

Bankhead National Forest  
Liaison Panel  
Meeting Agenda  
First National Bank  
May 19, 2016

6:00	Meeting Facilitator Introduction Ground rules review	Andy Scott Research Soil Scientist, USFS
6:15	District Ranger Welcome & Updates	Dave Casey District Ranger, USFS, Bankhead
6:45	Forest Health & Restoration Projects &	Allison Cochran, Wildlife Biologist, USFS, Bankhead Stewardship Proposal
7:00	Recreation Working Group Report	Mike Cook  ORA, USFS, Bankhead
7:45	Black Warrior WMA harvest updates	Kevin Pugh Black Warrior WMA Manager and Biologist
8:15	Closeout Next meeting & agenda items Other panel business items	Dave Casey, District Ranger, USFS, Bankhead
8:30	Adjourn	

**Liaison Members Present:**

James Barnacastle	Mike Henshaw	Kevin Pugh	Charles Borden
Chuck Byrd	Mark Kolinski	Russell Miller	James Alexander
John Howell			

**Bankhead National Forest Attendees**

Dave Casey	Allison Cochran	Mike Cook
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**Visitors**

Janice Barrett	Betsy Dill	Wes Stone	Iwo Gross
Jennifer Fischer	Jeff Hendrix	Robin West	Levi Brown

Ranger Dave Casey opened with a summary of various recent and ongoing BNF activities  
Recreation:

One staff member short, Mike (Cook) is working on options.

At Brushy Lake, a wind event in March caused damage. We're working on a salvage sale next week or asap to reopen Brushy Lake Campground

Piers at boat ramps are getting worked on. Corinth should be under contract within a month.

Recreation Working Group is meeting monthly. This group of 12-13 folks is discussing how to move forward to meet public wants & desires while protecting resources and within budget

**Timber:**

Draft EA for Houston Longleaf project should be released within the next two weeks. It will be on the website, please give comments.

We're working on a Forest Health project to perform first thinnings of young loblolly stands. Allison will give information later this evening.

We're continuing to treat NNIS (non-native invasive species)

We filled a forester position and we're working on silviculture position

**Fire:**

We prescribe burned more than expected

In 2016 we did not use a helicopter for prescribed burning, partly due to Desoto NF helicopter crash [incident](#) where two lives were lost. Considering the risk and weighing that against the outcome.

Using five fewer people for burning, we still got 21K+ acres burned

**Wildlife:**

Working on project surveys

Feral swine trapping

Stewardship proposal alongside Forest Health project to use receipts to do projects not normally affordable

**Hurricane Creek Shooting Range**

Maintenance this year, will be closed temporarily

Try to have closure during summer to avoid impacts on users

Bridge replacement on Rush Creek, Removing a box culvert and installing a bridge. Likely to occur this summer or fall.

James Barnacastle asked about No Littering signs at boat ramps

The [Youth Fishing Derby will be June 4, 2016 at Work Center](#)

Allison Cochran: Forest Health & Restoration Projects

### **Forest Health**

The 2014 Farm Bill amended the Healthy Forest Restoration Act to create new Categorical Exclusions (CE) from further NEPA analysis for forest health

Covers thinnings and other treatments designed to lower risk for southern pine beetle, Hemlock wooly adelgid, and other threats

We will identify overstocked young pine stands, and thin to a residual 60-80 sq. ft. basal area.

Approximately 3000 acres

We will still do Cultural Resource surveys, etc. for NEPA

Identified area south of Wilderness as our first priority

### **Stewardship Project**

We're planning a Stewardship proposal in conjunction with CE

A Stewardship Project blends the need to work with public with the need to manage forest

Stewardship Projects essentially trade goods for services

Can be used to work across large landscapes

Collaboration is required: need input from public

Possible Stewardship Projects

Roads & trails

Soil productivity

Prescribed Burning

Remove vegetation

Watershed restoration

Wildlife & fish

NNIS

BNF requests input on the scope, etc. of stewardship. How and what do we want to accomplish with stewardship projects? Do we need a workshop around project? Some contracts haven't been bid on. A lively discussion ensued.

