity to activities that have occurred in the past throughout the Forest and in this area, and have not shown to be scientifically controversial to the extent that the quality of the human environment is significantly impacted.

A relatively small number (58) of comments were received in response to the mailing of the EA for Public Comment, and those responses were about equally split between support and non-support (see Appendix G). The number of public comments or differing opinions does not, in and of itself, make an issue controversial. Controversy as described above is a dispute within the scientific community. I expect this decision will not be acceptable to everyone. However, based on the comments received, and the involvement of Forest Service resource specialists and experts from other agencies, it is my determination that the effects of the management actions in Alternative C are not thought to represent a scientifically controversial impact upon the quality of the human environment.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The actions included in my decision are similar to many past actions, both in this project area and in other areas across the Forest. The commercial timber sale will involve common harvesting practices and standard contractual requirements. The IDT that conducted the analysis encountered nothing that would indicate a unique or major unknown risk to the human environment. The effects of these actions (Chapter III; Appendix E) are within the range of effects disclosed at a broader scale in the Forest Plan EIS, are similar to effects of other like actions, and are reasonably predictable. I conclude that there are no unique or unusual characteristics about the area, which have not been previously encountered, that would constitute an unknown risk to the human environment.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

This is not a precedent setting decision. Similar actions have occurred previously in the local area and across the Forest, and as has been stated, the effects of Alternative C are within the range of effects of these other similar actions and within the range of effects disclosed in the Forest Plan EIS . All actions are wholly consistent with the Forest Plan, and therefore this is not a decision in principle. This decision does not commit me to actions on lands outside the project area that may have significant effects. I conclude that this action does not establish precedence for future actions with unknown adverse impacts to the environment.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant impacts.

Chapter III of the revised EA discusses the combined effects of this project with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. None of the actions of Alternative C are severe enough to create an unacceptable and significant impact when related to other actions. Based on the discussion in the EA and the Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, I conclude that there are no significant cumulative impacts.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or may cause loss, or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

A cultural resource inventory of the area was completed and three specific sites of concern were identified (revised EA p. III-48 through III-49). Mitigation will be used and actions monitored, including administration of timber sale contract clauses, to ensure that there will be no adverse effects to these areas (revised EA p. C-1; p. D-3). Implementation of these mitigation measures for similar projects has proven to be successful in protecting these types of sites from disturbance (revised EA p. III-50). As a result, no significant impacts will occur to any proposed or listed National Historic Places nor will there be any loss or destruction of scientific, cultural, or historic places.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The actions of Alternative C will not lead to significant impacts to endangered or threatened species or their habitats. The terms and conditions of the Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in regards to the recently completed EA, DN and FONSI for the Proposed Amendment of the Green Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species on September 11, 2001, will be applied to the selected actions. Reference the section above entitled Endangered Species Act Compliance, page 14. See also, the revised EA, Appendix E, and page III-13.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The activities of Alternative C are consistent with, and follow the management direction and standards and guides mandated by, the Forest Plan. The Final EIS and Record of Decision for the Forest Plan indicate the consistency of the Forest Plan with laws and requirements imposed for environmental protection. The EA and this decision document disclose that Alternative C is in compliance with Federal and State Endangered Species Acts, National Forest Management Act, heritage resource protection laws, and other resource protection requirements. Any required permits will be obtained before implementation occurs. The actions do not threaten a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

APPEAL RIGHTS

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.7. An appeal may be filed by those who have commented on or otherwise expressed interest in this specific project before the close of the Response to Public Comment period (July 1). To appeal this decision, a written Notice of Appeal must be postmarked or received within 45 calendar days after the date that the legal notice of this decision is published in the Rutland Herald newspaper, Rutland, VT. The first day of the filing period begins on the day after the legal notice appears in the aforementioned paper of record. When the 45-day filing period would end on a Saturday, Sunday or Federal holiday, the filing time is extended to the end of the next Federal working day. The Notice of Appeal must be mailed to:

USDA, Forest Service, Eastern Regional Office
ATTN: Appeals Deciding Officer
310 West Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203

The Notice of Appeal may alternatively be faxed to:

414-297-3127
Attn: Appeals Deciding Officer
USDA Forest Service
Eastern Regional Office

An appeal must: 1) state that the document is an appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215; 2) state the appellant's name, address, and telephone number; 3) identify the decision being appealed (include the title of this document, its date, and the name and title of the Responsible Official who signed it; 4) identify the specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks or the portion of the decision to which the appellant objects; and 5) state how the Responsible Official's decision fails to consider comments previously provided, either before or during the 30-day comment period and if applicable, how the appellant believes the decision violates law, regulation, or policy.

Detailed records of the Environmental Analysis are available for public review at the Green Mountain National Forest, Manchester Ranger District, 2538 Depot St., Manchester Center, Vt. 05255.

If no appeal is received, implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, five (5) business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received,

implementation may not occur for fifteen (15) days following the date of appeal disposition.

