



File Code: 1950
Date: May 2, 2014

Dear Reader:

The Mt. Magazine Ranger District is proposing forest health and ecosystem management, endangered species management, silvicultural treatments, road and trail management, and wildlife habitat management on National Forest land in Compartments 42, 47, 53, 54, 71, and 72. We are inviting you to submit comments to help refine the proposed activities disclosed in this letter. In addition, the Responsible Official is currently preparing an environmental analysis of this proposal and needs your assistance to better identify issues, concerns, and opportunities. Pursuant to 36 CFR 218.7(a)(2), this proposed project implements the land management plan and is subject to §218 subparts A and B.

This analysis area is located in the northwest corner of the district and has been named the Calico Rock Project. See the attached maps for the location of the proposed activities. **Please note that these activities are proposed for National Forest land only; proposal does not include work on private land.** The attached maps at the end of this letter show these proposed actions.

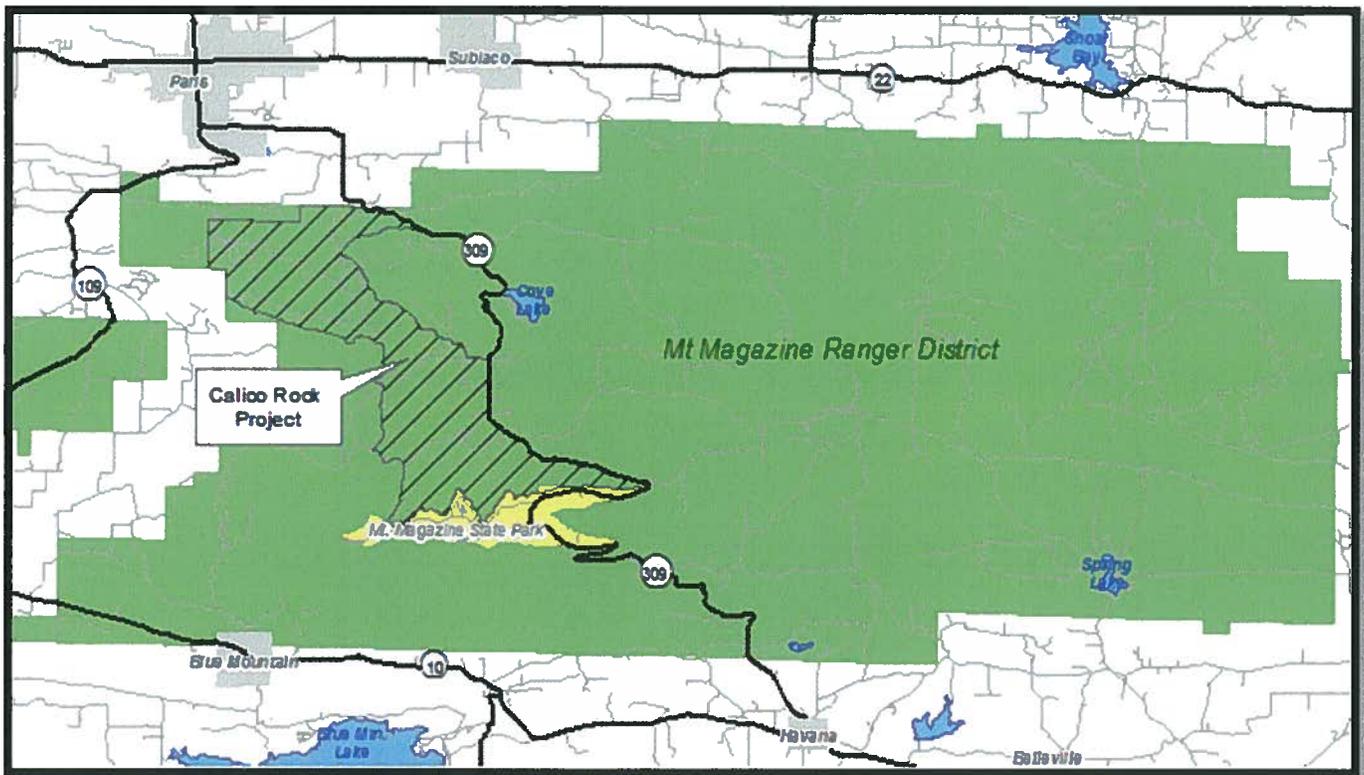


Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map

PURPOSE AND NEED:

