



Date: December 09, 2014

Dear Friend of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests:

The Big Piney Ranger District of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests is proposing a management project to reduce hazardous fuels, improve forest health, continue to restore ecosystems across the landscape, and improve wildlife habitat. The project areas for the 2015 Fuels Management Project are comprised of 108,755 acres of National Forest lands in Johnson, Newton, Madison, Searcy, Pope, Conway and Van Buren Counties. A map showing the project boundaries can be viewed on the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests website at the following location. <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/osfnf/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5212180>

Currently across the project areas, the landscape is considered at risk of catastrophic wildfire and insect/pathogen outbreak due to exclusion of fire and overstocked conditions in the over-story (too many trees per acre). The conditions leading to increased risk include a shift in plant composition toward fire intolerant species, reduced species diversity, little to no herbaceous species in the understory, overstocked timber stands, and a lack of age class distribution across the landscape.

Many areas have been and are being prescribe burned at regular intervals and in association with vegetation treatments are moving toward the desired future condition (DFC) described in the Revised Land Resource Management Plan 2005 (RLRMP). Inventories and site visits conducted by district specialists indicate portions of these areas have not reached their DFC while other areas meet the DFC and are in need of continued treatments along with prescribed burning to maintain the current condition.

In order to move the project areas closer to the DFC, the following activities are being considered: repeated prescribed burning, vegetation thinning, treatment of non-native invasive species (NNIS), glade restoration, and treatments to control woody understory. In areas where severe ice and/or insect damage has occurred, some regeneration treatments may be necessary to restore the species composition similar to what it was before the severe damage occurred. It can be expected that management of some roads would be necessary to implement portions of the proposed activities.

Heritage resources and biological surveys have or would be completed and concurrence obtained from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Native American Tribes and the US Fish and Wildlife Service before any proposed activities would be implemented.

The proposed project is an activity implementing a land management plan and is subject to pre-decisional objection process at 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B  
<http://cfr.regstoday.com/36cfr218.aspx> .

In order to identify issues resulting from this proposal and better assess its effects, I would appreciate your site/project specific responses and/or concerns sent to:

Timothy E. Jones, District Ranger, 12,000 SR 27, Hector, AR 72843. Verbal or hand delivered written comments must be made during business hours of 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday-Friday at the Big Piney Ranger District Office in Hector or during regular business hours of 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday-Friday at the Big Piney Ranger District Office in Jasper. Responses may be mailed electronically to our office, in a common digital format, at comments- [southern-ozark-stfrancis-bayou@fs.fed.us](mailto:southern-ozark-stfrancis-bayou@fs.fed.us). Please state "2015 Fuels Management Project" in the subject line when providing electronic objections or on the envelope when replying by mail. In order to continue to receive information about this project proposal and to proceed in a timely manner, your responses should be postmarked or received within 30 days of the postmark on this letter.

Additional information including a hardcopy of the map posted on the National Forest website mentioned above may be obtained by contacting Mike Mulford at the Big Piney District Office in Jasper, AR by phone at 870-446-5122 ext. 5136 or by email at [mmulford@fs.fed.us](mailto:mmulford@fs.fed.us).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy E. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

TIMOTHY E. JONES  
District Ranger