DECISION MEMO
Big Piney Ranger District
Ozark-St. Francis National Forests

Hagarville Tornado Salvage Project

Decision

I have decided to implement the actions necessary for a salvage timber project of 250 acres caused by a tornado in April of 2016. A severe weather/wind event occurred in Johnson County approximately four miles north of Hagarville, Arkansas causing timber blowdown across approximately 1,000 acres of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forest. Specific activities consist of a commercial salvage harvest of severely damaged trees. Removal of these trees would reduce the amount of hazardous fuels caused by the storm and increase the safety of forest visitors and Forest Service personnel. Following the salvage operations, treatments of manual site preparation, pine or hardwood planting, and manual release could occur.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). These activities fall under *36 CFR 220.6(e) (13) Salvage of dead and/or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than1/2mile of temporary road construction. The proposed action may include incidental removal of live or dead trees for landings, skid trails, and road clearing.*

The categorical exclusion (CE) is appropriate in this situation because no known extraordinary circumstances were identified through project scoping or analysis, and these actions do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment.

Public Involvement

A legal notice was published in Russellville's ***The Courier*** on April 17, 2016 and in ***The Graphic*** on April 20, 2016. Letters (121) were sent to neighboring landowners, interested public and the Native American Tribes asking for comments on the project proposal. Eleven of those letters were returned as undeliverable. Three responses were received from Native American Tribes. Two of those responses had no issues with the project proposal. The other response was requesting a Heritage Resource survey be completed before proceeding with the salvage project. A letter was sent to the Native American tribe clarifying that three Heritage Resource surveys had been completed in the areas where the project was to take place and no other issues were brought forward.

Findings Required by Other Laws

This decision is consistent with the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests Land and Resources Management Plan, as required by the National Forest Management Act.

I have determined that there will be no adverse effects to Threatened and Endangered Species or their Critical Habitat, Floodplains, Wetlands or Municipal Watersheds, Congressionally Designated Areas, Native American Religious or Cultural Sites, Archaeological Sites or Historic Properties or Areas.

A NEPA Categorical Exclusion pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Programmatic Agreement was completed and signed on May 16, 2016 and a copy is on file at the Supervisor's Office in Russellville. There will be "no effect to historic properties' from this decision. This salvage project has been designed such that all known heritage resources have been excluded from any ground disturbing activities.
In the event of an unanticipated discovery of historic property within the project area occurs, all project activities in the immediate vicinity of the discovery will be halted, the Forest and/or District Archaeologist will be notified, the property will be recorded with a recommendation as to eligibility forwarded to the Arkansas State Historic Preservation Officer (Arkansas SHPO) and affected Tribes. At which time, consultation and concurrence on findings will be sought prior to any additional ground disturbance in the affected area.

A Biological Evaluation was completed for this project in April of 2016. The US Fish and Wildlife Service was informally consulted and a concurrence letter received and filed at the District Office.

My decision is based on a review of relevant scientific information utilizing the best available science and other relevant information, a consideration of responsible views, and the acknowledgement that there may be some unknown, but relevant, information that would be useful in designing and analyzing the project's activities. I am satisfied that the efforts to discover and address the environmental impacts of this project are adequate and sufficient.

Implementation Date

This project may be implemented immediately.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

These actions are not subject to appeal (36 CFR 215.12 9(f)) Decisions for actions that have been categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS pursuant to FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30, section 31.

Responsible Official

Timothy E. Jones
District Ranger

Date: 6-28-2016

This decision is consistent with the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests Land and Resources Management Plan, as required by the National Forest Management Act.

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