



File Code: 1950/2630-1

Date: 1/06/2010

Dear Concerned Citizen,

The US Forest Service is proposing to implement the **2010 Mio Wildlife Opening Categorical Exclusion Project** on the Mio Ranger District of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. This letter is to provide you the opportunity to comment on this project.

Proposed Project Location

The project area includes sites in: T26N R1W and T25N R1W of South Branch Township in Crawford County, T26N R1E, T26N R2E, T25N R1E and T25N R2E of Big Creek Township, Oscoda, County and T26N R3E of Mentor Township, Oscoda. Detailed maps of the 64 proposed project sites may be viewed at the Mio Ranger District office or online at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/hmnf/pages/planningandprojects/mio.htm>

Purpose and Need of Proposed Project

The purpose of the proposed activities is to implement goals and objectives established in the Huron-Manistee National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (Forests' Plan). The proposed project areas are in need of treatment to meet the goals and objectives established by the Forests' Plan. This need will be met by enhancing wildlife habitats on the unit and providing early successional habitats including food sources and nesting cover for a variety of wildlife on the unit.

All but two openings occur within portions of MA 4.2, Roaded Natural Sandy Plains and Hills or MA 4.2 KW as described in the Forests' Plan. Forests' Plan direction for MA 4.2 (pp. III-4.2-2) specifies that "management activities enhance and increase the variety of wildlife habitats with emphasis given to managing deer, grouse and wildlife and providing a variety of recreational opportunities". Other goals and objectives for MA 4.2 include "provide vegetative age diversity in all vegetation classes" and "managing permanent openings and/or grasslands to meet species viability needs."

Openings 85-7 and 85-11 occur in MA 6.1, Semiprimitive Nonmotorized Areas as described in the Forests' Plan. Forests' Plan direction for MA 6.1 (III-6.1-4) specifies that the goals and objectives include 'Provides visual variety by providing visual diversity', and 'Manage permanent openings and /or grasslands to meet species viability needs.'

Proposed Actions

- Create or improve approximately 734 acres of wildlife openings by non-commercial cutting to remove coniferous and deciduous woody encroachment with a combination of hand-tools, mechanical methods and/or prescribed fire.
- Treat non-native invasive plant species by hand pulling or mechanical means.

All wildlife opening creation and improvements are proposed to be implemented over a 5 year period beginning in 2010 and would be treated on 3-10 year rotation.

The proposed actions fall into the categories described in Forest Service Handbook (FSH)1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 31.2 - Category of Action for Which a Project or Case File and Decision Memo Are Required, Categories 6 and 12. Category 6: Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction. Category 12: Harvest of live trees not to exceed 70 acres, requiring no more than ½ mile of temporary road construction.



A proposed action may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment if there are no extraordinary circumstances in accordance with Chapter 30 of FSH 1909.15 and if the actions are within one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30, Sections 31.1 or 31.2. Preliminary review of the proposed action indicates it will not impact wetlands or floodplains, congressionally designated areas, Research Natural Areas, threatened, sensitive or endangered species, designated critical habitat, or religious or cultural sites. This will be verified during field surveys and reviews by District specialists and documented in their reports. This project is similar to previous wildlife habitat improvement projects on the Huron-Manistee National Forests where no adverse direct, indirect, or cumulative effects are known to have occurred.

For additional and more specific information regarding this proposed action, contact Eric O'Neil, U.S. Forest Service, 107 McKinley Rd., Mio, MI 48647, (989) 826-3252 ext. 3323.

Comments

We would like your input concerning the proposed actions listed above. The input you provide will be factored into the analysis as we look to identify issues and/or concerns. Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the *Oscoda County Herald*. Written comments may be submitted to: U.S. Forest Service, Mio Ranger District, 107 McKinley Road, Mio, MI 48647, or by fax (989) 826-6073. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., M-F, excluding holidays. E-comments may be sent to comments-eastern-huron-manistee-mio@fs.fed.us. Oral comments may be provided during normal business hours via telephone to Eric O'Neil or Phil Huber, (989) 826-3252, or in person at the Mio Ranger District office.

This action will not be subject to appeal FSH 1909.15 31.2 (1). Comments received in response to this project will become a matter of public record. Copies of the final decision will be mailed to people who request a copy of these documents.

Sincerely,

/s/ Steven A. Goldman

STEVEN A. GOLDMAN
District Ranger

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