The purpose and need of this proposal is to improve forest health and wildlife habitat, maintain and expand fire in the ecosystem, and manage the transportation system to promote safety and reduce erosion. All of the actions proposed are in accordance to the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (RLRMP) for Ozark-St Francis National Forests and the American Burying Beetle Conservation Plan for the Ozark National Forest. The project area is home to the endangered American burying beetle (ABB). By completing the program of work outlined in the next section, we would be improving the habitat need by the ABB. In doing so, the pine woodland restoration would benefit other species such as: bobwhite quail, eastern wild turkey, white-tail deer, various song birds, and more.

PROPOSED ACTION:

FOREST HEALTH AND ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT / ENDANGERED SPECIES MANAGEMENT

-Conduct ecosystem management on 7,484 acres. Table 1 shows treatments proposed for this project.

Table 1: Treatments Proposed for the Project.

Treatment Type	Total	Treatment Type	Total
Shelterwood Harvest/acres	172	Site Prep Burn/acres	284
Commercial Thin/acres	3,463	Remove Seedtrees/acres	172
Salvage Thinning/acres	7,484	Release/acres	284
Cedar Thinning/acres	7,484	Landscape Prescribed Burning/acres	7,484
Constructing Wildlife Openings/each	3	Restoring Wildlife Openings/each	16
WSI & RSI ¹ /acres	148	Stream Habitat Management/miles	16
Aquatic Passages/each	8	Trail Extension/miles	3
Constructing Wildlife Pond/each	1	Linear Food Plots/acres	10
Pre-commercial Thin/acres	192	Road Management	See pg.5

¹Wildlife Stand Improvement, Riparian Stand Improvement

HARVEST TREATMENTS

-Thin stands of shortleaf pine and shortleaf pine/hardwood on approximately 3,063 acres.

Shortleaf pine and hardwood trees would be thinned on these acres. This will improve conditions for the ABB. Pine boring beetles (e.g., black turpentine beetle, ambrosia beetle) and pine bark beetles (e.g., Ips engraver beetle, southern pine beetle, southern pine sawyer) can attack and overwhelm unhealthy stressed pine forests. Once insect infestations start, it is too late to effectively treat large areas and many acres of trees rapidly die. Prevention is the control method of choice by thinning stands to reduce

competition and relieve moisture stress. By keeping the trees healthy, beetles are often exuded from the trees by pitch and are less likely to reach epidemic proportions.

Upland hardwood trees are susceptible to many insects and diseases. The annual combined loss due to insects and diseases is often more than the losses to forest fires. Some losses to insects and diseases are unavoidable. However, losses can be reduced through forest management. Maintaining healthy stands by promoting tree vigor helps to avoid these losses.

-Thin Eastern red cedar on approximately 7,484 acres of shortleaf pine, loblolly pine, and hardwood stands. Thinning cedar from these stands would reduce the trees per acre and increase growth and vigor of the remaining trees. Opening up these stands would increase the amount of sunlight reaching the forest floor and improve conditions for ground level plants such as bluestem grasses and various forbs. ABB, small rodents, birds, deer, and turkey would benefit from this treatment.

-Harvest mature shortleaf pine sawtimber stands by shelterwood cutting on approximately 172 acres. Shelterwood cutting is a process in which the majority of the merchantable shortleaf pine and hardwood trees are removed in an area where the overstory trees have reached a mature age. Larger shortleaf pine trees will be left to provide seed for regeneration and creation of a new stand. These larger trees would be left at a rate of approximately 20-30 trees per acre. Additionally, leave den trees and mast producing hardwood would be left at a rate of approximately 10-20 trees per acre. These hardwood leave trees would consist of larger mast or fruit producing hardwoods and den trees such as white oak, northern red oak, southern red oak, post oak, black cherry, black walnut, shagbark hickory, mockernut hickory, blackgum, sassafras, and persimmon.

