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For Immediate Release

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Forest Begins Planning Restoration Project; Seeks Public Input

Clarksville, ARK – Forest officials have announced they are in the beginning stages of planning a project designed to restore forest health, curb non-native invasive species and improve fish and wildlife habitat near the Mulberry Wild and Scenic River. Public input at this stage will help managers identify issues prior to developing a proposal.

“This is an opportunity for interested members of the public to have their voice heard from the very beginning,” said District Ranger Pat Kowalewycz (Kove-uh-lev-itch). “The project area is located near the Mulberry River and the “Pig Trail”, a part of the forest special to a lot of people, including the Forest Service.”

The Brushy Mountain Project area is bounded on the north by AR Hwy 215, on the west by AR Hwy 23, on the south by the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests boundary, and to the east by roads known locally as Low Bridge Road and Pink Twist Road. The project “box” encompasses a little more than 17,000 acres, including 4,400 acres of private lands. No work will occur on private lands, however cooperative agreements may be forged that would allow prescribed burning across ownership boundaries where it would benefit both parties, if that is part of the final decision.

The project is part of the routine order of entry for the Pleasant Hill Ranger District, with forest health laying the foundation for the project proposal.

“It’s time to take a look at this area and see what the needs are,” said Kowalewycz. “We have a goal of looking at all lands managed by the Forest Service over a 10-15 year period, and Brushy Mountain is next in line.”

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She said the Forest Service knows what some of those needs are, such as developing a plan to eradicate ‘tree of heaven’, a non-native invasive species quickly becoming a problem in some areas of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests, but over the next few months will be taking a much closer look at other issues in the area. These include ascertaining actions that meet visual goals along the scenic river and highway, analyzing the impact of actions on soils and water, and identifying wildlife needs, including the federally endangered Indiana bat.

Interested members of the public are encouraged to submit comments addressing wildlife habitat improvement, recreation opportunities, or any known problems with non-native invasive species, or forest health by February 12, 2016. Comments may be submitted in writing or in person at 2591 Highway 21 North, Clarksville, AR 72830 or via telephone at 479-754-2864.

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