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Abstract

To the Environmental Impact Statement for the Spring Creek Project

**Marienville Ranger District, Allegheny National Forest
Elk and Forest Counties, Pennsylvania**

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Spring Creek Project
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Elk and Forest County, Pennsylvania, June 2004

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Abstract: The Spring Creek Project Area (SCPA) is located approximately eight miles west of Ridgway, PA in the Spring Creek Watershed on the Marienville Ranger District of the Allegheny National Forest. This Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) documents the analysis of four alternatives developed as possible management strategies for the SCPA. In April 2002, the scoping process was initiated by presenting a Proposed Action to the public and other government agencies. As a result of comments received during the scoping process, four major issues were identified: 1) How can the effects of fragmentation be reduced or avoided while implementing the Forest Plan and meeting multiple use resource needs in the Spring Creek Watershed; 2) What silvicultural system should be used in the SCPA?; 3) What level of road management is appropriate to achieve our multiple use resources objectives and retain land stewardship values within the SCPA?; 4) How can areas with concentrated recreation use, unauthorized recreation use, or unmet demand be managed to reduce user conflicts, to protect user health and safety, and to protect soil and water resources? Four alternatives were developed in order to respond to direction from the Forest Plan, site-specific needs, and the four major issues. The original proposed action is no longer considered in detail and has been refined based on public comment and field data refinement. Alternative 2 (Proposed Action) replaces it. Below is a brief description of the Alternatives considered in detail:

Alternative 1 (No Action) would initiate no new federal action—including no new timber harvesting, wildlife habitat improvements, recreation treatments or changes to the road system.

Alternative 2 is the Proposed Action. It replaces the original proposal from scoping. This alternative would take advantage of the great majority of opportunities for vegetation management using a system of even-aged harvesting. This alternative involves the highest amount of new road construction and reconstruction of roads. Other activities include road decommissioning and maintenance (spot limestoning). It implements a wide

variety of soil, water, and wildlife habitat improvement treatments to correct soil and water problems and benefit a wide variety of wildlife species that are dependent on a variety of habitat types. Recreation facilities, such as horse trails, an ATV low development campground, and new dispersed campsites, would be developed in order to correct soil and water problems and meet recreational demand in the SCPA. These improvements address the Recreation issues in the project area.

Alternative 3 was developed to address the issue of the effects of fragmentation. There will be no new road construction and a number of silvicultural activities were dropped or changed to maintain some areas of habitat connectivity and mature forest core area conditions. Soil, water, and wildlife habitat improvement treatments are the same as Alternative 2. Recreation investments will be limited. There will be no developed horse trail, ATV campground, nor any new dispersed campsites. Initiatives to correct the soil and water problems without developed recreation facilities will be undertaken resulting in area closures and rehabilitation projects.

Alternative 4 will initiate uneven-aged regeneration harvest in proposed treatments from Alternative 2 forested stands where it is reasonably biologically feasible. This alternative addresses the issue of which silvicultural system should be used in the project area. Salvage only or salvage wind-thrown trees will occur in areas that need special attention. Associated reforestation techniques may be employed in treatments. New road construction will be less than Alternative 2, while the amount of road decommission will be similar. Soil, water, wildlife, and recreation proposals will be the same as Alternative 2.

The effects of implementing these alternatives on various Allegheny National Forest resources were analyzed. The responsible official, Leon Blashock, Marienville District Ranger, chose Alternative 3 for implementation (vegetation, transportation, wildlife, soil, and water treatment proposals) and he stated he would also implement the recreation proposals that were part of Alternative 2. These recreation activities would include all of the recreation proposals in Alternative 2. Some of the major recreation activities include constructing and designating a horse trail, expansion of campsites at the Timberline ATV Trailhead, and providing new dispersed camping sites. This decision is appealable per 36 CFR 215 regulations. A written Notice of Appeal must be submitted or postmarked within 45 days of the date of the published Legal Notice for the Record of Decision (ROD) in the The Derrick, (Oil City, PA) and The Ridgway Record, (Ridgway, PA) newspapers. Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14