



Corinth Recreation Area – Bankhead National Forest

BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST HEALTH & RESTORATION INITIATIVE: FINAL REPORT

FOR THE:

*USDA Forest Service, National Forests in Alabama, Bankhead National Forest
Bankhead National Forest Liaison Panel and Community
U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2000, the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest began discussions about the Bankhead National Forest Health and Restoration Initiative (also referred to as the Initiative). The Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative is designed to implement natural resource management actions aimed at sustaining short and long-term forest health, and representation of forest community types native to the Southern Cumberland Plateau region. The first phase of the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative involved determining the long-term desired future condition of the forest and an initial five-year program plan.

The second phase, will involve developing detailed procedures and activities to implement the five-year program plan, including participatory monitoring and evaluation activities. The immediate goals of the program plan focus on treating pine beetle damaged areas, comprised mostly of loblolly pine stands between 15 and 45 years old. In addition, the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest wants to implement a prescribed burn program to reduce fuel loads and prepare the treatment sites for regeneration or restoration.

The long-term goal of the Initiative is to restore forest and plant community types that are uncommon to private lands in northern Alabama. These forest communities, once common throughout the south have declined due to major land use changes, forest composition changes and the absence of fire. Restoring the Bankhead National Forest to native fire dependent forest community types such as upland pine/bluestem and oak woodlands and mid-to late-successional deciduous hardwood pine forests would: (1) reduce of catastrophic losses to the forest from insects and diseases; (2) increase public safety by reducing hazards resulting from standing dead trees and larger fuel loads; (3) increase protection for many native plant and animal communities including those federally listed threatened and endangered, sensitive, and locally rare species; and (4) insure that future generations of forest residents and users can continue to use and enjoy the Bankhead National Forest for years to come.

Many individuals and organizations have a stake in the management of the Bankhead National Forest. At times, forest management actions have been controversial, and met with limited public support and trust. For example, during the 1990s, local and national environmental organizations objected to commercial logging on public lands. Native peoples objected to logging on or near cultural sites. Local landowners objected to the high incidence of tree mortality due to the southern pine beetle infestation and the safety hazard standing dead trees posed to hikers. Others expressed concerns about future forest access rights and the rights of private landowners to live and work on their land.

The USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest wanted to enhance its working relationships with local citizens, organizations, and agencies to benefit all of its users through the long-term management of the Bankhead Forest. To do this, the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest engaged in an extensive public involvement process to provide information and to respond to questions from the community. They also sought to understand their perceptions about the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative, and receive public input and suggestions for improved forest management and outreach strategies.

Since 2000, the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest has conducted meetings, workshops, field trips, disseminated information through direct mailings, issued press releases and communicated with local media on local stories, published online information, and generated informational brochures. Furthermore, they established the Bankhead Liaison Panel. The liaison panel was a stakeholder group representing various interests. It provided a public forum for interested parties to meet face to face and discuss issues of the Initiative. This included encouraging public participation in providing technical and scientific information and other ideas on the subject of forest health and restoration such as: research and monitoring reports; related scientific information on soil, wildlife and plant habitat, and forest community relationships as well as suggestions and concerns on methods of forest health and restoration options.

From January 2000 through December 2002, the Bankhead Forest Service:

- identified a purpose and need for a forest health and restoration initiative;
- proposed forest health and restoration actions to the public and other agencies;
- gathered public and agency comment, including significant issues and concerns regarding the proposed forest health and restoration actions; and
- developed six alternatives that included proposed treatments and the desired future conditions of the restoration areas.

From January 2003 through December 2003, the Bankhead Forest Service:

- conducted an analysis of the six forest health and restoration alternatives for the desired future conditions through discussions with the Bankhead Liaison Panel, agencies, and the public at-large;
- chose Alternative 5 as the preferred desired future condition of the Bankhead National Forest based on intensive analysis from the public and interdisciplinary team discussions;
- prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to engage additional public comment on the preferred desired future conditions and management actions;
- met with local groups and organizations to present the DEIS, respond to questions and address concerns about the effect of Alternative 5 on the local economies; and
- considered public comments and concerns before finalizing the Environmental Impact

Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (USFS, Management Bulletins R8-MB 110B and 110C, September 2003).

In addition, to create a more collaborative decision-making process for the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative, the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest partnered with the US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (USIECR). The USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest, and the USIECR the hired the Natural Leadership Institute (NRLI) and RESOLVE to accomplish four tasks:

- (1) assess opportunities for integrating collaborative approaches into the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative planning process, which included identifying key individuals and organizations to participate in analyzing issues and collaboratively problem-solving any concerns about the Initiative; provide a summary describing attitudes toward the Bankhead Forest Service; and offer suggestions to improve relationships and communications;
- (2) provide training and educational opportunities to the Bankhead Liaison Panel and interested community members;
- (3) design and support an effective public involvement strategy for the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative through facilitation of the Bankhead Liaison Panel meetings.
- (4) develop agreements with the Bankhead Liaison Panel regarding a shared vision for desired future conditions of the forest communities and a 5-year program of priority actions needed to address current issues.
- (5) and assist in developing recommendations, including a transition process for implementation of agreements and future processes.

In December 2003, the Record of Decision filed by the District Ranger of the Bankhead National Forest (September 2003), describing the chosen desired future conditions of all existing loblolly pine stands on the Bankhead and the five-year program plan to begin to achieve the desired future conditions was accepted without an appeal. This is the first major forest health and restoration initiative in the Southeast National Forests.

This initiative is taking place because of the community's perseverance, commitment, and transparency in seeing it move forward. It is also taking place because a wealth of knowledge and insights were exchanged and contributed during the process - many different ways of knowing including technical, regulatory, scientific, community-based, cultural, and facilitative. Furthermore, there is a willingness to have an adaptive management approach - to try something, experiment and monitor, then evaluate it and

revise the direction chosen if there is a need. Lastly, because of the dedication of the Bankhead community, in particular the Bankhead Liaison Panel and the professionalism of the Forest Service, working relationships have improved significantly between various groups, individuals, and the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest. Many of these simple but important factors - perseverance, commitment, transparency, inclusiveness, collaborative problem solving, and adaptive management will assist the Forest Service and the Bankhead Community in implementing a future vision for the Bankhead National Forest.

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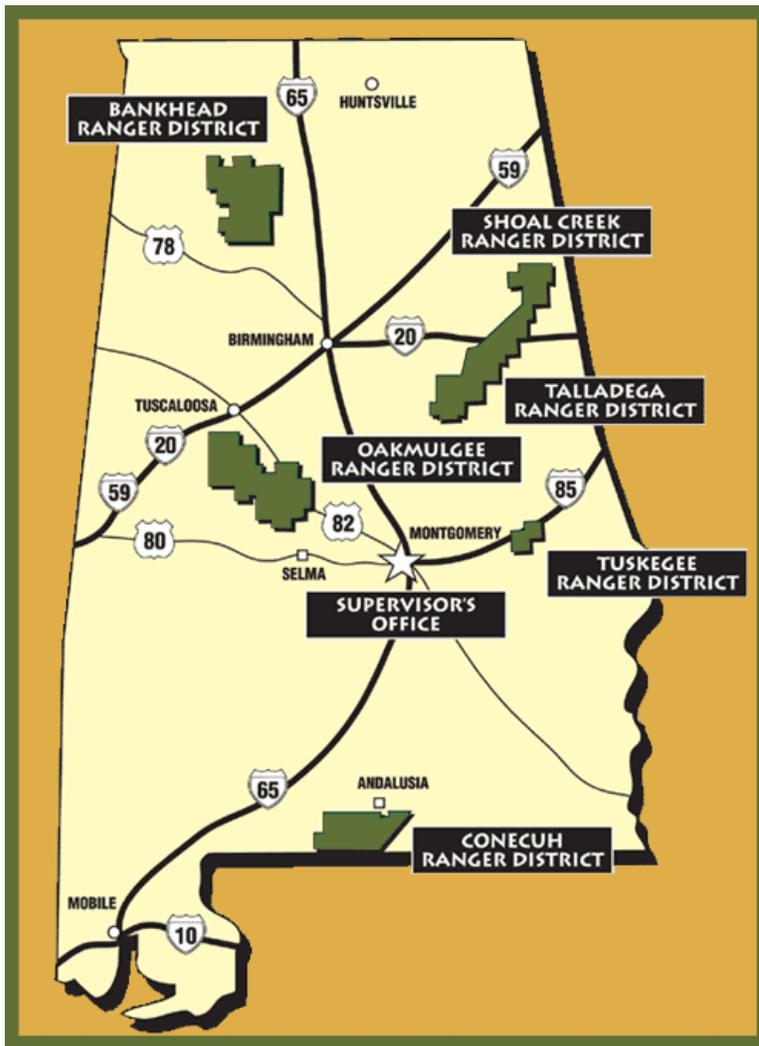
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LAND OF MANY USES: A BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



Throughout America's history, the "*land of many uses*"¹ has meant many different things to those who manage, use, and experience its abundance and resources. Offering a rich subsistence to its first native peoples and subsequent settlers, the "*land of many uses*" served then as it serves today - as a major contributor to a sense of place and livelihood, and cultural heritage. The map offers a brief historical perspective on the preceding factors that led to maintaining vast areas known as eastern national forests and eventually, the Bankhead National Forest.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Although, wooded areas and other landscapes were managed for thousands of years before the influx of immigrant peoples, it was the settler's expansion and increase

¹ This historical perspective is intended to begin to educate about the early need for and expansion of the Eastern Forest System and establishment of the Bankhead National Forest. It is also an attempt to describe the lineage of the "land of many uses", one that has affected so many. It is not meant to be exhaustive or to address any historical, cultural, environmental, or scientific controversy - it is simply a starting point from which to understand the development of the eastern forest system and the Bankhead Forest. There are much more in depth writings and oral histories, found in archives, research, and other literature as well as local knowledge and traditions that afford a more thorough and in depth account for those who wish to explore early cultural, environmental, and US Forest Service history in the eastern United States.

in population that created a dramatic change in the new country's land use patterns. The colonists fashioned a culture heavily dependent on *wood*. A basic ingredient of every major industry from "shipbuilding in New England to ironworking in Pennsylvania", wood supported settlements and farms in building materials - homes, barns, and fences; in fuel to heat homes and smelt iron; in transportation - steamships, railroad ties, wagons, bridges; and in mechanisms for living - furniture, cooking, carpentry, and farming tools, (Runte, 1991; Forest History Society, 2000; Andrews, 1999).

Not only were settlements and new industries dependent on forestlands, the predominately agrarian society was heavily dependent on transforming acres of forests into grazing and agriculture use. Some of the practices used to transform the landscape included: slash and burn or girdling (Runte, 1991; Wilson, 1902) as well as setting autumn fires to create spring pasture land as well as many acres not intended for pasturing (Wilson, 1902).

