

Decision Memo



Commercial Thinning – Compartment 67, Stand 8

USDA Forest Service
Conecuh National Forest – National Forests in Alabama
Escambia County – Alabama
T1N, R12E, Section 34 & 35



Decision and Rationale

I have decided to commercially thin 23 acres in compartment 67, stand 8 located in Sections 34 & 35, Township 1 North, Range 12 East, National Forests in Alabama, Conecuh National Forest. This project will improve the health of this stand, reduce the amount of off-site species, and will be the first step in achieving the Desired Future Condition of Longleaf Pine/wiregrass. In addition to the 23 acres in this proposal, 28 acres of thinning in this stand were identified for thinning in the Longleaf Restoration Final Environmental Impact Statement. This portion of the stand was left out of that decision due to an error in digitizing during the alternative formulation of the project.

Over the past ten years, the Conecuh National Forest has been implementing the 1995 Regional Red-cockaded Woodpecker ROD and the 2003 Revised Recovery Plan to improve and provide for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. The Longleaf Restoration Environmental Impact Statement of 1999 describes the need for longleaf ecosystem restoration to stands with off-site slash pine to improve red-cockaded woodpecker habitat over time.



Compartment 67, Stand 8

The purpose of this project is:

- To improve and maintain overall stand health.
- To restore this stand to native longleaf pine forests condition over time.
- To provide future longleaf pine forests in support of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker species recovery.

This action is needed because overstocking in this slash pine stand has created an unhealthy stand condition. This stand will be treated by thinning the overstocked trees with an emphasis on leaving longleaf pine trees. The target basal area for this thinning will be 60 ft². This action will be planned for Fiscal Year 2007.

This document is tiered to the Longleaf Restoration Final Environmental Impact Statement (LLREIS), Conecuh National Forest.

These actions are consistent with and similar to the categories that may be excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment as described in FSH 1909.15, Amendment 1909.15-92-1, Section 31.2, item 12 that states:

"Harvest of live trees not to exceed 70 acres, requiring no more than 1/2 mile of temporary road construction."

I find that no extraordinary circumstances exist for this action (as defined by FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30).

1. It is my experience that past projects that are similar to the proposed action have had no significant effects on the quality of the human environment, directly, indirectly, or cumulatively.
2. The Biological Evaluation determined the proposed action will have "no effect" on any federally proposed or listed species, or critical habitat.
3. The project area was surveyed for archaeological resources in March of 1994. No archaeological sites or sites with potential for inclusion to the National Register were located.
4. This action is consistent with management direction, including standards and guidelines in the revised LRMP.
5. This proposal is consistent with other federal environmental laws such as the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and Historical Preservation laws and regulations.

Public Involvement

This project meets the criteria for categorical exclusion from analysis in an Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment, as described in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Section 31.2, Category 12. However, based upon a recent court order, projects falling under this category, and which include timber sales are subject to public review, comment and appeal procedures at 36 CFR 215. In accordance with 36 CFR § 215, a Request for Comments was published in the Andalusia Star on July 5, 2006, initiating the 30

day comment period. Additionally letters detailing the proposed action were mailed to the district mailing list and the mailing list is in the project file. Comments received from these efforts are located in the analysis file. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service reported the federally listed species to be included in biological surveys. A copy of the Biological Evaluation was sent to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and a concurrence letter is available in the project file. No other comments were received.

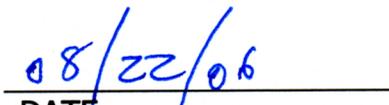
Findings Required by Other Laws

National Forest Management Act - My decision is based on an analysis of the situation and this action is consistent with the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan of the National Forests in Alabama, Goals and Objectives (pp 2-9 and 2-10), Goal 1 Objective 1.2 and 1.4 (pp 2-9) and Goal 3 (p 2-10); Standards and Guides, FW 2, 3, 5, 11, 14, 17, and 18; Management Prescription 9.D, (pp 3-38 through 3-39).

Administrative Review and Implementation

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215 this decision is not subject to appeal and may be implementation may begin immediately upon publication of the Notice of Decision in the paper of record. For further information, contact Stephen Lee, Conecuh District Ranger at 16375 U.S. Highway 29, Andalusia, Alabama, 36420; by phone at (334) 222-2555.


DISTRICT RANGER


DATE