One of the most important habitats for wildlife species is the early seral successional habitat (0-10 years old). The amount of habitat created is tied very closely to the amount of regeneration harvests that are conducted. This type of harvesting has declined over the years and this has driven the decline in early successional habitat. Four of the Management Indicator Species (MIS) from the Ozark-St. Francis RLRMP are dependent upon early successional habitat. At the current time, there are no forested acres in the project area providing this early successional habitat. This is also important habitat for ABB.

The pine type age classes in this project area are not in balance. The age class distribution is weighted heavily in the 41-70 and 71+ year old age classes. Approximately 38% of the pine type acres are in the 41-70 age class. Approximately 37% of the pine type acres are in the 71+ year old age class. If no new acres are regenerated, the majority of the project area would get old at once. Breaking up the age classes now would help reduce the possibility of a large scale loss later.

-Remove seedtrees on approximately 172 acres. The 172 acres of seedtree removal would be on this entry's proposed shelterwood harvest stands after they are certified adequately stocked with seedling/saplings and the seedtrees are no longer needed to provide regeneration.

-Permit salvage/sanitation thinning on approximately 7,484 acres. Due to the frequency of recent wind and ice storms that have occurred, salvage/ sanitation thinning is being proposed on all acres. Trees that blow over or die would be removed when feasible for safety, forest health, or public utilization reasons.

SILVICULTURAL TREATMENTS

-Perform pine site preparation on approximately 284 acres of shelterwood cutting with a subsequent release treatment. Planting of these stands would occur if necessary.

Site preparation using handtools/chemical/prescribed burning and subsequent release using handtools/chemicals would occur following the previously described shelterwood harvests. If selected, chemical application would be done on individually selected stems.

Mast producing trees, such as oaks, 8.0" (inches) diameter or larger at 4.5' (feet) height above ground level would not be treated during site preparation or release. The following trees, shrubs, and plants, regardless of size, would not be treated during site preparation and release: black cherry, dogwood, French mulberry, persimmon, serviceberry, plum, and Ozark chinquapin.

There would be no chemical application within 100 feet of private land, 300 feet of a private residence, or 50 feet from intermittent and perennial streams.

Site preparation would be accomplished with triclopyr, glyphosate, and/or imazapyr or a combination of these herbicides. Treatment would be done through foliar spraying, injection, or cut stump treatment directly on the target plant. These treatments help control competing vegetation until shortleaf pine becomes established. Herbicides are applied at the lowest rate effective in meeting project objectives and according to guidelines for protecting human and wildlife health.

Site prep burning would be done to prepare these sites for seedfall.

Planting of shortleaf pine in these stands would be done if natural seedfall does not regenerate the sites. Stocking evaluations would be done one to three years after site preparation to determine stocking. If a stand is not adequately stocked, planting would be done the following winter.

Once pine seedlings are established and a release treatment is deemed necessary, the above stands would be released from competition. Release would be accomplished by directed foliar application, injection or cut surface treatment. Herbicides triclopyr, glyphosate, imazapyr or a combination of these herbicides would be used to implement these treatments. These treatments would be applied within a four-foot radius of the selected pine leave tree to be released on an 8' x 8' spacing. After treatment, the selected shortleaf pine leave trees would gain sufficient height growth to exceed the competing vegetation. If there isn't a shortleaf pine available for release, a desirable hardwood would be selected for release.

The desired future condition of these stands is vigorous, well-stocked shortleaf pine seedling/sapling stands with at least a 70% pine and up to 30% hardwood component. Site preparation and release treatments would help accomplish this future condition. Current composition of these stands range from approximately 73% to 83% shortleaf pine.

-Perform pine release in existing shortleaf pine seedling/sapling stands on approximately 284 acres. This would be accomplished by directed foliar application, injection and or cut surface treatment as described above for release. Chemical application exclusions would be the same as discussed under site preparation above.

-Perform pine pre-commercial thinning in existing shortleaf pine seedling/sapling stands and

shortleaf pine poletimber stands on approximately 192 acres. This would be accomplished by handtools. Stand vigor in these stands is being lost through competition between pine trees for nutrients, sunlight, and water. Currently, pine stocking in these stands range from approximately 650-4200 shortleaf pine trees/acre. The pre-commercial thinning treatment would only be applied on individually selected stems within a four-foot radius of the selected pine leave tree. Pine leave trees would be chosen on an 8' by 8' spacing. After treatment, the selected shortleaf pine leave trees would gain sufficient height growth to exceed the competing vegetation.

WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

-Construct three wildlife openings and one wildlife pond. Three wildlife openings are proposed for construction located in this project area. Construction would consist of removing the timber on these openings by harvesting during the timber sale or by permit at time of opening construction. These openings would be constructed up to five acres in size. Stumps would be mechanically removed during construction and openings would then receive disking, fertilizing, liming, and planting with seed suitable for wildlife. These openings would receive subsequent routine restoration on a two-year interval as described below. These openings are proposed for two restoration treatments after construction. Access roads into these openings would be blocked after the openings are constructed.

A wildlife pond up to one acre in size would be constructed. The pond would benefit both game and non-game wildlife species such as bats and amphibians and would provide for permanent water sources for all wildlife to utilize in drought years .

-Up to 10 acres of linear food plots would be created. A large linear opening would be created on the proposed closed sections of FDR 96053B. The linear opening would be disked, fertilized, limed and planted with seeds and forbs suitable for wildlife.

-Perform wildlife opening restoration of 16 plots. Twelve existing wildlife openings and four (3 openings, 1 linear) new constructions are proposed for restoration. Routine restoration would be performed by brush hogging the openings followed by a chemical treatment with imazapyr, imazapic, triclopyr amine, and/or glyphosate, if needed, to eradicate non-native species and woody species. Each opening would be evaluated before treatment to determine which chemical(s) would be used. Chemical application would occur between March and October using a tractor-mounted sprayer. This would be followed by liming, disking, and planting seed suitable for wildlife on each opening. These openings are proposed for three restoration treatments on a two-year interval. Up to 0.3 lb. of active ingredient per acre of imazapyr, up to 8 oz. of imazapic per acre, up to 1.0 lbs. per acre of triclopyr amine, and up to 2.0 lbs. of active ingredient per acre of glyphosate (1.5 lbs. active acid equivalent) would be applied during mechanical liquid applications.

-Perform wildlife prescribed burning on approximately 7,484 acres. Endangered species and other wildlife habitat improvement along with fuels reduction prescribed burning is proposed on all Forest Service acres. Wildlife habitat improvement and fuels reduction burning is proposed on a three to seven year rotation in both the dormant and growing seasons.

-Preform stream habitat management on approximately 16 miles of stream. Stream habitat management is proposed on all blue-line stream miles in the project area. Large woody debris (LWD) would be felled or placed in the streambed. Wood would consist of trees over 16.4 feet long and greater

than 19.7 inches in diameter. Anywhere from 8-20 trees per mile would be placed in the streams.

-Construct eight aquatic organism passages. Eight aquatic organism passages may be installed on eight different road/stream locations. These locations are as follow: 1676C and Short Mountain Creek, 1676 and Short Mountain Creek, 1609 and an unnamed tributary to Short Mountain Creek, 1605 at Gutter Rock Creek, 1605 and two unnamed tributaries to Gutter Rock Creek, 1605 and Lick Creek, and 1605 and an unnamed tributary to Lick Creek. These crossings may be replaced with structures that are equal in width to the stream channel with as big of an opening as possible and would be either bottomless or if the structure has a bottom then the structure would be counter sunk into the stream bottom. Structures may also be replaced with natural crossings or repaired to eliminate fish barriers. The crossings would be replaced as funding becomes available.

-Perform wildlife stand improvement (WSI) and riparian stand improvement (RSI) on approximately 148 acres. Stands would be thinned to a basal area of 50 and would receive a prescription of 114 (Pine Bluestem). The purpose of this prescription is to create a woodland condition in shortleaf pine. Prescribed burning would be utilized to control the understory vegetation and create an herbaceous component. All Eastern red cedar, merchantable and non-merchantable, would be cut but would not be treated with chemical within the entire Calico Mountain Project area.