Predominantly an agrarian society until the mid 1800s, the U.S. population tripled from 23 million to 76 million people by the 1900s and with it, a standard of living due to the American Industrial Revolution (USDA - Economic Research Service, 1997). Dependency on wood, fire suppression, and wildfires, overgrazing, the notion "forests would last forever," the increase in populations and urban areas as well as other factors - all contributed to timber scarcity. Deforestation and over-cultivated land resulted too from the lack of knowledge about natural forest growth, to watersheds that generated water supplies and forests as cover for nutrient-rich layers of soil and vegetation, and wildlife habitat (Runte, 1991; Wilson Report, 1902).

Concerned with rapid settlements in forested watersheds, the burgeoning timber scarcity, the transfer of public lands to private lands, and loss of a common national heritage, Congress began to set aside forest reserves (1891), mainly in the west, under the newly formed National Forest System (Runte, 1991, Andrews, 1999). Early emphasis in the western United States was on land acquisition and custodial responsibilities. By the time the National Forest System expanded to the east coast, the focus was on restoration and revitalizing deforested, eroded, and over cultivated lands. Though deep gorges, inaccessible areas, and public lands sheltered remnants of old-growth timber, a large percentage of the land was cutover and cultivated according to land acquisition files. The previous forest composition and vegetation was partially gone, fragmented by small farms or abandoned farmlands and roads.

EXPANSION OF THE EAST COAST NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM

During the 1800s, policy makers discussed America's forests. The early effort to create a forest reserve² was controversial and involved significant policy changes. Millions of forestland acres, particularly in the west, were withdrawn from the private market³ by presidential proclamation and returned to the public domain though some western interests advocated against this (Runte, 1991; Andrews, 1999). Foreclosed, abandoned, and purchased eastern lands enabled establishment of the eastern forest reserve (Runte, 1991; Wilson, 1902). Lumbering, one of the country's principle industries faced new governance regarding forest practices. Determining and rendering policy was as complicated then as it is now (Runte, 1991; Wilson, 1902; Price 1902).

Extending from Virginia, through the Carolinas, Georgia, and into Alabama, the Southern Appalachians, recognized for agricultural richness and an abundance in flowing waters and forestland, was recognized as a devastated area due to large areas of cleared and cutover land. This led to significant flooding, erosion, and numerous gullies (Wilson, 1902; Runte, 1991). The public was in favor of a push to restore and protect forestlands and the headwaters pervaded in the east, to not only prevent floods, perpetuate waterpowers, and preserve a common heritage, but also to protect public health. The watershed of New York's Adirondack Mountain is a good example (Runte, 1991, Andrews, 1999)

Preliminary and concluding findings of the Wilson Report (1901 and 1902), hurried the expansion of the East Coast National Forest System. Passage of the 1911 Weeks Act for stream-flow protection, and later the 1924 Clarke-McNary Act, permitted purchase of land for both timber production and watershed protection) and allowed the newly formed US National Forest Service (1905) to expand the east coast system to 25 million acres (Runte, 1991; Forest History Society, 2002).

² Forests were initially known as reserves, renamed in 1907 to national forests: development of the US Department of Agricultural (1862); creation of the Forestry Division (1876); and the Forest Reserve Act (1891 rider to the General Revision Act). The General Revision Act revised many public land laws (overturned the Timber Culture and Preemption Act); limited public lands on the market, and in 1897, the Forest Management Act authorized protecting and managing the reserves permanently (Runte, 1991; Andrews, 1999).

³ To spur the young economy, public land was initially transferred to private owners large and small through legislative land acts such as the Public Land Act (1796) authorized Federal land sales to the public in minimum 640-acre plots at \$2 per acre of credit; Land Act (1820) allowed purchasers to buy as little as 80 acres of public land for a minimum price of \$1.25 an acre; Graduation Act (1959-75) reduced price of unsold public lands.; and Homestead Act (1862) granted 160 acres to settlers who had worked the land 5 years, predominantly in the West (USDA- Economic Research Service, 1997).

BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST

The Alabama Purchase Unit, set up by the National Forest Commission (1914), eventually established four national forests in Alabama: the Bankhead, the Talladega, the Conecuh, and the Tuskegee, spanning 17 counties. The first forest was located in the counties of Franklin, Lawrence, and Winston. It had a succession of names: in 1918, the Alabama National Forest (proclamation of President Woodrow Wilson); 1936, the Black Warrior National Forest (proclamation of President Franklin D. Roosevelt); and by 1942, the William B. Bankhead National Forest (Congressional Act). The William B. Bankhead National Forest, a part of the Southern Cumberland Plateau, covers 182,000 acres in northwest Alabama - about half the size of the Talladega National Forest (387,000 acres in central Alabama); and larger than the Conecuh National Forest (82,883 acres in southern Alabama) and the Tuskegee National Forest (11,000 acres in east-central Alabama). According to the US Forest Service of Alabama land acquisition files show that much of the ridge tops were cut-over, and approximately 40% of the land was cut-over, cultivated, and vacated farmland (US Forest Service of Alabama, 2002).

The Bankhead is the largest remaining tract of unfragmented deciduous forest in Alabama. It continues to protect water quality and serve as a watershed to local municipalities. As private land becomes more restricted to public use, as urban settlements expand and fragmentation of land use increases, the Bankhead has become very popular to local and regional visitors. Users appreciate its' fish and wildlife, hunting, cultural and recreational resources, its' educational, and scenic opportunities. It also provides economic benefits to local communities. The Bankhead has cultural and historic significance to residents and communities surrounding the Bankhead. It has spiritual significance to Native peoples, and scientific and research significance to academic and scientific communities. The Bankhead also includes other managed uses including timber, water and soil, wilderness and range, and habitat protection for numerous species of game and wildlife - birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and animals, and endangered, threatened, and sensitive species.

The Bankhead terrain includes high overlooks, rolling hills, and flat lands.. Dispersed recreation is important - there are over 96 miles of trails developed for various uses including horseback riding, biking, and hiking. In addition, there are roads for quiet scenic drives; recreational areas for primitive camping to recreational vehicle hook-ups. There is a lake for boaters and water-skiers to enjoy as well as quiet coves for anglers. The Bankhead also contains the 26,000-acre Sipsey Wilderness, the Sipsey Wild and Scenic River, and the 96,000-acre Black Warrior Wildlife Management Area.

The Bankhead landscape is a mosaic of canyons and drains with ecologically diverse deciduous forests and aquatic systems. Within its 182,000 acres, about 176,000 acres is forested, comprised of about 51% southern pine and 49% hardwoods (US Forest Service of Alabama, 2003). Loblolly pine forests⁴, mixed pine-oak forests, and upland oak forests dominate the dry upland areas. The current conditions of these forests is affected by past land management practices, including the exclusion of fire, land allocations, and ownership patterns. The absence of fire, in combination with major land use changes, has resulted in a decline of native grassland and shrub conditions common in some of the upland forests. Without fire, the native fire-dependent forest communities cannot survive. They are uncommon across the North Alabama landscape.

During the past decade, the Bankhead Forest has experienced Southern Pine Beetle infestations at epidemic levels. Occurring predominantly in loblolly pine forests, the epidemic peaked in the summer of 2000. An estimated 18,600 acres of pine forest is diseased or dead because of this epidemic, mostly occurring in the Bankhead's Sipsey Wilderness. The epidemic has caused large acres of standing dead trees. These standing trees have increased forest fuel loads, and elevated the risk of disastrous wildfires. They also create a public safety hazard along trails and roads.

OVERVIEW OF FOREST PLANNING AND PROJECT LEVEL DECISION-MAKING

The U.S. Department of Agriculture National Forest Service is a federal agency that manages 156 national forests and grasslands. The National Forest Service is also the largest forestry research organization in the world. It provides technical and financial assistance to state and private forestry agencies.

Several statutes govern administration of the National Forests System: the 1974 Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) and the 1976 National Forest Management Act (NFMA). The RPA requires land and resource management plans for each national forest. The NFMA governs multi-use

⁴ During the 1930's, the Civilian Conservation Corps provided labor to reestablish eastern forests with loblolly pine, as the species offered the best chance of survival and success in reforestation, especially on cutover and abandoned farmland; then in the 1960's, the Forest Service initiated new efforts replacing upland hardwood forests with loblolly pine to improve economic yields. Though considered native to eastern forests, pure stands of loblolly pine are not typically native of fire dependent woodlands occurring in the uplands. Efforts to reestablish the Bankhead eventually resulted in roughly 79,000 acres of planted and natural generation of loblolly pine.

management of national forests through Forest Management Plans⁵ (Gray, Enzer, & Kusel, 2001). The Forest Management Plans require an assessment of forestlands. This assessment is used to develop a management program in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)⁶. There are fundamentally four levels of forest planning and decision-making: (1) nationally; (2) regionally; (3) national forests; and (4) district or project level of a national forest.

At the national level, the Chief of the National Forest Service manages the system through a line organization of regional foresters, forest supervisors, and district rangers. The National Forest System level administration provides broad policy and direction for the agency, overall budget development, and reports to Congress on accomplishments of the agency.

Regional Foresters, coordinate and monitor activities between broad geographic areas and on national forests to ensure quality operations and guidance for forest plans. They also allocate budgets to the respective national forests.

Forest supervisors of national forests, report to the respective regional forester and coordinate activities between ranger districts, including budget allocation and technical support. Within Alabama, a state forest supervisor and district rangers govern the four Alabama national forests. A district ranger administers the Bankhead Forest. The district forester supervises other USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest professionals through working partnerships with other agencies, organizations, and individuals, user groups and volunteers. Many activities occur on the ranger districts, including trail construction and maintenance, operation of campgrounds, and management of vegetation and wildlife habitat.

⁵ Federal Land Policy and Management Act (Oct 1976). Requires management of public lands so future-planning decisions will include an "interdisciplinary approach to achieve integrated consideration of physical, biological, economic, and other sciences; and where appropriate, preserve and protect certain public lands; provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals; and provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use. Land Policy and Management Plans are never "completed", or "final", but are maintained, amended, and revised. See also: Forest System Land and Resource Management Planning Rule November 2000, and revised proposed rule 2002. The latest Alabama Forest Plan was approved March 1986.

⁶ The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision-making processes by preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is prepared if warranted and then submitted for public comment, followed with the finalized EIS after reviewing and considering public and technical comments.

At the national forest level, a *Forest Land and Resource Management Plan or Forest Management Plan* is required for each administrative unit of the National Forest System. Amended or revised plans respond to a change in resource conditions, social issues and values, or economic climates; or if monitoring reveals the plans are no longer suitable. They are revised every 10 to 15 years; however, planning is continuous at and between each level rather than sequential. The National Forest Management Act requires continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment of the Forest Management Plans through amendment and revision.

