



File Code: 1950-1

Date: November 20, 2009

Dear Interested Party:

The Marienville Ranger District of the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) is initiating an environmental analysis for the **De Young Project**. Proposed activities include vegetation, wildlife habitat, non-native invasive plant (NNIP) species, soil, and water management in conjunction with road maintenance. Oil and gas development and maintenance is ongoing within the project area.

Background

The 16,672-acre De Young project area is located in the central area of the Marienville Ranger District, southwest of Russell City, Pennsylvania. It includes National Forest System (NFS) lands within Warrants 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2032, 2033, 2463, 2464, 2808, 2882, 2916, 2977, 3662, 3663, 3664, 3667, 3668, 3669, 3753, 3761, 3779, and 3783, in Howe and Jenks Townships of Forest County and Highland Township of Elk County.

The project area is within the Spring Creek watershed, primarily along East Branch Spring Creek, a high quality cold water fishery. The majority of the project area supports Allegheny and upland hardwood forest types. Vegetation management has occurred over the past 30 years with Spring Creek (2004) and East Side (2001) being the most recent projects within the watershed (several timber sales from these decisions are still active and implementation of other work is ongoing). This area was also affected by the 2003 windstorm and includes part of the Sackett oil field. Recent oil and gas development (OGD) has occurred in the Russell City (Forest Road 580) and Watson Branch areas.

Purpose and Need

The purpose for considering activities in the De Young project area is to implement the goals and objectives of the ANF Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), specifically to work towards the desired future condition of the Management Area (MA) 3.0 lands within the project area. The need for considering activities in the DeYoung project area includes the following:

- To provide a diversity of vegetation patterns across the landscape to represent well-distributed habitats, a range of forest age classes and vegetative stages, a variety of healthy functioning vegetation layers, moderate-to-well stocked forest cover, and the variety of vegetation species and forest types necessary to achieve multiple resource objectives and sustain ecosystem health (ANF LRMP, p. 14).
- To provide forage and cover for a variety of wildlife species through habitat enhancements. To contribute to the conservation and enhancement of habitat integrity for species with viability concerns by protecting specific habitat elements crucial to the long-term sustainability of species. To provide nesting sites, breeding areas and young-rearing habitat free from human disturbance for species with viability concerns (ANF LRMP, p 14).



- To implement non-native invasive plant (NNIP) species treatments that would limit the introduction and/or spread of NNIP species, and conserve forest resources in a manner that presents the least hazard to humans and maintains or restores forest resources (ANF LRMP, p. 13).
- To provide a safe, efficient, and economical transportation system that is responsive to public and administrative needs; having minimal adverse effects on ecological processes and ecosystem health, diversity, and productivity; and is in balance with needed management actions (ANF LRMP, p 16).
- To maintain, restore, or improve soil quality, productivity, and function. Manage soil disturbances from management activities such that they do not result in long-term loss of inherent soil quality and function (ANF LRMP, p.14).
- To maintain or restore watersheds and their associated stream and groundwater processes, channel stability, riparian resources, and aquatic habitats to a functional condition (ANF LRMP, p.14).
- Specific to MA 3.0 –To contribute to the desired condition by providing a mix of vegetative conditions and quality timber products that contribute to the local and regional economy. Regeneration harvests, along with reforestation treatments would allow for the establishment of an early structural forest, which is characteristic of this management area and helps achieve the desired condition of a diversity of vegetation patterns across the landscape. (ANF LRMP, pp. 113-116).

Proposed Action

An interdisciplinary (ID) team has examined the existing conditions in the project area, including field surveys to identify specific concerns and opportunities, and developed a site-specific proposal for natural resource management activities that can help achieve the desired condition for MA 3.0. Proposed timber harvest activities would include even-aged management on 1,397 acres, about 8 percent of NFS lands within the project area.

Proposed activities are listed in Table 1.

