

DECISION MEMO

HARDWOOD MANUAL RELEASE PROJECT FY 2005 - 2006 BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST NATIONAL FORESTS IN ALABAMA FRANKLIN AND LAWRENCE COUNTIES, ALABAMA

Decision

I have decided to proceed with the proposal to release by mechanical means, three areas located in S36, T7S, R10W; S1, T8S, R10W and S6, T8S, R9W, totaling 107 acres on the Bankhead National Forest. This project is part of the restoration of the upland hardwood forest native community and meet the direction of the desired future conditions for the Bankhead National Forest as outlined in the Forest Health and Restoration Project EIS ([FHRP](#)) and the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the National Forests of Alabama ([RLRMP](#)).

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to promote the restoration of an upland hardwood forest.

These areas are stands which have naturally regenerated following timber harvesting operations in 1998. The preferred hardwood species of oaks, hickories, black cherry, persimmon and ash are generally slower growing as compared to yellow poplar, red maple, conifers and other woody species. There is a need to release these preferred species from woody competition in order to promote the growth of the preferred hardwood species and begin the process of establishing the desired future condition of an upland hardwood forest. Treatment will consist of cutting all woody competition that is 18 inches and greater in height within a five foot radius of the preferred species, followed by slash treatment. Cedars, hemlocks, briars and *Vaccinium* species will not be cut. Cutting will be done with hand held tools such as chainsaws or brush cutters. This action will take place during the fiscal years 2005 through 2006. Maps for the treatment areas are attached to this document.

Category

This action is consistent with FSH 1909.15, Section 31.2, Category 6, "Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction (Service level D, FSH 7709.56). Examples include but are not limited to:

- b. Thinning or brush control to improve growth or to reduce fire hazard including the opening of an existing road to a dense timber stand."

No extraordinary circumstances as defined in FSH 1909.15, Section 30.3(2) exist that might cause the action to have significant effects:

- *Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat or Forest Service sensitive species*
The project area has been surveyed for threatened, endangered or sensitive species, the

biological evaluation was completed and the determination was “No effect” on T&E species, requiring no further consultation, and “No impact” on sensitive species. The Biological Evaluation and the Decision Memo are available on a CD upon request.

- *Flood plains, wetlands or municipal watersheds.* The project area is not in a flood plain, wetland or municipal watershed.
- *Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas or national recreation areas.* No congressionally designated areas are within the project area.
- *Inventoried roadless areas and research natural areas.* No part of the project area is designated as inventoried roadless area or research natural areas
- *American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites or historic properties or areas.* Manual release treatment using hand held tools is not a ground disturbing activity. Therefore, the proposed hardwood manual release and slash treatment project will have no impact on significant cultural resources.

Therefore, this action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment.

Public Involvement and Analysis

A notice of the proposed action was published in the Northwest Alabamian and in the Moulton Advertiser on May 11, 2005 to notify the general public and ask for comments on the proposal. No comments were received concerning this proposal during the comment period.

Findings Required by Other Laws

My decision is based on an analysis of the situation. This area will be treated to promote the restoration of an upland hardwood forest in accordance with the National Forest Management Act, the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the National Forests of Alabama, Forest-Wide Goals and Objectives pp. 2-1 through 2-10; Goal 1, Objectives 1.3 and 1.5; Standards and Guides, FW-9, FW-11, FW-53; Management Prescription 7.E.2, pp 3-31 through 3-34 ([RLRMP](#)) and the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Project ([FHRP](#)).

Implementation

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12 (f), this decision is not subject to appeal. Implementation of this decision may begin immediately. For further information, contact Glen Gaines, Bankhead National Forest, PO Box 278, Double Springs, AL or at (205) 489-5111.

/s/ Glen D. Gaines

8/3/05

GLEN D. GAINES
District Ranger
Bankhead National Forest

Date