

**Bankhead National Forest  
Liaison Panel  
May 2018 Meeting Summary**

**Meeting Agenda  
First National Bank  
May 10, 2018**

<b>6:00</b>	<b>Ranger Welcome, Updates and Intro</b> Ground rules review	<b>Andy Scott</b> District Ranger, USFS Bankhead
<b>6:15</b>	<b>2018 SPB CE (NEPA) and Beetle Sale Update</b> Caney, Mill Creek, Dry Hollow Sales	<b>Blake Addison</b> TMA, USFS, Bankhead
<b>6:30</b>	<b>Aquatic Species Partnership</b> Listed Species Updates	<b>Jeff Baker</b> Biologist, Alabama Power Company
<b>7:00</b>	<b>Rare Community Conservation</b> Glade Restoration Updates	<b>Allison Cochran,</b> Wildlife Biologist, USFS, Bankhead
<b>7:30</b>	<b>Wilderness Partnership Projects</b> NNIS Inventory, Borden Creek	<b>Kim Waites</b> Wild South
<b>8:00</b>	<b>Closeout &amp; Adjourn</b> Next meeting & agenda items Other panel business items	<b>Andy Scott</b>

In attendance at the May 10, 2018 Liaison Panel meeting were Liaison Panel members Mike Henshaw, James Barnacastle, James Alexander, Charles Borden, and Mark Kolinski. Forest Service staff attending included Andy Scott, Kerry Clark, Blake Addison, Jason Harris, Allison Cochran, Gaylon McGraw, Krystal Reddy, and Dustin Rolan. Also in attendance were Paul Housel of Representative Aderholt's office, Kim Waites, Scott Shaw, Joey Stephenson, Brandon Bobo, Kozma Naka and forestry students from Alabama A&M University, and Rickie Gardner.

#### Bankhead National Forest Updates

Ranger Andy Scott provided updates on the Bankhead National Forest. He introduced new employees. Krystal Reddy is a firefighter apprentice. Dustin Rolan is an Auburn University Wildlife student intern. Shane Hoskins has been selected as the new ORA and will arrive in early June from the Inyo National Forest in California. Stephen White has been selected as the new timber marker and also starts in June.

Updates on the Secure Rural Schools Act and programs. Funding has been reauthorized by Congress. Title 2 Funds have been approved by the Alabama Resource Advisory Council and are being put in agreements with Winston County and Lawrence County.

There was a wildfire in the Sipsey Wilderness, the Little Ugly wildfire, that was about 30 acres in size and it has been controlled. All prescribed burning is complete for the year with the exception of site preparation burns. The timber program is at about 90% of our goal for this year. Silviculture updates include that Jason Harris is working through the National Advanced Silviculture Program to become a certified silviculturist. Wildlife biologists and volunteers have been working on bird point count surveys (monitoring) and planting wildlife openings and pollinator habitat. Biologists have also been working on some sensitive species projects that are on the agenda tonight. Updates from the recreation and engineering shop include maintenance issues due to rain. Due to very much rain, many of our roads are in very bad shape. Forest Service Road 254 (Brushy Creek Road) is closed due to a failed culvert which will be replaced this summer. Flint Creek multiple use ORV trail is reported to be in bad condition due to rain and may require a temporary closure. Three of the four lift station pumps at Corinth Rec Area are down. There are questions on the appropriate use of the Wild and Scenic River related to motorized boats running up Sipsey and Brushy from Smith Lake. Andy is looking into appropriate uses, in addition to natural resources and public safety concerns. There is a question about access and vandalism at the Poplar Springs Cemetery and Andy will be looking into that, as well. The Sipsey Hiking Club is meeting at the Sipsey Picnic Area on 5/19. A Search and Rescue operation in the Sipsey Wilderness Area required necessary prohibited access with the use of UTVs and helicopters. The Bankhead Fishing Derby is scheduled for June 9<sup>th</sup>. We recently completed an Outdoor Classroom event for Double Springs 6<sup>th</sup> grade at the Payne Creek Demonstration Area.

#### Southern Pine Beetle Update

We are proceeding with spot treatment of Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) Spots under the Suppression of SPB Environmental Assessment. On January 30<sup>th</sup> we sold the first SPB Sale, the Caney Creek Sale for 78 acres and it is actively being harvested. In May, we sold the Mill Creek SPB Sale for 135 acres. SPB is present through the entire units in each of these sales. We are not harvesting (retaining) all longleaf and shortleaf pine and all hardwoods larger than 6" DBH in these two sales being treated under the SPB Suppression Environmental Assessment.

The 2018 Southern Pine Beetle Categorical Exclusion and associated Decision Memo was signed in April. We will treat entire pine stands by clearcutting to control southern pine beetle and increase the pace and scale of restoration of native communities described in the Forest Health and Restoration Project EIS, Forest Plan and Decision Memo. We will retain all desirable hardwoods, oaks, hickories and soft mast producers. We will be removing pine (loblolly and Virginia pine), poplar and maple. The desired future condition (DFC) for restoration for the majority of these stands is upland hardwood forest and woodlands. About 3000 acres were identified for treatment in this Decision Memo. We have prepared the following sales. Jim Brown (127 acres);

Dry Hollow (169 acres) and Wolfpen (189 acres). We will try to sale these sales without overloading purchasers and markets.

The SPB prognosis is that we are hopefully not seeing movement or major issue but that could very well change with temperatures coming up this summer. A forest health flight for SPB is scheduled for June.

Jeff Baker, Alabama Power Company, gave a presentation on cooperative work between the Power Company and the Bankhead Ranger District to monitor and manage the federally listed Black Warrior Waterdog and Flattened Musk Turtle in Smith Lake and its primary tributaries. Questions arose about the effects of jet boats operating in Brushy and Sipsey and potential impacts to the flattened musk turtle and Black Warrior Waterdog. Jeff shared that there may be indirect effects from silt and wave action. A discussion on the Wild and Scenic River management ensued. There was a suggestion that guidelines to protect habitat are needed and that we need to look at drones and camera placement to address issues. There were questions about impacts from drought. Jeff Baker's observations during drought were that all reaches where turtles were being monitored remained wetted and provided habitat for turtles.

There was a question and discussion on whether mountain laurel is poisonous to deer.

Allison Cochran gave a presentation on management of glade and rock outcrop rare plant communities on Bankhead. There was a question about carvings (heritage resources) on rock outcrops and whether the areas are surveyed by archaeologist or ground disturbing activities take place.

Kim Waites shared a presentation on partnership projects being completed by Wild South in Sipsey Wilderness, specifically a non-native invasive (NNIS) plant inventory and a recreation site inventory near Borden Creek. Kim shared that callery pear is being documented on the NNIS inventory and it was not present on the previous Wilderness NNIS inventory. Mark Kolinski recommended that we try to treat every one of them with our rapid response plan very quickly.

There was a question about improving the Mims Canoe Takeout on Sipsey. This area is on private land. Winston County Commission, RC&D, the National Forest and Alabama Power Company all have an interest in a partnership for this site, but it is on private land.

There was discussion on the boat launch on Brushy at County Road 63 near Arley. Andy is working with the County to move forward with stabilizing that site.

There was a question about installing anti-litter signs at boat ramps/Forest Service sites.

Copies of all power point presentations shared at the May meeting are available by contacting Allison Cochran, 205-489-5111.