Table 1–Summary of proposed activities

Even-aged Vegetation Management (acres)	
Intermediate Thinning (commercial timber harvest)	708
Intermediate Thinning (non-commercial)	112
Shelterwood Seed Cut Harvests/Regeneration Harvests (Shelterwood Removal with Reserves)(1 st and 2 nd entries)	529
Salvage Shelterwood Seed Cut Harvests/Regeneration Harvests (Shelterwood Removal with Reserves)(1 st and 2 nd entries)	160
Understory Vegetation Treatments (acres)	
Herbicide – Reforestation	689
Fertilization	423
Fencing Option	689
Site preparation	689
Tree planting for species diversity	165
Release for species diversity	699
Non-native invasive plant species treatments (herbicide/manual)	50
Wildlife Management (acres)	
Planting – Mast producing trees and shrubs	36
Planting – Conifer	13
Fencing Option	36
Install Wildlife Structure (number)	57
Opening maintenance	27
Watershed Management (miles)	
Large wood introductions (in streams)	38
Travel Management (acres)	
Area cleared in existing pits to excavate stone for road maintenance (acres)	1

Proposed **vegetation management activities** include:

- Even-aged management regeneration treatments, including shelterwood seed cuts and shelterwood removals, are proposed on 689 acres (4 percent of the project area). These treatments would be accompanied by reforestation activities, which could include site preparation, herbicide application, planting, fencing or individual tree shelters, fertilization, and crop tree release to provide and maintain age class and species diversity. The maximum number of reforestation treatments are proposed for each given treatment area, with many of the treatments occurring on the same piece of ground.
- Even-aged intermediate thinning treatments are proposed on 820 acres (5 percent of NFS lands in the project area), to promote stand health, growth, vigor and diversity. Approximately 112 acres (1 percent of NFS lands in the project area) of this total would be accomplished non-commercially (since the trees would lack commercial value at their current stage of development) with the remainder done commercially through a timber sale.
- Forest health activities would include crop tree release in stand 669039 (10 acres) to increase species diversity and promote tree growth.

- The amount of reforestation treatments proposed and those actually implemented may not necessarily be the same. For example, while fencing is proposed on 689 acres, the forested stands actually fenced would likely be less. Management of the deer herd in recent years has been successful in reducing average deer population densities. However, since deer densities are not evenly distributed across the ANF, there is a need to allow for management of site-specific deer browsing impacts. Fencing is being proposed for 689 acres as an option, if needed. In recent years, we have installed fencing, on average, on less than 25 percent of those stands for which it was originally proposed. Herbicide application is proposed for 685 acres as a part of vegetation management to reduce dense interfering vegetation for natural regeneration and to enhance species diversity and forest health. It is anticipated that herbicide would be applied to nearly all of these acres proposed for treatment.

*Acronyms and abbreviations used in **Table 2***

Objective: *Grn = Green (emphasis on standing live trees),*
 Salv = Salvage (emphasis on dying, diseased or dead trees)
 Refor = Reforestation (no commercial treatment, reforestation activity only – including herbicide, site preparation, fertilizer, fencing, planting and crop tree release)

Silvicultural Treatments (1st Entry, 2nd Entry):
 CTR Crop tree release
 Int. Thin Intermediate thin
 NCR Non-commercial release
 SWSC Shelterwood seed cut
 SWR Shelterwood removal

Table 2–Proposed silvicultural treatments

Compartment Stand	MA	Acres	Objective	1st Entry	2nd Entry	Herbicide	Site Prep	Fence	Plant	Fertilization	Release
699-039	3.0	10	Refor	CTR	-	0	0	0	0	0	10
700-008	3.0	40	Salv	SWSC	SWR	40	40	40	10	40	40
700-018	3.0	14	Grn	SWSC	SWR	14	14	14	3	14	14
700-022	3.0	15	Grn	SWSC	SWR	15	15	15	4	15	15
700-034	3.0	17	Grn	SWSC	SWR	17	17	17	4	17	17
700-129	3.0	17	Salv	SWSC	SWR	17	17	17	4	17	17
700-135	3.0	8	Grn	SWSC	SWR	8	8	8	2	8	8
700-140	3.0	11	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
701-016	3.0	9	Grn	SWSC	SWR	9	9	9	2	9	9
702-014	3.0	31	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
702-036	3.0	7	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
702-037	3.0	5	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
702-061	3.0	10	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
702-074	3.0	19	Grn	SWSC	SWR	19	19	19	5	19	19
702-085	3.0	4	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
702-096	3.0	4	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
702-099	3.0	36	Grn	SWSC	SWR	36	36	36	8	0	36