RSI may be accomplished within 100 feet on either side of Calico Creek in Compartment 52/Stand 24 and 25. The Forest Plan calls for using a silvicultural prescription of 106 for Riparian Corridors. Riparian areas would be cut to a basal area of between 60 to 80 with most areas closer to 60. Trees would be cut and left on the flood plain to improve riparian conditions.

ROAD/TRAIL MANAGEMENT

-Temporary road construction, where needed, to provide access to harvesting areas during the timber sale. These roads would be blocked and seeded once the sale is completed.

-Road maintenance would be performed as needed to maintain or improve the roads in no less than the same condition that existed prior to timber sale activity. Maintenance may consist of but not limited to mechanical brushing and the use of herbicides to control vegetation along roadsides, removal or repair of minor slides or slumps, cleaning of roadside ditches and drainage devices, spot aggregate placement, and blading of the travel way. All disturbed areas would be mulched and seeded along with the use of hay bales for erosion control where needed.

-Approximately 8 miles of FDR 1605, 1609, 1609B, 96053B and 1676 would be reconstructed to support traffic associated with timber harvesting. This activity would involve but not be limited to clearing the existing vegetation back to daylight the road, replacement of failing drainage structures such as culverts and adding additional structures to facilitate drainage. Geotextile and oversize aggregate may be added to improve the bearing strength of the sub-base. Borrow material would be used when needed to raise the road grade and to cover exposed rock. The travelway would be resurfaced with gravel. Realignment of some sections of road may be required. All disturbed areas would be mulched and seeded along with the use of hay bales for erosion control where needed. During road maintenance and road reconstruction, some road/stream crossings may be replaced to improve aquatic organism passage. These replacement crossings would allow for passage of all aquatic species.

-A borrow pit would be developed up to five acres in size. Borrow material from this site would be removed for use during the proposed road work in this project. The borrow pit would remain open for future needs. Erosion control measures would be implemented to limit the impacts outside the borrow pit location. Erosion control measures could include hay bales, sedimentation ponds, and construction of diversion ditches.

-Decommission approximately two miles. In an effort to reduce system road miles within this project area roads that are currently closed and are no longer needed as systems roads all or part of these roads would be decommissioned. These roads are FDR 1609E, 1609F, 96053D, 96054C, 96072D and 96072E.

-Designated approximately three miles of new off-highway vehicle (OHV) routes. Approximately 1.75 miles of FDR 1675 will be proposed as OHV trails. FDR 1675 is currently closed and will be width restricted to allow only OHV traffic. Approximately .65 miles of FDR 96053B and .25 miles of FDR 1609B will be designated to allow both OHV and highway vehicles. Both routes are currently open to highway vehicle traffic and are proposed to be reconstructed with the timber sales from this project. None of the existing routes open to OHV will be removed in this project.

COMMENT PERIOD:

I invite your comments on the Calico Rock Proposed Action. Please use the enclosed form if you wish to comment on the Proposed Action. Specific written comments as defined by §218.2 should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the Proposed Action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider. It is the responsibility of all individuals and organizations to ensure that their comments are received in a timely manner. To establish standing for objection eligibility, the designated opportunity for scoping comments must be received May 5, 2014 to June 9, 2014. Our mailing address is: U.S. Forest Service, P.O. Box 511, Paris, AR 72855.

Oral or hand-delivered comments may be made at the Mt. Magazine Ranger District office at 3001 E. Walnut within the normal weekday business hours of 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc, .docx) to comments-southern-forest-district@fs.fed.us.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on these proposed actions and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents. A 30 day Notice and Comment period will be provided at a future date (§218.24).

If you have questions on this proposal or the analysis and decision process, please call me, Rob Kopack at 479-963-3076.

Sincerely,



ROB KOPACK
Deputy District Ranger
Attachments

**MT. MAGAZINE RANGER DISTRICT
OZARK-ST. FRANCIS NATIONAL FORESTS**

Calico Rock Project

COMPARTMENTS 42, 47, 53, 54, 71, & 72

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE # (DAYTIME): _____

COMMENTS:

(Attach additional sheets if needed)

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

PLEASE POSTMARK OR RETURN BY June 9, 2014:

Rob Kopack

Deputy District Ranger

Mt. Magazine Ranger District

P.O. Box 511

Paris, AR 72855