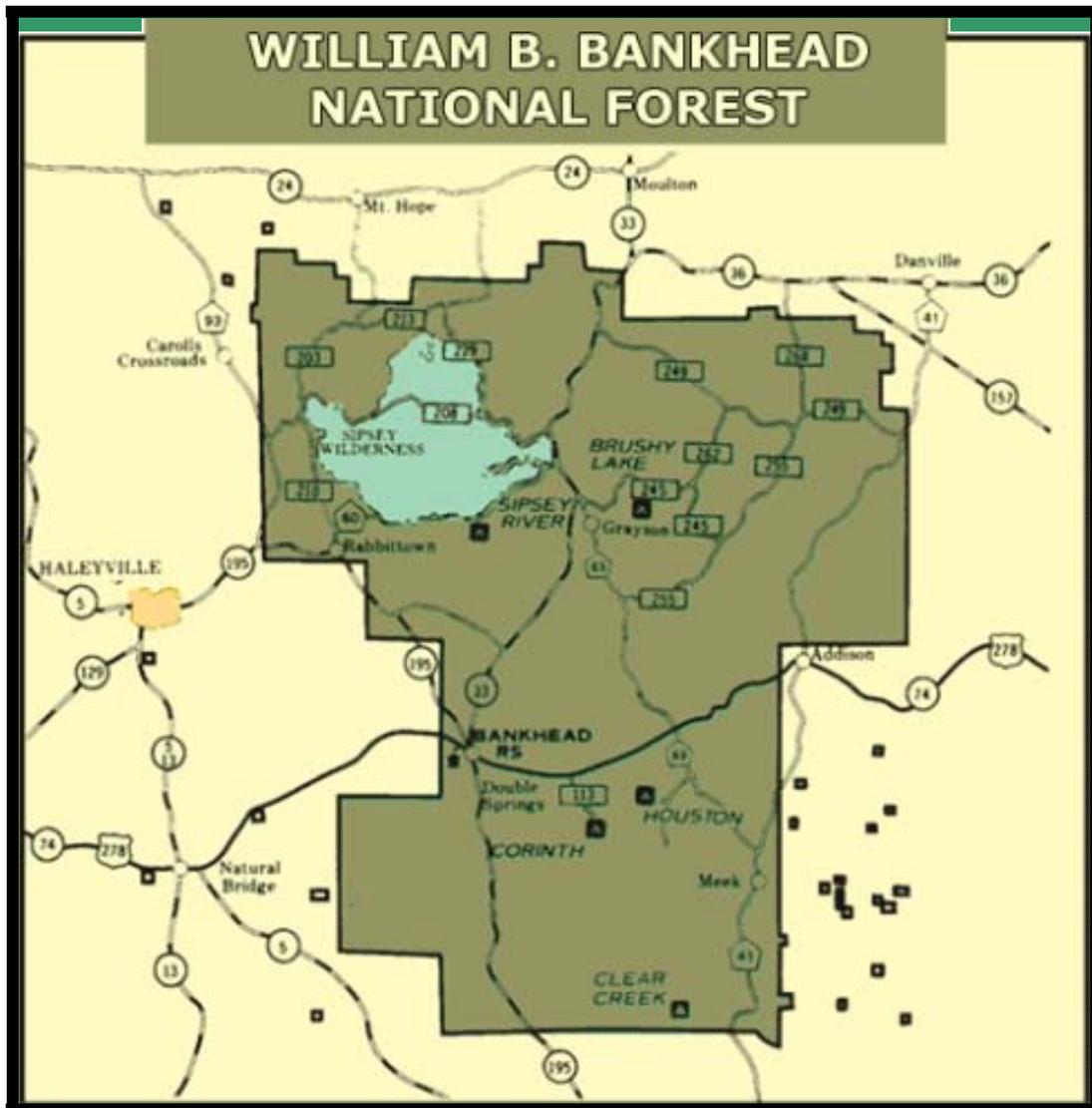
Project Level Plans occur within a national forest district, such as restoration initiatives, oil and gas leasing, grazing and recreation developments. Projects remain subject to site-specific and continuing compliance with federal environmental law such as the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Clear Air Act. The Bankhead Forest and Health Restoration Initiative is project level effort.

BANKHEAD FOREST HEALTH AND RESTORATION INITIATIVE

Project Purpose

In January 2000, the United States Forest Service (USFS) in Alabama began discussions about the Bankhead National Forest Health and Restoration Initiative. The Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative was designed to implement natural resource management actions aimed to sustain short and long-term forest health and increase representation of forest community types native to the Southern Cumberland Plateau region. The first phase of the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative determined the long-term desired future condition of the forest and an initial five-year program plan. The second phase, will involve developing detailed procedures and activities to implement the five-year program, including monitoring and evaluation activities.

Immediate short-term goals focus on treating pine beetle damaged areas, comprised mostly of loblolly pine stands between 15 and 45 years old. In addition, the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest wants to implement a prescribed burn program to reduce fuel loads and prepare the treatment sites for regeneration or restoration. The long-term goal of the Initiative is to restore forest and plant community types that are uncommon to private lands in northern Alabama. These forest communities, once common throughout the south have declined because of biological and anthropogenic changes, including the absence of fire.



Bankhead National Forest Map Courtesy the USDA Bankhead National Forest Service

The Initiative describes several native fire dependent forest community types: upland pine/bluestem and oak woodlands, mid-to late-successional deciduous hardwood pine forests, and old growth representative of all native forest community types. Restoring the Bankhead National Forest to these forest community types would:

- 1) result in reduction of catastrophic losses to the forest from insects and diseases;
- 2) increase public safety by reducing hazards resulting from standing dead trees and larger fuel loads;

- 3) increase protection for many native plant and animal communities including those federally listed threatened and endangered, sensitive, and locally rare species; and
- 4) insure that future generations of forest residents and users can continue to utilize and enjoy the Bankhead National Forest for years to come.

The draft environmental impact statement of the broader *National Forests in Alabama Land and Resource Management Plan* (or Forest Management Plan) review was underway when discussions began about the Initiative. Although the Alabama Forest Management Plan may integrate elements of the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative, and for the most part, they occurred simultaneously, the Plan and the Initiative are two different efforts. Often, perceived as the same format for planning, they are not. The Forest Management Plan is state level planning and decision-making, covering the entire 182,000 acres of the Bankhead. While the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative is district or project level planning and decision-making, covering 16,312 acres (see Appendix C).

Since 2000, the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest has conducted meetings, workshops, field trips, disseminated information through direct mailings, and issued press releases. They have also communicated with local media on local stories, published online information, and generated informational brochures. Furthermore, the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest established the Bankhead Liaison Panel to provide a forum for interested parties to meet face to face and discuss issues with the Initiative. This included encouraging public participation in providing technical and scientific information and other ideas on the subject of forest health and restoration. Research and monitoring reports related scientific information on soil, wildlife and plant habitat, and forest community relationships. Interested parties could give suggestions and concerns on methods of forest health and restoration options.

From January 2000 through December 2002, the Bankhead Forest Service:

- identified a purpose and need for a forest health and restoration initiative;
- proposed forest health and restoration actions to the public and other agencies;
- gathered public and agency comment, including significant issues and concerns regarding the proposed forest health and restoration actions; and
- developed six alternatives that included proposed treatments and the desired future conditions of the restoration areas.

From January 2003 through December 2003, the Bankhead Forest Service:

- conducted discussions with the Bankhead Liaison Panel., agencies, and the public at-large on the six forest health and restoration alternatives to determine the desired future conditions ;
- chose Alternative 5 as the preferred desired future condition of the Bankhead National Forest ;
- prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to engage additional public comment on the preferred future conditions and management actions;
- met with local groups and organizations to present the DEIS, responded to questions and addressed concerns about the effect of Alternative 5 on the local economies; and
- considered public comments and concerns before finalizing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (USFS, Management Bulletins R8-MB 110B and 110C, September 2003).

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Project Methodology included a situation assessment to determine the feasibility of a collaborative approach; a method for process design, including operating guidelines and mission; a timeline; and a training component. It also included a final report, describing the status of the five-year program plan, current recommendations and next steps.

Environmental disputes can be very complex. Environmental disputes are often about many other circumstances other than the substance of the controversy and its solutions. Disputes can entail undefined problems and therefore numerous problem definitions. There are multiple sources of knowledge - scientific, technical, cultural, and local - and some will accept only certain kinds of knowledge and sources. Complications may include a history of hostile relationships between people or organizations,; different attitudes about whether to solve the conflict or the level of involvement expected in working toward some kind of mutual-gain approach.; Certainly a diverse group of parties may have different management strategies and skill levels in how conflict is approached, managed or resolved.

One reason to conduct a situation assessment is to determine in the broadest sense three points. Who are the parties in the conflict? What are the substantive issues? What procedures might be useful to either reduce or resolve the conflict? (Carpenter and Kennedy, 2001). Often, a situation assessment informs a convener, or a third-party neutral (mediator or facilitator) about the circumstances surrounding a conflict and the likelihood of whether a collaborative approach could be used to guide better decision-making. However, a situation assessment can be essential information to the parties involved by assisting them to:

1. develop a shared understanding of the history of the problems and opportunities facing the Bankhead Forest Service and the Bankhead Forest Community;
2. orient and educate oneself to the potential opportunities and barriers of a collaborative process;
3. improve understanding about the various perspectives on the critical issues and concerns, and interests;
4. "listen" to others from a completely different context;
5. "listen" for opportunities to address identified issues and concerns;
6. provide group memory from which the stakeholders can refer to, partially as an indicator of success when issues are resolved; and
7. provide information to consider whether the issues and other associated barriers, can be structured for more effective decision-making and/or long-term agreements? And if so, how? Moreover, if not, can conflicts be reduced enough for temporary settlements?

Initially, the facilitators conducted a situation assessment to help the Bankhead National Forest Service with immediate and long-term decision-making about the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative. The NRLI and RESOLVE facilitators interviewed a wide range of people about their concerns and suggestions to determine the feasibility of enhancing a participatory process. Questions posed included: who should take part in the collaborative process and how? What should be the scale and scope of the issues addressed? What timelines were needed and other process considerations? What were known barriers to educating one another? What were additional opportunities to educate each other? What information did people need to participate effectively? And, who else might offer additional information? (See Appendix A: Situation Assessment Presented to the Bankhead Liaison Panel - January 2003).

RANGE OF ASSESSMENT METHODS

However, the NRLI-RESOLVE team relied on range of assessment methods other than the initial situation assessment from September 2002 until December 2003 to ensure involvement of the needed spectrum of interests, and to ensure the process timeline could and would be met. They also provided opportunities and incentives for continual involvement and capacity building, and to enable a transition to implementing adaptive processes, if and when, these were determined.

The range of assessment methods used by the NRLI-RESOLVE team from September until December are listed below and followed with a brief description.