Compartment Stand	MA	Acres	Objective	1st Entry	2nd Entry	Herbi- cide	Site Prep	Fence	Plant	Fertili- zation	Release
703-003	3.0	31	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
703-021	3.0	37	Refor	NCR	-	0	0	0	0	0	37
703-025	3.0	34	Grn	SWSC	SWR	34	34	34	7	34	34
703-028	3.0	40	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
708-025	3.0	40	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
709-005	3.0	59	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
709-012	3.0	29	Grn	SWSC	SWR	29	29	29	6	0	29
709-028	3.0	9	Salv	SWSC	SWR	9	9	9	2	9	9
709-029	3.0	13	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
710-002	3.0	24	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
710-005	3.0	11	Grn	SWSC	SWR	11	11	11	4	11	11
710-006	3.0	19	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
710-014	3.0	35	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
710-015	3.0	30	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
710-033	3.0	38	Grn	SWSC	SWR	38	38	38	7	38	38
710-037	3.0	40	Grn	SWSC	SWR	40	40	40	10	0	40
710-045	3.0	30	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
710-046	3.0	32	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
711-003	3.0	26	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
711-007	3.0	11	Grn	SWSC	SWR	11	11	11	3	11	11
711-014	3.0	37	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
711-017	3.0	27	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
711-057	3.0	24	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
711-058	3.0	40	Salv	SWSC	SWR	40	40	40	10	40	40
712-008	3.0	24	Grn	SWSC	SWR	24	24	24	5	0	24
712-010	3.0	56	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
712-012	3.0	16	Grn	SWSC	SWR	16	16	16	4	0	16
712-019	3.0	24	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
712-021	3.0	48	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
712-024	3.0	7	Refor	NCR	-	0	0	0	0	0	7
712-028	3.0	39	Grn	SWSC	SWR	39	39	39	10	39	39
713-022	3.0	20	Grn	SWSC	SWR	20	20	20	5	20	20
861-001	3.0	7	Grn	SWSC	SWR	7	7	7	2	0	7
861-013	3.0	31	Grn	SWSC	SWR	31	31	31	7	0	31
861-020	3.0	39	Grn	SWSC	SWR	39	39	39	10	0	39
875-003	3.0	32	Refor	NCR	-	0	0	0	0	0	32
876-020	3.0	9	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
876-027	3.0	24	Salv	SWSC	SWR	24	24	24	5	24	24
876-028	3.0	18	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
877-004	3.0	29	Grn	SWSC	SWR	29	29	29	7	0	29
877-008	3.0	28	Grn	SWSC	SWR	28	28	28	7	28	28
877-030	3.0	14	Grn	Int. Thin	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
877-041	3.0	15	Grn	SWSC	SWR	15	15	15	5	0	15
877-048	3.0	36	Refor	NCR	-	0	0	0	0	0	36

In order to improve wildlife habitat, treatments to maintain and enhance habitat within the project area are being proposed.

Proposed **wildlife habitat improvements** include:

- Planting native trees and shrubs to provide food and cover for a variety of wildlife species. The proposed planting would occur on approximately 49 acres, of which 13 acres are underplanting with conifers to provide hiding and thermal cover in the future and for species diversity. Except for the conifer underplantings, planted trees and shrubs would be fenced (36 acres).
- The placement of 57 wildlife structures is proposed to increase nesting and roosting opportunities for cavity dwellers. These include logs and structures in vernal pools for reptiles and amphibians to use for basking and cover.
- Maintaining or enhancing existing herbaceous openings (liming, disking, applying fertilizer and herbicide, prescribed burning, seeding, and mowing) on 27 acres are being proposed to enhance wildlife habitat.
- Fell 80 to 120 trees (large wood introductions) per mile into streams and onto floodplains to improve aquatic habitat diversity, trap sediment, and slow flood flows. Trees within 10 feet of the high water mark of the stream channel would not be cut. This is proposed for approximately 38 miles of streams but would only occur where large woody debris is lacking and where trees are available to be felled without reducing stream shading.
- There is a need to implement non-native invasive plant (NNIP) species treatments to limit introduction and spread of these species (ANF LRMP, p.13). Twenty-two (22) NNIP species have been documented along roads and within stands and stone pits within the project area (see map 4). Not all NNIP species or infestations within the project area may be treated. For example, coltsfoot, which is commonly found along road corridors and disturbed areas may not be prioritized for treatment unless it is invading a Regional Forester Sensitive Plant Species habitat (see ANF LRMP, Appendix A, pp. A-43–A-44 for additional discussion site selection and treatment priority). Additional NNIP species or infestations may be documented during implementation; additional NNIP species treatments of these species or infestations would follow appropriate ANF LRMP direction. Fifty (50) acres of NNIP species treatments are being proposed.

