

**DECISION MEMO**

**PRECOMMERCIAL THINNING PROJECT**  
**FY 2005**  
**BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST**  
**WINSTON AND LAWRENCE COUNTIES**

I have decided to proceed with the proposal to precommercially thin 15 predominantly pine stands, totaling 620 acres on the Bankhead National Forest. The stands are located in different areas of the forest in the following compartments: Compartment 70, Stands 13, 16 and 23; Compartment 122, Stands 1, 5 and 9; Compartment 127, Stands 4, 22, 41 and 42; Compartment 93, Stands 7 and 8; Compartment 51, Stand 13 and Compartment 29, Stands 14 and 15. My decision is based on an analysis of the situation. This action is consistent with the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the National Forests of Alabama, Goals and Objectives pp 2-1 through 2-10; Standards FW-11 and FW-18; Management Prescriptions 7.E.2, pp 3-31 through 3-34 and 9.C.3, pp 3-37 through 3-38.

**Purpose and Need**

The purpose of this proposal is to move these stands toward the desired future condition as outlined in the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration project (FHRP) EIS, to provide early successional habitat for wildlife and to promote healthy stands by reducing the stocking level, increasing the vigor and thereby decreasing the risk of insect and disease infestations. The stands in Compartments 29, 51, 70 and 93 are within Area 1 in the Bankhead FHRP EIS and therefore, the preferred leave tree species are oaks, hickories, black cherry, persimmon, ash and other hardwoods. The stands in Compartments 122 and 127 are within Area 2 of the Bankhead FHRP EIS and therefore, the preferred leave tree species are pines. Currently, these stands are overstocked and competing with each other as well as with other vegetation for moisture, light and nutrients, resulting in reduced vigor.

This action will take place during the fiscal year 2005. The precommercial thinning will be accomplished by using handheld tools, such as chainsaws, brush saws, machetes. or loppers and is not a ground-disturbing activity.

**Mitigation Measures**

These sites have been surveyed for threatened, endangered, sensitive or locally rare plants and animals. The biological evaluation was completed and the determination was "No effect" on federally listed plants and animals and "No impact" on species listed as sensitive, requiring no further consultation.

**Public Involvement and Analysis**

A notice of the proposed action was published in the Northwest Alabamian on February 12, 2005, and in the Moulton Advertiser on February 9, 2005, to notify the general public and ask for comments on the proposal. A scoping letter for this action was mailed on February 7, 2005 to persons and organizations on the Bankhead mailing list. Three comments were received and all

of the respondents were in favor of the proposed action as long as the needed surveys and analyses were accomplished prior to the beginning of the project implementation.

**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)” No extraordinary circumstances exist that might cause the action to have significant effects. Therefore, this action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment.

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

March 29, 2005

GLEN D. GAINES  
District Ranger  
Bankhead National Forest