### **Name Abbreviations:**

MH= Mike Henshaw	AC= Allison Cochran
DC= Dave Casey	BY= Charles Byrd
MK= Mark Kolinski	CB= Charles Borden
RM= Russell Miller	WS= William (WES) Stone
KP= Kevin Pugh	MC= Mike Cook
JB= James Barnacastle	

MH: A workshop was held on another NF to encourage businesses to bid

AC: On a previous stewardship project, BNF had a meeting with buyers when sale was advertised, but not well before bids (not in planning phase)

DC: Most mill owners, loggers, etc don't do the other stuff or know the subcontractors to do NNIS, wildlife openings, etc.

BY: Georgia NWTF (National Wild Turkey Federation) had a stewardship contract, Nature Conservancy did the burning.

DC: NWTF has supplemental project agreement with Forest Service for Stewardship

MK: Average timber buyer likely not comfortable bidding based on the complication of other services. May need to find a stewardship contractor.

DC: An individual could purchase and subcontract much of the other stuff.

RM: There's a limited number of buyers willing to buy NF timber plus they don't understand how stewardship works. Will need a lot of bidders to look at thinnings due to low price on pine pulpwood. Need people who have ability to move pulpwood and then help them with stewardship.

MK: Was there a change in acreage? How much will be available to stewardship?

AC: That's still part of our question. Could do any or all, or even bring in Houston LL

MK: Maybe it's not a good time to do a stewardship based on pulpwood. Houston LL could have stewardship.

DC: Not a big fan of stewardship, but SPB is likely coming and ecologically it's needed. With thinning, we don't have required projects required by KV funds. This way, we can use the funds.

RM: Proposed area 85-100 miles to nearest mill for pine pulpwood. Logging costs increased so much when Courtland pulp mill shut down.

CB: Loggers have question about complexity of multiple projects. Could smaller projects with more simple service work better so they developed expertise.

DC: Any ideas from public on what things should be spent? Especially things BNF doesn't get appropriated support for.

KP: Get rid of Eleagnus.

DC: Trail maintenance, soil & water maintenance. Roads

CB: Wild hog issues...discussion on how to do that

WS: Would thinning qualify as restoration? Seems like a bigger project with a PCT would be useful.

MK: District's greatest need? 300 acres NNIS, is it road maintenance, what's the greatest deficit? NNIS too pervasive to treat in most forest, but priority wildlife areas could be treated, etc.

AC: Midstory removals in wildlife/woodland area

#### Rec Working Group Update- Mike Cook

About a year ago, a LP meeting had quite a bit of discussion on recreation. Decided to have a working group to continue to move forward with recreation

Identified rec opportunities, establish priorities, move rec programs to DFC

Used variety of estimates for visitor use days on each rec usage

Described current assessment of supply and demand for each rec areas

Next steps will be on developing priorities, then describe vision & desired conditions

#### Comments and Discussion

KP: Hunting up last year, but down overall. Licenses staying the same, but population increasing. Concerned about future hunters

#### Surprises & Discussions

JB: hunting down, shooting up.

KP: Shooters are up over past 8 years, but they aren't hunters.

AC: Did you discuss crossover uses? Such as hunting - campers  
MC: Somewhat. We tried to estimate as best as possible  
BY: Can you use trail cameras?  
MC: We can use counters, not cameras. We can ask people (not actual surveys)  
MK: WildSouth has multiple use data in the Wilderness from field reports  
JB: Is data skewed because of gates?  
DC: Lots of effort to adjust estimates based on data  
MK: Will you develop pie chart of BNF budget for each usage?  
MC: Yes, as good as possible.  
MK: Need to see how costs and uses are matched, or not  
MC: Meet the two months between LP meetings. Non-LP members adding high value to the process.  
WG exceeding expectations and vitally important.  
DC: Reiterate need and value of public involvement. This whole issue is a “wicked problem”, and this process is vital.