E-mail Updates and Communication of Upcoming Events.	Information Gathering: Phone and Face-to-Face Interview Observations. & Historical Information	Information from Technical Experts
Information from the Media	Steering Committee Leadership	Federal, State, and Local Regulations
Summative Evaluation	Public Participation Throughout Process	Debriefings
Feasibility Criteria	Preliminary Meetings and Introductory Briefing	Co-Facilitation

INTRODUCTORY BRIEFING

An introductory briefing occurred in September of 2002 between the Bankhead National Forest Service and the Bankhead Liaison Panel. The objectives of the briefing were to:

- Introduce the NRLI-RESOLVE team to the Bankhead Liaison Panel, other community residents, and the Bankhead National Forest Service staff.
- Provide a presentation about the expected role and responsibilities of NRLI-RESOLVE team;
- Discuss potential next steps, respond to questions, and determine if these steps seemed agreeable to USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest and the Liaison Panel, and other community residents and in general, headed in an appropriate direction for all concerned.

SITUATION ASSESSMENT

The primary assessment format involved conducting one-on-one phone interviews with representatives from a cross-section of the Bankhead communities that rely on the Bankhead including: decision-makers; local community and cultural groups; non-profits; agencies; educational groups; local government; residents within the Bankhead forest and surrounding lands; Tribal clans; recreational users; tourism and local businesses.

Beginning in November 2002, NRLI -RESOLVE team contacted 102 individuals about his or her perceptions on the overall management of the Bankhead National Forest and whether enhancement of a participatory process would assist the Bankhead National Forest Service staff in their decision-making efforts with the Bankhead Forest Health & Restoration Initiative. Of those contacted, 61 individuals agreed to an interview, representing a range and diversity of perspectives related to the Bankhead National Forest. The NRLI-RESOLVE team began with a small group of potential interviews based on recommendations from the US Bankhead National

Forest Service and the Bankhead Liaison Panel. Then they increased the number of potential people to interview by requesting additional names of individuals who could offer different perspectives and information during interviews.

In addition, key information provided during the initial public participation scoping process (May 2002) was also included in the situation assessment. These were comments gathered by the Bankhead National Forest Service in response to the Notice of Intent to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative.

The NRLI-RESOLVE team conducted each interview using the same set of questions for consistency throughout the information gathering process. Each interview helped the NRLI-RESOLVE team to learn about the various perspectives, challenges, and the complexity of the issues facing the Bankhead Forest Service, the Liaison Panel, and community members.

During the interviews, the NRLI-RESOLVE team focused on identifying the similarities and differences of opinions on topics, looking for areas of commonality, and convergence as well as areas of divergent or polarized opinions. The assessment also assisted in proposing a process to address the widest range of participant interests and work with the Bankhead National Forest Service to develop better decisions about how to move forward with the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative.

The situation assessment presented to the Bankhead National Forest Service, the Liaison Panel, and other interested parties in January 2003 allowed for participant confirmations, changes, clarifications, and increased commitment. Combined with the September introductory briefing, this encouraged fruitful discussion including affirmation of stakeholder interest in assisting the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest with a public participation process; identified process concerns to be addressed, and surfaced insights regarding the feasibility of finding mutual-gain options. The assessment helped in developing process design and in establishing a mission and operating guidelines. It also helped identify potentially missing stakeholder interests from the Bankhead Liaison Panel, and create a timeline for moving forward.

FEASIBILITY CRITERIA: DEVELOPING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRODUCTIVE COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

The initial situation assessment also assisted in determining the feasibility of developing opportunities for productive collaborative processes. Although there is the potential for collaborative processes not work as anticipated, the NRLI-

RESOLVE team determined the following factors would greatly enhance the ability of Bankhead Community, the Bankhead Liaison Panel, and the Forest Service in fostering better working relationships as well as contributing to collaborative learning to improve the long-term management of the Bankhead Forest for its community and visitors.

An overarching feasibility criterion was starting with a small collaborative project, rather than a statewide forest management plan. It provided a sense of manageability and a test of reasonableness for accountability. Other criteria included:

1. AN EXISTING FORUM OR MECHANISM FOR THE COMMUNITY TO INTERFACE WITH THE USDA FOREST SERVICE, BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST - THE BANKHEAD LIAISON PANEL:

- ‡ **Existing forum and structure:** been working together since January 2000 a stakeholder group, is currently running and organized;
- ‡ **Existing network:** can expand upon the informal communication network that exists between many of the long-time residents in the community;
- ‡ **Level of Commitment:** stakeholder commitment and leadership exists to work on the process;
- ‡ **Convener Support:** organizational support from the Bankhead Forest Service;
- ‡ **Level of Trust:** some level of "working" trust with the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest and other stakeholders;
- ‡ **Recognition of Differences:** some recognition for the legitimacy of stakeholder differences, concerns, and issues;
- ‡ **Connected geographically;**
- ‡ **Level of Cooperation for Problem-Solving and Adaptation:** willingness to learn and apply learning and focus on task at hand;
- ‡ **Level of Dedication:** willingness to attend meetings and meet deadlines; and
- ‡ **Level of Innovation Potential:** Diverse representation.

2. CONVENER - THE BANKHEAD FOREST SERVICE:

- ‡ **Level of Trust:** wants to work with local groups, organizations, and other agencies to reestablish trust; values the input and dedication of the Bankhead Liaison Panel;
- ‡ **Level of Cooperation for Problem-Solving:** wants to work with the community, other organizations, and agencies to guide the future

management of the Bankhead National Forests, both in times of certainty and uncertainty;

- ‡ **Clear Mission, Task, and Timeline;**
- ‡ **Willingness to Provide Open and Transparent Opportunities for Participation:** not only to those who can participate directly but also to those who unable or uninterested to participate directly;
- ‡ **Willingness to Provide and Share Information:** bring technical, cultural, and scientific expertise to the project; willing to consider the agreements and plans the Bankhead Liaison Panel develops to support and inform decisions of the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest as well as the public at large and other agencies;
- ‡ **Multifaceted Experience:** brings technical expertise in working with various agencies and organizations in multi-jurisdictional arenas and the local community; and;
- ‡ **Links to Formal Legal Framework of Decision-Making:** follows regulatory requirements for public involvement and review.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND INCENTIVES FOR DIVERSE AND CONTINUAL INVOLVEMENT

To ensure involvement of the needed spectrum of interests and that the process timeline could and would be met, members of the community were asked about who could provide not only information but would be willing to learn new information, problem-solve, and develop approaches that could be beneficial to most if not all of the of potential interests. Participants were needed for all stages, during the Introductory Briefing, during the Situation Assessment Interviews, and during the public meetings.

Furthermore, a five-member Steering Committee assisted in debriefing meetings and developing upcoming agendas with other members. Technical and scientific people were involved during public meetings to assist in framing larger questions of discussions as well as provide information to narrow areas of uncertainty or for clarification.

From September 2002 through October 2003, nine public meetings were held, in alternatively sites around the Bankhead Forest, during the evening in order for most folks to attend. Meetings happened on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Meetings were publicized and pre-agendas were developed. Handouts were available on site for all who attended and meeting summaries were available at local libraries as well as online. Refreshments were provided at the meetings. Training in

communication and negotiation held on a Saturday was for both those directly involved in the process and any member of the public who wished to participate.

CO-FACILITATION

To ensure continuity in process and maximize facilitative expertise, co-facilitators supported the Bankhead Liaison Panel. They collaborated on meetings process design, agenda development, and procedural guideline development.

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

The US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution is conducting a summative evaluation of the facilitative process provided by the NRI-RESOLVE team. Information gathered from the evaluations will inform the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest, and the Facilitators about the productivity of the collaborative approach, and potential areas of improvement. This information will be summarized at a future meeting and any warranted steps to take as a result, will occur during the five-year program plan.

One consideration that may be useful is to consider conducting a focus group with local community members who have not been as involved in the process. Information from this kind of a focus group may assist the Bankhead Forest Service, the Bankhead Liaison Panel, Agencies, and Educators in determining how best to build the capacity of those who do not participate as frequently - to determine what information they would like to know; how to work more effectively with them or provide educational activities they would be willing to participate in (Schnepf, 2003).

ADDENDUM

If additional information is deemed necessary to support to this final report as a result of future meetings, or clarification is requested, an addendum will be written to the final report and made available and accessible.

ASSESSMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

Many residents were encouraged that the Bankhead National Forest Service was interested in bringing together individuals, groups, and organizations to help identify resource concerns, potential solutions, and to develop a coordinated plan of action. Nearly all respondents interviewed stated they would be willing to serve on the Bankhead Liaison Panel, to share their knowledge and suggestions and develop options for mutual-gain. Overall, interviewees were insightful throughout the

interview process, expressing a wide range of opinions, suggestions, and perspectives during the interviews. Some overarching themes framed most the discussions:

OVERARCHING STAKEHOLDER THEMES

- Management of the Bankhead National Forest is at a critical juncture, with an opportunity for the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest in tandem with other organizations, agencies, and citizens to guide its future;
- Though community members and the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest would like to move forward and develop mutual-gain approaches, a collaborative process will require persistence, patience and the ability to hear each others views;
- Although past events are important lessons learned, it is a good time for positive change, including changes in the Bankhead Liaison Panel if need be, to reach better options and decisions;
- Members liked the idea of an ambitious, forward-looking, progressive, and new approach at long-term stewardship;
- Have a clear purpose in mind for involving and engaging the right people; and
- Know what is on and off the table - what decisions does the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest have the authority to make and want to make; what decisions can the stakeholders contribute to and aid in completing.

REVERENCE FOR THE FOREST

The people who live in and near the Bankhead National Forest *love the forest*. It is very dear to them for many reasons. As a public resource, it offers something for everyone:

- ♦ a place of diverse beauty;
- ♦ a diverse cultural heritage for many and for some, a sacred place;
- ♦ a place of residence, a home for many who live in the Bankhead;
- ♦ a place of work;
- ♦ a diverse natural heritage, rich in natural history, scientific discovery and change, and ecological diversity;
- ♦ a place to hunt and fish, ride horses, walk in the wilderness, site-see, and camp;
- ♦ a place that draws visitors from around the country and contributes to the economic quality of the area; and
- ♦ a place many want to see available for their children's children.

Many individuals and organizations are interested in how the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest manages the Bankhead Forest including those who live in

the area and/or those who share a common interest or concern about the Bankhead.