Table 3–Wildlife habitat treatments

Compartment- Stand	MA	Planting	Fencing	Install Structures	Opening Maintenance
699-034	3.0	4	4	4	5
700-008	3.0	5	0	0	0
700-129	3.0	2	0	0	0
701-070	3.0	1	1	5	0
703-028	3.0	0	0	5	0
703-043	3.0	3	3	3	3
708-036	3.0	1	1	3	2
708-044	3.0	4	4	3	4
709-013	3.0	2	2	4	0
709-014	3.0	1	1	0	0
709-049	3.0	4	4	2	2
709-050	3.0	1	1	2	1
710-056	3.0	2	2	3	3
713-024	3.0	2	2	2	2
713-040	3.0	2	2	2	2
847-011	3.0	2	2	3	3
876-027	3.0	3	0	0	0
877-042	3.0	1	1	3	0
879-005	3.0	0	0	2	0
879-017	3.0	3	0	0	0
879-020	3.0	4	4	5	0
879-025	3.0	2	2	6	0

To facilitate access to stands proposed for treatment and provide for a safe and adequate public transportation system while protecting resources, some type of road maintenance would be performed on approximately 24 miles of Forest Service system roads within the project area (see map 2). No new road construction or reconstruction is proposed. No road decommissioning is proposed.

- Stone will be needed for spot surfacing of Forest Service system roads. There are nine existing stone pits in the project area, encompassing 23 acres, proposed for horizontal and vertical expansion to provide this stone. This expansion would total 1 acre, distributed among the pits. Following expansion, all nine pits would be rehabilitated and stabilized, until needed again.

Table 4–Proposed stone pit expansion (total 1 acre, 9,500 cubic yards of excavated stone)

Location	Estimated Size (acres)	Proposed Excavation Method
FR124E (north)	2–3	vertical expansion, floor rippable
FR124E (south)	<1	horizontal expansion
FR224	>5	vertical expansion, floor rippable
FR338 (north)	3–4	vertical expansion, floor rippable
FR338 (south)	<1	horizontal expansion, floor rippable
FR396D	4–5	horizontal expansion
FR502	<1	horizontal expansion
FR584 (west)	1–2	horizontal expansion
FR661	1–2	horizontal expansion

Project location and proposed activities are shown on the enclosed maps. Map 5 shows the areas along streams and around wetlands that would be avoided and protected during timber harvests and other proposed activities.

Comments

If you wish to provide comments concerning this proposal, please send site specific comments to: De Young Project, ATTN: Robert T. Fallon, USDA-Forest Service, Marienville Ranger District, 131 Smokey Lane, Marienville, PA 16239. Comments will also be accepted by telephone at (814) 927-6628 during normal business hours (Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), by fax at (814) 927-2285, and via email at comments-eastern-allegheny-marienville@fs.fed.us. For email comments, please include the project name in the subject line, your name, and mailing address. Comments should be received or postmarked by December 30, 2009. This letter and the enclosed maps are also available on our website at: http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/allegheny/projects/vegetative_management/.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. This decision will be subject to notice, comment, and appeal pursuant to 36 Code of Federal Regulations 215.

If you need additional information concerning this project, please contact Kevin Treese, district NEPA coordinator, at (814) 927-5759. Thank you for your interest in the management of the Allegheny National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Robert T. Fallon
ROBERT T. FALLON
District Ranger