For additional information concerning this decision, please contact the Responsible Official, Stephen J. Kimball, District Ranger for the Middlebury and Rochester Ranger Districts, 99 Ranger Road, Rochester, VT. 05767 (802-767-4261 ext. 513), or Bob Bayer, Environmental Coordinator and Project Leader, Manchester Ranger District, 2538 Depot St., Manchester Center, VT. 05255 (802-362-2307 ext. 218).

STEPHEN J. KIMBALL
District Ranger

Date

**Table DN-1. Summary of Alternative C
Vegetation Management Activities by Management Area**

<u>Stand</u>	<u>Layout Unit</u>	<u>Stand Acres</u>	<u>Forest Type</u>	<u>Treatment Method</u>	<u>Harvest Acres *</u>
MANAGEMENT AREA 2.1A Compartment 158					
4	4	106	Hardwood	Single Tree/Group Selection	25 ***
11	5	14	Mixedwood	Single Tree/Group Selection	16 ***
Subtotal:		120 acres			Affected Acres: 41
MANAGEMENT AREA 4.1 Compartment 118					
11	9	11	Hardwood	Single Tree/Group Selection	11
12	9	28	Softwood	Single Tree/Group Selection	14
Compartment 125					
1	7	22	Hardwood	Thinning	16

1	7	--- **	Hardwood	Aspen Clearcut	6
9	12	43	Hardwood	Thinning	34
9	12	--- **	Hardwood	Aspen Clearcut	6
18	8	26	Hardwood	Overstory Removal	17
19	11	18	Hardwood	Overstory Removal	12
Compartment 158					
14	3	10	Hardwood	Thinning	9
15	6	29	Hardwood	Overstory Removal	14
19	2	22	Hardwood	Shelterwood	8
Subtotal:		209 Acres			Affected Acres: 147
MANAGEMENT AREA 6.2A Compartment 118					
14	10	102	Hardwood	Single Tree/Group Selection	43
14	16	--- **	Hardwood	Single Tree/Group Selection	34
Compartment 125					
7	14	145	Hardwood	Single Tree/Group Selection	24 ***
7	-	--- **	Hardwood	Create Wildlife Opening	5
7	15	--- **	Hardwood	Delayed Shelterwood	9
21	13	34	Hardwood	Overstory Removal	13
Subtotal:		281 Acres			Affected Acres: 128

Total Acres of Stands Proposed for Harvest/Treatment: 610 Acres

Total Acres That Will Be Affected by Harvest: 316 Acres

Estimated volume of wood products produced: 978 MBF (1.0 MMBF rounded)

* Harvest Acres totals are based on actual layout of the harvest unit on the ground.

** Stand acres already accounted for elsewhere in this table.

*** Group opening sizes are 3/4 to 1 acre in size.

**** Unit size reduced by three acres from that shown in the revised EA due to mitigation.

**Table DN-2. Summary of the Alternative C
Vegetation Management Activities by Treatment Method**

<u>Compartment</u>	<u>Stand</u>	<u>Layout Unit</u>	<u>Stand Acres</u>	<u>Forest Type</u>	<u>Harvest Acres</u>	
Single Tree/Group Selection Harvests						
158	4	4	106	Hardwood	25	**
158	11	5	14	Mixedwood	16	**
118	11	9	11	Hardwood	11	
118	12	9	28	Softwood	14	
118	14	10	102	Hardwood	43	
118	14	16	---	Hardwood	34	*
125	7	14	145	Hardwood	24	**
Subtotal:			406	Affected Acres:	167	
Thinning Harvests						
125	1	7	22	Hardwood	16	***
125	9	12	43	Hardwood	34	
158	14	3	10	Hardwood	9	
Subtotal:			75	Affected Acres:	59	
Aspen Clearcut Harvests						
125	1	7	---	Hardwood	6	*
125	9	12	---	Hardwood	6	*
Subtotal:			---	Affected Acres:	12	
Overstory Removals						
125	18	8	26	Hardwood	17	
125	19	11	18	Hardwood	12	
125	21	13	34	Hardwood	13	
158	15	6	29	Hardwood	14	
Subtotal:			107	Affected Acres:	56	
Shelterwood Harvests (SW)						
158	19	2	22	Hardwood	8	
125	7	15	---	Hardwood	9	(Delayed SW)
Subtotal:			22	Affected Acres:	17	
Wildlife Openings						
125	7		---	Hardwood	5	*
Subtotal:			---	Affected Acres:	5	

Total Acres of Stands Proposed for Harvest/Treatment: 610 Acres

Total Acres That Will Be Affected by Harvest: 316 Acres

* Stand acres already accounted for elsewhere in this table.

** Group opening sizes increased from Proposed Action to about 3/4 to 1 acre.

*** Unit size reduced by three acres from that shown in the revised EA due to mitigation.

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**U.S. Department of
Agriculture**



Forest Service

Address Service Requested

**Green Mountain and Finger Lakes
National Forests**

231 N. Main St.
Rutland, VT 05701

TO:



**Green Mountain National Forest
Decision Notice & Finding of No Significant Impact**

**Revised Environmental Assessment for the Old
Joe Project**

BEFORE Back Page, INSERT Appendix G