FOREST HEALTH AND RESTORATION PRIMARY STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS:

- ♦ **TRIBAL COMMUNITIES AND CLANS:** long-time residents of the area, with significant sacred, cultural, and historic connections to the Bankhead National Forest, and consider the area their home. Interest is in having the forest be native and natural, and preserving cultural heritage while monitoring impacts from tourism and local residents. Not many sacred, untouched sites left in America.
- ♦ **BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST RESIDENTS:** home and landowners who live-in or near the Bankhead National Forest with significant cultural and historic connections and consider the forest their home. Some may prefer to see the forest preserved while others may prefer a multi-use approach on forestlands.
- ♦ **LOGGERS:** individuals who log timber for a living. Interested in seeing a healthy forest, one all can enjoy including economic interest. Loves forest. Would like to see a mix of forest composition: young, old, middle trees. It takes disturbance to create a mix - either natural or man-made. Would like to consider what can benefit all interests.
- ♦ **TIMBER HARVESTERS:** organizations or small mills involved in commercial harvesting of timber.
- ♦ **CONSULTING FORESTERS:** work with landowners to advise them of about forestland management options. Interested in developing an understanding within the community that forest landowners depend on healthy forest to market to industries.
- ♦ **FOREST LANDOWNERS:** landowners in or near the Bankhead who managed their land for multiple resources including timber. Many have lived here for several generations. Interest is in honoring and appreciating the forest - want to contribute to shaping a vision that 7 generations from now can appreciate.
- ♦ **REGULATORY:** representatives of agencies that oversee, manage, and protect natural resources. Interested in helping others understand how forest management affects things. Nothing in forest stays the same - yet it changes very slowly every day. There is a need to mimic natural activities

(speed/slow) sometimes to get desired outcome. Understanding together the how and the kinds of outcomes to expect would be useful. Threatened and endangered species should not prevent people from getting to an agreeable plan.

- **RECREATIONAL:** individuals and organizations with interests in horseback riding, bird-watching, fishing, hiking, hunting, camping, sight-seeing, hunting, ATV's, and tourism. Interested in maintaining viable recreational opportunities. Interested in making sure the forest service has the resources to manage the forest. Wants to see multi-use - horses and other recreation. Wants to bring in tourists (\$). Forest needs to be managed to be productive - manage it - don't rob it. Manage for trails, native flora, and fauna, less for people - lots of in holdings and private land to be less restrictive on.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL:** organizations with interests in conservation and/or preservation of the area, and in public health. Interested in seeing the forest returned to a natural state to preserve for future generations. Something special here. Preserve cultural areas - available and untouched. Work with other interests as well.
- **LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** elected officials, county and town employees. Here to listen, contribute to problem solving and decision-making where appropriate.
- **MULTI-USE ORGANIZATIONS:** organizations that promote multi-use on public lands - management of the forest, economic development, property rights, cultural heritage protection, recreational use, and conservation. Interested in a healthy forest, finding a balance between preserving native sites and having recreational opportunities. Want to walk in the pines without fear that a diseased or dead trees will fall on you. Want to come to the forest everyday.
- **COMMUNITY ELDERS:** long-time residents in various occupations.

ADDITIONAL BANKHEAD FOREST STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS:

- **COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:** organizations that provide services to the local community in and around the Bankhead.

- **TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL SERVICES:** organizations that provide tourism and/or recreational services (horseback riding, camping, and other facilities, tourism).
- **PUBLIC SERVICE:** organizations that provide a service to the local community such as the media and public health groups.
- **EDUCATIONAL:** organizations with interests in research and education that benefit the Bankhead National Forest.

STAKEHOLDER CRITERIA:

1. Have authority to decide and present recommendations for and/or from their organizations;
2. Have the potential to obstruct problem-solving initiatives or potential agreements and their implementation;
3. Do not have a vested interest but could be adversely affected by implementation of relevant agreements;
4. Can support decisions made through technical, scientific, research, or community outreach assistance;
5. Have a substantial investment or vested interest in the relevant issues and thus may feel some degree of risk with it;
6. Can contribute to the problem-solving discussions about the relevant issues;
7. Have a right to know and want to stay informed whether directly or indirectly; and
8. Recommended by other community members.

ASSESSMENT OF THE CENTRAL THEMES AND ISSUES

There are several ways to understand a concern or a multitude of issues. One way is to meet and talk with the people who are involved in the issues, to listen to their stories - their memories, concerns, and hopes for the future - and just what something means to them. The NRLI-RESOLVE team began to understand the concerns and issues and how those concerns could affect, inform, and create opportunities for collaborative problem solving by talking to people and creating chances for people to talk to one another.

During the structured interview process and throughout the public involvement process, participants were asked to provide their thoughts, opinions, and concerns about the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative. The central themes listed here reflect the most frequent statements in either general support and agreement or different perceptions and potential disagreements about the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative. While they agree in general terms on what the issues are, they do not always agree on how to resolve these issues.

GENERAL AGREEMENTS:

- ✦ **People have reverence for the forest.** While people may value different things about the forest, it is important to each of them. Various parties used similar words and phrases to explain their appreciation for and what they valued about the Bankhead Forest - they valued its beauty, history, culture, resources, and recreational opportunities.
- ✦ **Appreciation for the role and interaction of the Bankhead Liaison Panel,** established in 2000. The Bankhead Liaison Panel is and has been a means to engage local citizens. The Liaison Panel would like to continue working toward reaching decisions that are more inclusive.
- ✦ **Need to do something to improve the health of the Bankhead Forest.** There is a sense that there is little action.
- ✦ **Even though this is a long-term goal, many hope to see short-term successes.**
Composition of the forest should be a mix, and it should be sustainable (the values of beauty, history, culture, economic, resources, and recreational opportunities should be available for the future beneficiaries).

DIFFERING PERCEPTIONS:

- ✦ **What constitutes "forest health"?** This could affect people's ideas about what the goals should be and what is appropriate for a restoration plan;
- ✦ **The level of decision-making authority** various groups have and what level of decision-making citizens and other groups should have about the forest restoration and health initiative;
- ✦ **Expectations about natural resource management and restoration,** including how long it should take and what are the best methods;
- ✦ **The amount of human intervention needed** to achieve sustainability;
- ✦ **Whether there is enough information** about the soil, species, ecology, aquatics, history of the Bankhead, and information about large-scale restorations like this in the Southeast;
- ✦ **The impact past events have on current events** and capacities to work together;

- ♦ **What the Bankhead should be managed for** multi-use, conservation, or preservation;
- ♦ **What people have been talking about-** some are focusing on the overall forest management plan. It is revised every 15 years, and is currently under revision. Others are simply focusing on the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative.

HISTORICAL DIFFERENCES

It is not unusual then, for these interests to compete, or for controversy to exist given the multi-use mandate. Some examples of controversy since the 1990s include:

- ♦ Land management and land exchanges were unpopular with local environmental organizations. In general, environmental groups have opposed timber harvesting practices in the national forests;
- ♦ Controversies between the Bankhead National Forest Service and local Native Americans occurred over land management and cultural/historic districts;
- ♦ Recently there have been disagreements with local groups and/or individuals over issues such as private landowner rights (some landowners stated that were required to make "quick claim deeds" on their inholdings even though land was deeded to them);
- ♦ Management strategies to deal with the high incidence of tree mortality caused by southern pine beetle infestation were challenged by various forest user groups which in some cases allowed further development of the southern pine beetle infestation;
- ♦ Landowners within the forest are concerned that access rights to their property through the forests will be limited or cut-off especially during discussions which are often framed as "roads or roadless areas";
- ♦ A few local groups distrust federal and state government agencies in general. They may distrust the Bankhead National Forest Service because there is the belief that "government" does not do what it says "it" will and therefore cannot be trusted to operate in the public interests.
- ♦ Some respective interests have previously distrusted the district Bankhead National Forest Service leadership believing prior administrations did not take into account the interests of respective user groups and failed to involve the public in decision-making.

One very contentious situation occurred in 1999 - Local and national environmental groups requested President Clinton to designate portions of the Bankhead and

Talladega National Forests as National Monuments.. Though some local citizens were in strong support of this designation in order to protect part of a resource they believed was being devastated, other community members did not approve of the National Monument status. These members were concerned that designating even a portion of the Bankhead would change the multi-use mandate of the Bankhead National Forest Service to preservation and specifically:

- Confiscate inholder's property by eminent domain (even if property owners could remain on property until death, they could not will property to their heirs;
- Limit use of the public resource as well restrict private land use on inholdings and surrounding lands; and
- Manage for preservation in areas designated for Monument status (which may increase wildfires and bug infestation) instead of multi-use conservation.

Although some suggested the issue was not as contentious as it sounded, there are local community members who would not agree. The issue placed neighbor against neighbor, and still does in some cases.

Furthermore, claims surfaced during a recent Bankhead Liaison Panel meeting (October 2003) that the "National Monument" issue was being revisited as a result of the recent collaborative process. Some community members believe this is true while others do not. In either case, the required legislative or executive action to substantiate the claim that National Monument status is being sought for the Bankhead National Forest is not evident. Since 1999, no other group or organization has attempted to advocate this particular land management policy. Moreover, no one probably will - given the current working relationships and management transparency currently evident on the Bankhead National Forest.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY ATTITUDES ABOUT THE USDA FOREST SERVICE, BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST

1. General concurrence that the current USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest staff have been/are doing a much better job at communicating and building working relationships with the local community and interested parties. Although some parties remain cautious, they are willing to move forward in working with the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest to help

determine management strategies for the Initiative as well as communicate directly with the Forest Service.

2. The current state of the forest and its current administration create an ideal opportunity to improve health of the forest.
3. Many people shared their appreciation for the extensive deliberations and interactions of the Bankhead Liaison Panel. While structural changes were expected on the Liaison Panel, many hope to continue serving on the panel, reaching mutually satisfying and inclusive decisions.
4. Because the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest retained final decision-making authority, several members wondered whether their feedback, input, and recommendations, would have any affect on the decisions and plans for the Initiative.
5. People wanted to know what decisions the USFS had the authority to make, what decisions it wanted to make, and what decisions the Bankhead Liaison Panel and other community members could contribute to and assist in implementing. The Liaison Panel was looking for a mutual incentive to spend time analyzing the various alternatives, assurance that "something" would happen.
6. Some wondered if follow-up or communication from previous planning processes occurred, and whether the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest could clearly describe the basis or criteria for its agency decisions. Others were simply not clear what was on or off the table in trying to work collaboratively with the Bankhead Forest Service.
7. Distrust of government in general affects perceptions of USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest actions in particular. The distrust has been at various levels with the Forest Service and trust has been regained depending on the circumstances. There has been or still is:
 - a. Generalized distrust of the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest due to historical interactions with a previous administration characterized by many interviewed as adversarial, lacking in communication, and problem-solving opportunities. Although a generalized distrust was initially evident, the current USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest has increased its capacity significantly for building working relationships within the community. Instead of attributing negative motives on the current working

relationship, individuals and organizations are more willing to create new reference points and take incremental steps in building new working relationships because of the current administration's efforts to respect local knowledge, abilities, and skills; to maintain confidentiality; to share information; to admit mistakes and learn from them; to follow through; and be open to feedback. Although some may consider the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest more reliable under some circumstances than others, there is still a willingness to engage from the community and move forward.

