



File Code: 1950-1

Date: March 26, 2008

Dear Forest Friend:

As a past participant in the scoping process for the Mead's Mill Project, I invite you to provide comments on the Mead's Mill Environmental Assessment (EA), including Appendices, as it is now available for public review and comment. The EA documents are also available on the Allegheny National Forest website:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/allegheny/projects/vegetative_management/meads_mill/

The comments that you provide for this document will be considered in making our final alternative selection.

The range of alternatives analyzed in the Mead's Mill EA includes:

Alternative 1: No Action

Although 25 acres of removal harvest and 10 acres of reforestation (site prep) that were approved in previous decisions will be implemented, no new vegetation, recreation, wildlife habitat improvement, Non-Native Invasive Species (NNIS) treatments, or transportation system treatments would be implemented to accomplish project goals. This alternative provides a baseline against which to describe the environmental effects of the action alternatives and responds to the concerns of those who would like no additional management activities to occur within the project area. Previously approved harvesting would provide an estimated 0.2 million board feet (MMBF) of wood during final entries. Ongoing road maintenance could occur through current management direction or other management decisions in the future. Oil and gas development would continue on private mineral leases on both private and federal lands within the project area.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action

This alternative was based on the site-specific purpose and need for the project area, and proposed activities are intended to move the project area from the present condition to the desired future condition identified in the Forest Plan. Alternative 2 uses a variety of even-aged timber harvest treatments, wildlife habitat improvement work, and understory treatments to achieve a more balanced age class distribution, improve stand structure and diversity, and enhance wildlife habitat conditions in Management Areas (MA) 3.0 and 6.1. This alternative also proposes activities to increase the mast production in oak stands and enhance the existing white pine component. Road activities under Alternative 2 consist of 0.6 mile of road construction – new corridor, 5.7 miles of road construction – existing corridor, and 0.6 mile of decommissioning non-system roads. The amount of standard road maintenance and limestoning of haul roads is greatly increased. Pit expansion could occur on up to nine acres on seven sites,



and restoration of pits on up to five acres on one site. In addition, two pit sites from the West Branch of Tionesta project area may be expanded up to three acres in order to implement both projects. Alternative 2 would provide an estimated 3.9 MMBF during the 1st entry (over the next 2-5 years) and 3.8 MMBF for the 2nd entry (9-15 years from present) for an estimated combined total of 7.7 MMBF. The proposed wildlife improvements would be implemented across 24 stands including a large grassland. This alternative includes 1,000 acres of NNIS treatment – a combination of manual/mechanical and/or herbicide treatments.

Alternative 3: Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative focused on addressing water quality issues in the project area. It responds to the issue by eliminating all (0.6 mile) of the new corridor road construction (only proposed in Dutchman Run watershed) and the associated timber harvests of 54 acres. Road activities under Alternative 3 decreases existing corridor road construction by 0.7 mile, while accomplishing 5.0 miles of road construction – existing corridor and 0.6 mile of decommissioning non-system roads and further decreases proposed timber harvest by an additional 28 acres compared to Alternative 2. Pit activities are also the same as under Alternative 2. Alternative 3 would provide an estimated 3.6 MMBF during the 1st entry (over the next 2-5 years) and 3.6 MMBF for the 2nd entry (9-15 years from present) for an estimated combined total of 7.2 MMBF. The wildlife habitat improvements and NNIS treatments are identical to Alternative 2.

The Mead's Mill Project Area is located in the northwest portion of the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) within Brokenstraw, Conewango, Pleasant, and Meade Townships, Warren County, Pennsylvania (Map 1, Vicinity and Project Area Map). It consists of 20,344 acres and is southwest of Warren, Pennsylvania. The ownership is made up of 49 percent National Forest System lands (9,933 acres) and 51 percent private land (10,194 acres). The project area adjoins 12 miles of the Allegheny River, which is a part of the Wild and Scenic River System. The project area boundary is roughly defined by the Allegheny River on the north and west, the southern watershed boundaries of Morrison Run and Dutchman Run on the south, and Possum Hollow Watershed in the east.

The purpose of this comment period is to provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the EA prior to a decision, which is subject to appeal, being made by the Responsible Official. Appeals may be filed by persons or non-Federal organizations or entities that provide comments or otherwise express interest in the proposed action by the close of the comment period. It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them during the comment period.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following publication of the legal notice in *The Bradford Era* (Bradford, Pennsylvania newspaper). The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this analysis. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. Regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period (36 CFR 215.6).

Written comments must be submitted to the Responsible Official (Anthony V. Scardina, Bradford District Ranger, 29 Forest Service Drive, Bradford, PA 16701). The office business

hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are 8:00 am – 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business hours via telephone (814) 363-6000. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an e-mail message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Word (.doc), or any software supported by Microsoft applications to comments-eastern-allegheny-bradford@fs.fed.us. In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an electronic message, a verification of identity will be required for appeal eligibility. A scanned signature is one way to provide verification. An e-mail name and address is not sufficient.

Your views on this project are important. If you need more information or wish to comment, please contact Alan Wetzel at (814) 363-6072.

Sincerely,

/s/ Anthony V. Scardina
ANTHONY V. SCARDINA
District Ranger

Enclosures