

## **Heritage Resources**

### **Hurricane Ivan – RCW Expansion Project**

The RCW Habitat Expansion Project area encompasses approximately 8100 acres. Heritage resource inventories and surveys of the project area were conducted on 5178 acres by Forest Service archaeologists in consultation with the Alabama State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). (Reports on file at Conecuh Ranger District office)

As a result, three sites were identified within the project area. Of these, two sites (1Cv172 and 1Cv195) were evaluated as having limited information and integrity (i.e. the sites had been heavily disturbed by past management actions, historic land use, and natural causes) and were therefore ineligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

One site, 1Es74, is potentially “likely to yield information important in prehistory or history” (36CFR60.4) and is considered potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP, pending further testing and evaluation. This site will be defined with a painted boundary and monitored. No ground disturbance will be allowed within this boundary.

In November of 2004 a report was submitted to the SHPO outlining the proposed activities for the RCW Habitat Expansion Project on the Conecuh National Forest (Schleidt 2004). This report included maps of the proposed project areas, a review of areas previously surveyed, sites previously recorded, and areas requiring an archaeological survey. Potentially eligible sites were identified on the maps and it was noted that these sites would be painted, removed from the proposed thinning project and monitored.

Of the 8100 acres within the proposed RCW Habitat Expansion Project area, a total of 2922 acres will require an archaeological survey. Once the survey is completed, a report of the findings will be submitted to the SHPO and interested Tribal Historic Preservation Officers for their review. All potentially eligible sites will be defined with a boundary, removed from the proposed thinning project, and monitored.

The Hurricane Ivan Timber Salvage Project area is comprised of approximately 7722 acres. Forest Service archaeologists and a cultural resources firm in consultation with the Alabama SHPO have previously surveyed a total of 5438 acres within the proposed salvage area. (Reports on file at Conecuh Ranger District office)

As a result, six archaeological sites were recorded within this project area. Of these, four sites (1Es63, 1Es64, 1Es86, and 1Es130) have been deemed ineligible for listing to the NRHP. However, two sites (1Cv192 and 1Cv195) have been identified as potentially eligible. These sites will be defined with a painted boundary, removed from the proposed salvage area, and monitored.

In October 2004, the National Forests of Alabama forwarded to the SHPO a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) outlining the proposed activities for the Hurricane Ivan Timber Salvage Project on the Conecuh National Forest. This MOA included a discussion of the areas previously surveyed, areas requiring a survey, potentially eligible sites that will be removed from the proposed salvage area, and a timetable for reporting on the new surveys. In addition, a meeting was held at the Supervisor's Office in Montgomery on October 29<sup>th</sup> with the SHPO representative to review the maps of the proposed timber salvage project area. A copy of this MOA is available at the Supervisor's Office and the Conecuh National Forest.

Of the 7722 acres within the proposed Hurricane Ivan Timber Salvage Project area, a total of 2284 acres will require an archaeological survey. Once the survey is completed, a report of the findings will be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer and interested Tribal Historic Preservation Officers for their review. All potentially eligible sites will be defined with a boundary, removed from the proposed salvage project, and monitored.

### **No Action Alternative**

Under this alternative there would be no effects to any heritage resources within the RCW Habitat Expansion Project area and the Hurricane Ivan Timber Salvage Project area. Only natural occurring disturbances (animal burrowing, erosion, wind-thrown trees, etc.) would continue. The three potentially eligible sites would still be painted and monitored.

### **Proposed Action**

Under the proposed action none of the potentially eligible sites will be affected.

Prior to any timber salvage or thinning activities, all timber stands within both the RCW Habitat Expansion and Hurricane Ivan Timber Salvage Project areas not previously investigated will be surveyed in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. A report with the archaeological survey findings will be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer and interested Tribal Historic Preservation Officers for their review.

Reports for the areas previously surveyed are on file at the SHPO office and in the Conecuh Ranger District Office. Letters of concurrence have been received for all previous surveys and are on file at the Supervisor's Office in Montgomery, Alabama.

None of the three previously recorded potentially eligible sites will be adversely affected by the proposed action. The District Archaeologist and the Silviculturist, to ensure adequate protection of the three heritage resources, will redesign the timber stands. To avoid potential impacts, a painted boundary will be used to define the three potentially eligible sites. This site will be painted under the direction of the District Archaeologist. Any additional potentially eligible sites recorded during the subsequent surveys will be similarly protected and monitored.

In accordance with federal law, in the unlikely event that any additional heritage resources are inadvertently discovered during any project related activity, the District Archaeologist will be notified, and activity at that location will be suspended until an evaluation of the resource is made.

As the project has been designed to have “no effect” on heritage resources potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP, there would be no cumulative effects to heritage resources under this alternative.

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