- b. An enormous distrust and resentment occurred specifically from some organizations and individuals when the current administration conducted forest management actions without communicating its intent or seeking input. One of the first steps the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest took to regain this trust was to admit a mistake was made and to receive feedback from the party that felt betrayed. Because of sharing information and encouraging mutually serving intentions, there is a renewed sense of trust between these local relationships and the Bankhead Forest Service. In addition, expectations are being communicated and managed, and boundaries are clearly being communicated and set. The parties involved were able to reframe the experience (understand what led up to the situation instead of blaming and reacting), recognize it was not intentional, and that each party contributed in some way to the events that led up to situation. All of the parties involved have focused on a communication plan to prevent similar situations.
- c. Skepticism is still expressed by some members in the community because of a generalized distrust in government. Some of the distrust stems from oral accounts handed down for several generations on how the government acquired land for eastern forests. Even today, there are community members who believe that there is a plan, initiated by government to acquire acres of landowner's property without their full knowledge or understanding. However, the Record of Decision filed in September 2003 responds specifically to this public concern by stating the decisions associated with the project will not result in loss of private property to the Bankhead Forest Service, or the ability to manage property according to personal objectives, or the ability to pass on property to whomever (Record of Decision, 2003).

RESULTS OF COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FOREST HEALTH AND RESTORATION INITIATIVE

The Bankhead Liaison Panel, after deliberation and discussion, recommended Alternative 5 as the desired future condition to the Bankhead Forest Service. This alternative proposes to implement a five-year schedule of work to emphasize forest health and restoration of Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) damaged stands. They will thin overstocked loblolly pine stands and reforest SPB damaged stands. Emphasis is placed on six native upland-forest community types, including all associated plant and wildlife species, on the Bankhead National Forest located in Winston, Lawrence, and Franklin Counties, Alabama. (See Appendix F for further details on the Bankhead Liaison Panel recommendations).

One of the proposed agreements specifically involves **creating community based work groups to monitor progress and performance of each aspect of the health and restoration work**. These work groups will be accountable for members actively participating in attending meetings and field trips as needed, documenting learnings, monitoring observations, following through on action items, evaluating, reporting on all activities to the Liaison Panel, and working in tandem with the Bankhead Forest Service. The work groups will set up an operating structure for monitoring and evaluation. There are five work groups:

- ◆ Timber and Thinning Performance Work Group
- ◆ Recreation Work Group
- ◆ Cultural and Historic Work Group
- ◆ Wildlife Work Group
- ◆ Desired Future Conditions Work Group

OTHER OUTCOMES

Because of the intensive public involvement process, some working relationships between the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest, and the community have improved significantly. Members of the Bankhead Liaison Panel are willing to move forward in discussions about others issues pertaining to the Bankhead Forest. Furthermore, additional community members are willing to join the working groups in assisting the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest to implement decisions that have been made.

The Forest Health and Restoration Initiative Record of Decision, formally filed by

the District Ranger in September 2003, was not appealed. The 5-year plan of work described in the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest Record of Decision will begin in 2004.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

Reasonable people will disagree on the nature, scope, and complexity of National Forest issues. However, most people can agree on some core values, such as their love for the forest, which can transcend competing interests as was exemplified throughout the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration assessment process. To assist with implementations of next steps and to sustain the working relationships that are governing the implementation, the following recommendations are offered.

Wondolleck and Yaffee (2001) suggest there are four key factors to sustain the success of the collaborative initiative: (1) continuity of people and philosophy (development of working relationships); (2) continuing agency commitment and support for the process; (3) retaining the compelling focus for sense of place and community; and (4) maintaining a mechanism to support continued involvement. The NRLI-RESOLVE team has provided recommendations around these four key factors including the addition of a fifth key factor - monitoring and evaluation. Reaching an agreement is only step in the overall process of better management for the USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest and the Bankhead Community- monitoring and evaluation will be needed not only to ensure appropriate management decisions are being made but that the working relationships building built are provided opportunities to grow and develop, and sustain themselves where necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS AND SUSTAIN THE COLLABORATIVE

The following suggestions may assist in improving the chances for collaborative approaches where appropriate:

- ♦ Work with local businesses and educational facilities to improve and market educational opportunities among the USFS and these stakeholders; and to market activities within the Bankhead to visitors to area.

- ♦ Recognize natural resource terms mean different things to different people in different and in similar locations. As a result, words intended to bridge collaboratives may not and groups may need to “unpack definitions and meanings” to order to further conversations. An example is “ecosystem management” - with roots in science as well as natural resource policy such as the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)⁷. Rural landowners may perceive words like “ecosystem management” and “sustainability” as a legal means to gain more control over their land instead of a means to bridge economic-environmental-social interests.
- ♦ Include ethnic and minority communities in public outreach, and work with these communities to provide activities that meet their interests.
- ♦ During the discussions of the Bankhead Liaison Panel, several topics were identified for future discussions including: development of new recreational areas or expansion of current ones; developing an action plan for working with invasive species; and discussing access in the Bankhead.
- ♦ Continue to provide a meeting summary of previous discussions and/or decisions to each stakeholder or Liaison Panel member, and make these accessible to the members and the public.
- ♦ Build the capacity to engage in stakeholder natural resource processes by offering training in: collaborative problem solving, communication, and negotiation, planning, and monitoring and evaluation, and others as identified. Work with local Cooperative Extension and Alabama’s academic institutions to develop a natural resource leadership development model - similar to the Natural Resources Leadership Institute model (1994) developed at NC State University, or a model that will allow diverse perspectives to engage in collaborative learning and apply that learning to initiative within their communities.
- ♦ Develop ongoing activities and opportunities for collaborative learning to occur, not only between the Bankhead Liaison Panel and the Forest Service but also between the new members to the Bankhead Liaison Panel, the working groups, and local organizations. Continuing to learn and communicate with each other is crucial not only to the 5-year plan of work but for any future decisions and recommendations, or plans of action that may need to be developed.

⁷ According to Gray, et al, in Europe “ecosystem management” is referred to a highly technical scientific approach to resource management; outside of Europe - “bioregional and integrated conversation” may be terms used to mean the same thing (2001, p.37).

- Expand representation of the Bankhead Panel to include interests not currently represented, such as local businesses and youth organizations.
- Provide forums for information exchange between technical experts and the community to identify problems or issues of concern and potential opportunities in the Bankhead Forest.
- Continue to inform the public about the activities of the Bankhead including management plans for example using the Bankhead website, local community gathering places, radio-talk shows, churches, libraries, schools, and local newspapers.
- Use other organizational websites, newsletters, and other communication tools to share experiences and information related to collaborative learning, planning, and Bankhead forest management efforts.
- Create educational programs to disseminate information and increase awareness about Alabama's National Forests, not only in what the forests provide but also in how the community can be involved in shaping the future of the forests.
- Facilitate networking between local communities, the Bankhead Forest Service, and other cooperative programs to gain greater integration of forest stewardship planning at the local level and offer multi-educational opportunities. Ensure connections with Alabama's Cooperative Extension Service, its Universities, the local Resource Conservation District Council, the State Forestry Councils and Committees, State Rural Development Councils, and others as they are identified.
- Recognize that working relationships are dynamic and will require ongoing communication and commitment, action plans, activities for interaction, and follow-through. While history and previous patterns of interaction can influence current working relationships, providing opportunities for improvement and sometimes challenging stereotypes and misperceptions can new build new ways of thinking about how to interact. New memories, built on shared understanding are needed in order to sustain the collaborative approach achieved thus far.
- Recognize there are community members who believe that government in general only appears to seek and consider public involvement. Believing solutions are predetermined, some parties may not be willing to engage in public

involvement activities no matter how much other parties are willing to engage or trust the current administration. Some suggestions for the involved parties may include:

- When trust is low, recognize the importance of making expectations concrete, communications simple, and straightforward ;
- Understand there may be little the current administration can do about historical events but asking how to avoid similar situations or deciding on a plan together may assist in working through future situations;
- Recognize members of the community who want and require tangible evidence in order to trust. Though other members may be comfortable with ambiguity or uncertainty, there may be a need to set aside time with several of these members in order to build clear expectations and mutually serving intentions. Otherwise, expectations of mistrust and conflict may generate additional layers of mistrust and conflict.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

Transition of Facilitation Team: continue to use current facilitation team to move process from "vision" to "action," while assisting in identification of local facilitation team to begin working with the Bankhead Liaison Panel and the working groups.

Develop Protocols and Procedures:

- ‡ Develop a list of selection criteria and procedures for selecting five participant-leaders to "chair" the monitoring working groups. Work with Liaison Panel, working groups and USDA Forest Service, Bankhead National Forest to identify participants who have facilitative leadership skills and who are acceptable to Liaison Panel and working group members.
- ‡ Develop protocols for media relations and adopting a technical resource network.
- ‡ Develop protocols for selecting a local facilitator, assist with orientation and coaching to ensure new co-facilitator team is prepared to assume responsibility for facilitating the monitoring work groups and future discussions of the Bankhead Liaison Panel.

Provide training: provide facilitative leadership and dealing with scientific data training.

Presentation on Adaptive Management: provide a presentation on ways other stakeholder groups are approaching monitoring and adaptive management.

Further Assessment: throughout this project, the value of collaborative learning and inquiry for making good decisions has been encouraged- evaluations are part of this process as a well as for reporting on updates and progress.

- ♦ **Summative Evaluation:** the US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution is conducting a summative evaluation of the facilitative process provided by the NRLI-RESOLVE team. Information gathered from this evaluation can inform the Bankhead Forest Service, the Bankhead Liaison Panel, and the NRLI-RESOLVE team about the productivity of the collaborative approach, and potential areas of improvement, in conjunction with information contained in this report. Information about potential opportunities for improvement can be communicated at Bankhead Liaison Panel meetings, and incorporated into the ongoing process.

They will also conduct a summative evaluation following the formal transition of the project to a local facilitation team.

- ♦ **Focus Group:** a future consideration may be to conduct a randomly selected focus group of local community members who have not been directly involved in the process to provide additional feedback (Schnepf, 2003). Information from this kind of a focus group may assist the Bankhead Forest Service, the Bankhead Liaison Panel, agencies, educators, and the community in determining how best to build the capacity of those who do not participate as frequently in collaborative processes: determine what information they would like to know and how best to provide it: how to work more effectively with those who do not participate as frequently or directly to keep them informed; and perhaps educational activities that are of interest the community would be willing to participate in.
- ♦ **Inter-Working Group Assessment:** develop a working group assessment and plan of action to move forward in building working relationships.
- ♦ **Addendum:** If additional information is deemed necessary to support to this final report because of future meetings, information, or assessments, an addendum will be written to the final report, made available and accessible.

Where all think alike, no one thinks very much.

Walter Lippmann

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APPENDIX A: BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST SITUATION ASSESSMENT

Environmental disputes can be very complex. Environmental disputes are often about many other circumstances other than the substance of the controversy and its solutions. Disputes can entail undefined problems and therefore numerous problem definitions; several sources of knowledge - scientific, technical, cultural, and local - but only certain kinds of knowledge or sources will be accepted by some; a history of hostile relationships between people or organizations, or camaraderie; different attitudes about whether to solve the conflict or the level of involvement expected in working toward some kind of mutual-gain approach; and certainly, respective parties to the conflict may have different management strategies and skills level in how conflict is approached, managed or resolved.