#### WMA Harvest Updates: Kevin Pugh

Started in November on Black Warrior WMA

Deer and other wildlife issues came up at last meeting

Deer & turkey numbers are down significantly

Hunters down as well, but not whole picture

Zone A=West of 33, Zone B=East of 33

Zone A: Age structure of harvested Antlered Deer has shifted to older deer since 2007-2008

Mature deer structure is good

Recruitment of young bucks isn't good

Zone B: Antler restriction designed to improve young buck recruitment into mature bucks

Much higher percentage of mature bucks in zone B.

Restriction is working to produce desired age structure

Hunters are more concerned with antlers, not age structure

Data indicate zones have similar antlers by age class

CB: Why would you expect a difference?

When you have an uneven age structure, you get younger bucks trying to breed, etc. If you have more mature bucks, they hold that back, which allows younger bucks to spend time eating, etc.

KP: My thinking is that deer are well fed regardless so this theory isn't holding for this case. Harvest rates for past 20 years showed higher harvest in 1980s, and was almost all bucks. Since then, much more antlerless harvesting allowed on private lands. My opinion is that overall population is down.

CB: I brought up issue years ago, and brought up idea of southern whitetail restocking. Montgomery didn't have the time to do a 5-10 yr study with Auburn, so they wanted to control genetics issue and improved population by increasing native southern genetics. Food availability is not great in areas of WMA and wouldn't support a “normal” population.

KP: Restocked with south Alabama deer, which probably wasn't native in Bankhead. Closer to the Michigan deer. Concerns with EHD (hemorrhagic disease), which increases when populations are stressed. There is food available in certain areas. Enough food for current population. I think habitat is definitely a part. Thinnings, shortleaf, etc. good for deer and all wildlife populations. Hogs and other invasives, as well as an increase in predation by coyotes and bobcats, which have increased.

CB: Saw study on Fort Rucker showed 65% mortality due to predation

KP: About 30% mortality naturally – adult bucks

BY: Vehicle impacts?

AC: No good data, not as high. Hog strikes higher than deer, anecdotally

Proposed ideas are to limit either sex harvests on WMA. Cut back on doe days until population numbers recover. Don't need to harvest does with low deer numbers. Working on both gun and archery regulations

Proposal for upcoming hunting season would include reduction of doe days on Forest Service lands as well

Deer on private is higher due to better habitat, other issues.

If game check goes through, we'll have better data

CB: I advocated for antler restriction on eastern side. I asked for it on both sides, but Ron Eakes had same arguments on west side for not restricting hunters. I got it done on the eastern side. Conversations at the time noted that if it worked and hunters weren't opposed it would be instituted on the western side. Need to continue discussion with KP to understand context.

KP: One major issue is inability to manage wilderness area, can't affect habitat.

KP: We were able to offer a pre-rut and rut hunt, 986 permits, 40% checked. Only 5 deer killed over two days. This is a major problem.

Game check will help show if management helps populations

Wrap up: We don't know everything. Likely a combination of habitat, overharvest of does in past, invasives, other.

DC: Converting Type 31 (loblolly) stands isn't the point of stewardship, but hopefully it will set up conditions for conversion.

### **Dave Casey closed out the meeting**

We had a mixup with Wes and Iwo (from AAMU) on the agenda. Wes and others are working on BREC (Bankhead Research and Education Center) to get it moving. We'll hopefully have Lisa Gardner at the next meeting to talk more about BREC etc.

Wes: Will be going to DC to discuss with Congress. Handed out talking points to congress

Lisa Gardner to join the panel from AAMU, but couldn't be here tonight (in China)

**Note** James Barnacastle as LP member from Winston County Smith Lake Advocacy