One reason to conduct a situation assessment is to determine in the broadest sense: who are the parties in the conflict; what are the substantive issues; and what procedures might be useful to either reduce or resolve the conflict (Carpenter and Kennedy, 2001). Often, a situation assessment is intended to inform a convenor, or a third-party neutral (mediator or facilitator) about the circumstances surrounding a conflict and the likelihood of whether a collaborative approach can be used to guide better decision-making. However, a situation assessment can be essential information to the parties involved by assisting them to:

- 1) develop a shared understanding of the history of the problems and opportunities facing the US Bankhead National Forest Service and the Bankhead Forest Community;
- 2) orient and educate oneself to the potential opportunities and barriers of a collaborative process;
- 3) improve understanding about the various perspectives on the critical issues and concerns, and interests;
- 4) "listen" to others from a completely different context;
- 5) "listen" for opportunities to address identified issues and concerns;
- 6) provide group memory from which the stakeholders can refer to, partially as an indicator of success when issues are resolved; and
- 7) provide information to consider whether the issues and other associated barriers, can be structured for more effective decision-making and/or long-term agreements? And if so, how? And if not, can conflicts be reduced enough for temporary settlements?

During the situation assessment interviews, a range of comments, concerns,

perspectives, suggestions, and issues regarding the health and quality of the Bankhead National Forest in general, and the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative specifically, were gathered and identified. Specifically, the situation assessment assisted to:

- 1) Identify and involve key individuals and groups in the analysis of the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative;
- 2) Identify and assess issues in general related to the Bankhead National Forest;
- 3) Identify and assess specific issues related to the Initiative;
- 4) Identify points of concurrence or disagreement;
- 5) Identify suggested activities to:
 - a. improve working relationships among affected parties;
 - b. help decision-making among affected parties; and
 - c. explore the potential to build capacity for local leadership to support and sustain more inclusive and collaborative approaches to forest management decision making.
- 6) Decide the feasibility for engaging in a productive and collaborative approach about the Initiative:
 - a. explore the potential to develop agreements with the Bankhead Liaison Panel and other community members regarding desired future condition of forest communities and a 5-year program plan;
 - b. compare potential results of the collaborative process to other strategies and alternatives for meeting respective interests; and
 - c. explore the potential risks in a collaborative approach and whether these risks are manageable (i.e., other stakeholders may not invest the same amount of time nor resources).

Bankhead National Forest
Forest Health and Restoration Initiative

In November of 2002, the U.S. Institute's Federal Partnership Program for Environmental Conflict Resolution and the U.S. Forest Service in Alabama contracted with the Natural Resources Leadership Institute (NRLI) and RESOLVE to facilitate public involvement and conflict resolution for the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration project. To begin we interviewed interested parties. While

we have not finished contacting all the interested parties, we did want to report some of what we have heard so far.

In our interviews, we identified a range of comments, concerns, and issues regarding the health and quality of the Bankhead National Forest generally and the Health and Restoration Initiative specifically.

THEMES: WE HEARD MANY COMMON THEMES RUNNING THROUGH THE INTERVIEWS WE CONDUCTED, SO FAR.

1. We found general agreement that current USFS staff are doing a better job at communicating and building relationships with the interested parties.
2. A distrust of government in general affects perceptions of USFS actions in particular. This ranges from distrust in the current administration's actions around forest planning to historic reactions to government appropriation of land.
3. People used very similar words and phrases to explain their appreciation for and values about the Bankhead Forest. People value the beauty, history, culture, resources, and recreation riches of the forest.
4. Many we interviewed explain that they do not know if their recommendations, feedback, or input has any affect on USFS decisions and plans. Some people wondered if there was follow-up or communication from previous planning processes. Some people said that the Bankhead staff did not always clearly describe the basis for agency decisions. Others explained that Bankhead staff did not clearly describe the criteria they would use to make future decisions.
5. People explained that the forest should be a mix of hardwood and evergreen species, and that the forest should be sustainable. While they understand that this is a long-term goal, most also wished they could see some short-term successes.
6. Many people shared that the current state of the forest and the current staff on the Bankhead create an ideal opportunity to improve the health of the forest.
7. Many people shared their appreciation of the role and interaction of the liaison panel. While they expected some changes with the panel, they would like to continue working toward reaching decisions that are more inclusive.
8. We found that people did not have a clear sense of what was "on and off the table". People wanted to know what decisions the USFS had the authority to make, what decisions it wanted to make, and decisions the stakeholders could contribute to and assist in implementing.
9. People explained that there had been a lot of talk, if they were going to participate in a collaborative process they needed to have assurances that something would be accomplished.

STAKEHOLDERS: We asked people who needed to be involved in any collaborative discussions or decisions about the Bankhead National Forest. Many people mentioned the following list.

- 1) Landowners, residents and neighbors of the Bankhead (esp. people who live w/in forest)
- 2) County Commissioners, District Conservationists in Counties, County Boards and local politicians
- 3) Tourist interests (for example someone from Industrial Development Board)
- 4) Native American Groups
- 5) Forest Recreation Users (camping, boating, hiking, biking, horseback riding, ATV)
- 6) Timber harvesters, loggers, consulting foresters
- 7) State Environmental Groups
- 8) National Environmental Groups
- 9) Other Involved Federal Agencies: (for example US Fish and Wildlife,
- 10) State Agencies (for example Alabama Game and Fisheries, Alabama Multi-Use and Conservation Association)
- 11) Hunting and fishing groups and interests
- 12) Research and University individuals (for example biologists, botanists, soil scientists, pathologists, sociologists, Agricultural Extension Agents)

ISSUES: We asked people to tell us what issues needed to be talked about in the discussion around the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative. People talked about a range of issues, but many stressed these ones.

- 1) What are the best ways to do the restoration work? Can the restoration work be done so there is no further erosion, soil compaction, damage to sacred or historic sites, and little reduction in recreation area use? Can the restoration work enhance the local economy?
- 2) Will the Health and Restoration Initiative close roads? Either having or closing roads is an issue.
- 3) How do you define a healthy forest in ways that accommodate forest industries, tourism, recreation, preservation, and expansion of wilderness, as well as rare, sensitive, and threatened species?
- 4) How can we all use the Bankhead forest at the same time without stepping on the toes of other users?

- 5) What should the proportion of hardwood to pine be? What is the best forest composition for the Bankhead?
- 6) What kind of fire suppression and prescribed burns makes sense for Southeastern forests?
- 7) How does or should the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative connect or integrate with other forest planning processes, watershed protection efforts or dam relicensing projects?
- 8) How do you develop an end use, restore the forest, and monitor it, so that forest is sustainable over a very long time?
- 9) How will the health and restoration initiative affect water quality?
- 10) How will the forest health and restoration affect local control and landowners and residents use of their land?

AGREEMENTS/DISAGREEMENTS: We heard clear things people agreed on, and some things that people might disagree about, too.

Agreements:

- 1) Need to do something to improve the health of the forest.
- 2) The current staff is much better at communication and community; there is a foundation to build on.
- 3) People have reverence for the forest, while people may value different things about the forest, it is very important to people.

Potential Disagreements:

- 1) People have different perceptions about what constitutes "forest health". This could affect people's ideas about what the goals should be and what is appropriate for a restorative plan.
- 2) People did not seem to share the same ideas about what level of decision-making different groups had about the forest. Nor did people agree about what kind of decision-making citizens and other groups should have about the initiative or the forest.
- 3) People have different expectations about natural resource management and restoration, this includes how long should it take and what are the best methods.
- 4) People have different ideas about the amount of human intervention needed to achieve sustainability.
- 5) There are disagreements about whether there is enough information about the soil, species, ecology, aquatics, history of the Bankhead, and information about large-scale restorations like this in the Southeast.
- 6) People have different perceptions about past events and how that history affects current events.

- 7) Not everyone agrees what the Bankhead should be; people have different ideas about how the Bankhead should be designated.

WORKING TOGETHER: We asked people if they had any ideas about how to work together productively. People had lots of ideas and preferences about a collaborative process.

- 1) There should be a clear charge—a goal or mission statement for the group which states where they are going and why.
- 2) There should be a clear statement and understanding about the group's authority and the role of the USFS.
- 3) There should be a clear time frame with clear decision points and clear understanding of how collaborative process fits into NEPA process.
- 4) People need lots of information and time for learning, but it needs to be accessible and abstracted.
- 5) There should be summaries of decisions and discussions that can be available on the website or accessible to the public. In particular, there should be meeting summaries for the stakeholders.
- 6) There should be clear and open communication while being polite; people want to hear why some people prefer one thing to the other.
- 7) When people make claims or statements they should support their claims, people should help each other test their assumptions.
- 8) A 15-25 person group would be best, with other people involved in smaller working groups.
- 9) There should be a public outreach and education process for general information on the project, the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative and the forest ecology.
- 10) There should be some way to tap into local business and education resources to expand outreach, education and interactions.
- 11) There should be some learning or training about communication and problem solving.
- 12) The process should expand representation and access so that more people learn about the Bankhead and the activities on the Bankhead. There could be more interests represented such as local business, youth organizations, and ethnic and minority communities.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE OF BANKHEAD ASSESSMENT TOPICS

- How familiar are you with the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative project? The goal of the project is to assist the USFS with a collaborative approach to decision-making that will assist in development of local understandings and relationships, rebuild public trust, and determine the desired future conditions for the Bankhead National Forest through a formal NEPA process.
- Please tell me a bit about your organization? What is its mission? How is it organized? How long has it been in existence? Who is the decision maker - spokesperson?
- What activities does your organization participate in on the Bankhead--how do you use the Bankhead?
- What is the history of your organization's interest/involvement in with the US Bankhead National Forest Service or forest issues on the Bankhead?
- Tell us about your views on the health and quality in the Bankhead Forest? Is it improving? declining compared to the past? Or staying the same?
- What are the issues that you think should be discussed in regarding the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative? How are these issues important to you?
- If a formal consensus-building process were developed for the forest health and restoration initiative, what would you consider a "successful outcome" of such a process? Who do you think is important to include in such discussions?
- Given the opportunity, would your organization be interested in being part of the core negotiations? Would you be the appropriate person to represent your organization in this situation or someone else? What would need to happen during the project to make this effort worthwhile to your group?
- If your group was not able to participate, is there any other group that you believe could represent your interests about this project?
- Can you tell me a bit about your organization's internal decision-making process and how, if you were representing your organization in negotiations, you would

keep the rest of your organization and its broader constituency updated on the discussions?

- If such a process were undertaken, what do you think negotiation dynamics would be like? Can you think of anything that would help make it constructive?
- What ground rules do you think are particularly important to establish for a group to work together productively?
- If a group were to meet, what do you think are the best days of the week, times of the day and places to meet? Number of meetings a month? Size group do you think will be most inclusive and productive?
- What information do you need to participate well? What information can you bring to the process? How do you want to learn and share information?
- What would the impact be if discussions or negotiation did not result in agreement?
- Are you aware of any barriers to a successful process? Do you see ways in which they could be overcome?
- Currently, the USFS has been working with a representative liaison panel to provide input and recommendations on the desired future conditions for the Bankhead National Forest: are you aware of the liaison panel and their work?
- If you are a Liaison Panel member, is this structure working for you and how so? Not working for you and how so?
- Are there other people or organizations that I should contact about the Bankhead Project who could provide additional information? If yes, can you provide contact information?

APPENDIX C: BANKHEAD LIAISON PANEL MISSION AND GROUND RULES

Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative Liaison Panel Mission and Ground Rules

(Full Version Located Online: www.ces.ncsu.edu/NRLI)

I. Mission of the Liaison Panel

The Bankhead Liaison Panel is made of individuals that represent a diverse cross section of public interests on the Bankhead National Forest. The goal of the panel is to:

- 1) Learn about projects, plans, health and status of the Bankhead National Forest,
- 2) Communicate clearly with other Liaison Panel members about each others preferences and interests,
- 3) Consider, discuss, and provide possible solutions to a variety of issues on the Bankhead.

The Liaison Panel aspires to develop solutions that are acceptable to all panel members or at least to a large majority of the members. The Panel meetings are open to the public and the meetings provide a forum for the public to come together to learn, discuss and help resolve difficult land management issues.

II. Short Term Objective (2003)

The short-term objective of the Liaison Panel is to provide recommendations to the Bankhead National Forest Service on the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative.

- 1) Learn about Bankhead Forest Health and share information about the alternatives proposed to meet the desired future conditions.
- 2) Discuss concerns and viewpoints about the proposed alternatives and their possible impacts,
- 3) Communicate each other's preferences and interests about the proposed Forest Health Initiative alternatives.
- 4) Identify criteria for evaluating the alternative plans,
- 5) Narrow disagreements regarding Forest Health and Restoration Initiative alternatives,
- 6) Agree on one proposed alternative as a recommendation to the U.S. Bankhead National Forest Service, the agreement will be documented in a meeting summary.

LIAISON PANEL GROUND RULES

1. Only one person will speak at a time and no one will interrupt when another person is speaking.
2. Each person will express his or her own views rather than speaking for others at the table.
3. No one will make personal attacks or issue statements blaming others for specific actions or outcomes.
4. People will avoid extended comments and questions to allow everyone a fair chance to speak and to contribute.
5. Each person will try to stay on track with the agenda, to respect time limits, and to move the deliberations forward.
6. People should expect, respect, and try to accept different interests, perspectives, and opinions.
7. Everyone will limit sidebar conversations.
8. Members will engage actively - share information ideas and concerns.
9. To decide, the Liaison Panel will operate by consensus. Consensus means there is no dissent by any member. Granting "consent" means that each member can live with the decision and support its implementation.
10. With the right to offer consent or express dissent as a Liaison Panel member, comes the responsibility of making clear the reasons for dissent and try to offer an alternative proposal satisfactory to other members.
11. Members should remain at the table during deliberations to hear the full discussions so their judgments are informed when decision-making occurs. Members may also choose not to consent on a decision, but to abstain without offering dissent.
12. Absence will be equivalent to abstaining.

APPENDIX D: COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES AND STRUCTURE

During the January 2003 meeting, the NRLI-RESOLVE team proposed a process design to address the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative to the Bankhead Liaison Panel and the Bankhead National Forest Service staff. The process design resulted from information gathered during the interviews and the process expertise of the NRLI-RESOLVE team.

A 5-member Steering Committee, formed from members of the Bankhead Liaison Panel, helped in developing working agendas; helped structure who should be involved in the Liaison Panel; encouraged direct discussion; helped in assessing the need for and deciding the stakeholder interest in a proposed agenda items; and identified process concerns to be addressed. Once ideas or suggestions were discussed, these would be brought back to the Bankhead Liaison Panel for further discussion, deliberation, or action.

STAKEHOLDER PREFERENCES FOR COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

Establish a:

- Clear charge for any group process;
- Clear understanding and statement about the group's authority, goals, and responsibilities, and that of the US Bankhead National Forest Service;
- Time frame with decision points and visual diagram of how a collaborative process fits into the NEPA process. Establish set meeting dates;
- Clarity about the agency's commitment to work with the group and their recommendations; and
- Decision-making procedures format.

Process Structure:

- Establish rules all can live with;
- Establish broad and diverse representation to represent the respective interests but avoid becoming too large so that the group is not productive. Consider using smaller work groups to aid productiveness of process design;
- Use a facilitator or someone other than the Bankhead National Forest Service to guide the meeting process;
- Establish the expectation that group members will need to make the thinking behind their reasoning and statements transparent in order for everyone to learn from one another;
- That allows members to test assumptions, claims, or statements of fact;

- Provide training in communication, successful skills of negotiators, and multi-party negotiation;
- Members or alternated attend all meetings; and
- Members communicate with their constituencies and the larger Bankhead Community.

Provide Accessible and Relevant Information to:

- Constituencies and the public through public outreach and education on the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative;
- Include the media in the educational process;
- Maintain meeting summaries that record decisions and summarize discussions;
- Provide upcoming agendas before meetings and other supporting documentation;
- Provide reflective learning time to abstract information learned and its impacts on the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative;
- By working with local businesses and other educational resources to expand outreach, education, and interactions about the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative. Allow process to expand representation and access for more people to learn about the Bankhead and its activities. There could be more interests represented, such as local business, youth organizations, and ethnic and minority communities.

FACILITATOR SUGGESTIONS ON DEALING PRODUCTIVELY WITH PUBLIC CONCERNS, FEARS, AND ANGER

- **Motivation by Fears or Sense of Unfairness:** recognize people have strong feelings when they have been hurt, when they feel threatened by risks not of their own making, or when they believe that someone is challenging their fundamental beliefs. These feelings are intensified when people feel disempowered or that they don't have any control of their lives, when they feel they have not been treated fairly or with respect, and when they feel they have been manipulated, trivialized, ignored or lied to.
- **Retaliation:** recognize people may retaliate or create a movement in order to "do something" that may advance their fears or beliefs. It is important to respect the deep places these feelings come from or the need to "do something."
- **Empathy:** communication is not just, what comes out of our mouths - how you feel will inevitably show in how you say it. Be concerned. Listen. Listen to their values.
- **Reflect and Reflect Aloud:** in order to begin to clarify peoples' roles. Begin to develop a list of questions that can draw out the reasoning of others and

the details. It's easier to think up good questions now rather in the heat of the moment. This will provide you with more information on which to judge the concerns and the risks being expressed. Some questions to ask: what else concerns you? Could you say more about the problems this would cause? What could make this better?

- Breathe: if you feel attacked, breathe. Biologically our flight/fight responses kick in whether we want them to or not. But, we can control them somewhat by breathing deeply which helps slow down your heartbeat, etc. Plus, it gives you a minute to think.
- Be honest. Tell them if you do not know how something relates to their question or it does.
- Summarize Next Steps.
- Spend a bit more time in talking with people.

APPENDIX E: ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

The following questions were posed by the Bankhead Panel members, acquired during the Interviews or from the Scoping Documents about the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative.

- 1) What are the best ways to do the restoration work? Can the restoration work be done so there is no further erosion, soil compaction, damage to sacred or historic sites, and little reduction in recreation area use? How do increased demands and uses affect forest health?
- 2) Can the restoration work enhance the local economy? What are the potential economic impacts? How much commercial logging will be allowed in the restoration areas? What is the timetable for thinning?
- 3) Will the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative require road closures or open more roads?
- 4) How can a healthy forest be defined in ways to accommodate forest industries, tourism, recreation, preservation, and expansion of wilderness, as well as rare, sensitive, and threatened species?
- 5) How can the Bankhead forest meet the user interests of one group while at the same time meeting the interests of users, even if those interests are competing?
- 6) What should the proportion of hardwood to pine be? What is the best forest composition for the Bankhead? What is the natural distribution of shortleaf/longleaf? What were pre-settlement forest types?
- 7) What fire suppression activities and prescribed burns makes sense for Southeastern forests? What are the effects of fire prescription on forest health? What are the effects of Pre-settlement fire disturbance - on soils, how often, etc.?
- 8) How does or should the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative connect or integrate with other forest planning processes, watershed protection efforts, air quality protection efforts, or hydropower relicensing projects?

- 9) How do you develop an end use, restore the forest, and monitor it, so the forest is sustainable over a long time?
- 10) How will the Forest Health and Restoration Initiative affect water quality? Air Quality?
- 11) How will the Bankhead Forest Health and Restoration Initiative affect local control - landowners and residents use of their land? Property values and access?
- 12) What are the positive effects from each of the proposed desired future condition? What interests and values will not be met within the proposed desired future conditions? What are the consequences of each proposed desired future condition? What are the effects of treatments on the southern pine beetle? What are the benefits of small clear cuts? What are the benefits in using environment-friendly treatment alternatives? What are the differences in forest composition prescriptions -with blue stem longleaf and shortleaf, as a result of burn schedules? Regarding wildlife?
- 13) What are effects of the restoration activities on cultural and historic sites? What could happen?
- 14) Can indigenous wildlife be increased including game and non-game species?

APPENDIX F: BANKHEAD LIAISON PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Bankhead Liaison Panel, after deliberation and discussion, recommended Alternative 5 as the desired future condition to the Bankhead Forest Service. This alternative proposes to implement a five-year schedule of work to emphasize forest health and restoration of Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) damaged stands by thinning overstocked loblolly pine stands and reforesting SPB damaged stands. Emphasis is placed on six native upland-forest community types, including all associated plant and wildlife species, on the Bankhead National Forest located in Winston, Lawrence, and Franklin Counties, Alabama.

One of the proposed agreements specifically involves **creating community based work groups to monitor progress and performance of each aspect of the health and restoration work**. These work groups will be accountable for members actively participating in attending meetings and field trips as needed, documenting learnings, monitoring observations, following through on action items, evaluating, reporting on all activities to the Liaison Panel, and working in tandem with the Bankhead Forest Service. The work groups will set up an operating structure for monitoring and evaluation. There are five work groups:

- ♦ Timber and Thinning Performance Work Group
- ♦ Recreation Work Group
- ♦ Cultural and Historic Work Group
- ♦ Wildlife Work Group
- ♦ Desired Future Conditions Work Group

The proposed action would focus on:

- ♦ Areas occupied by loblolly pine stands between ages of 15 and 45 years old.
- ♦ Areas 10 acres and larger that have been killed by SPB infestations.

The proposed action addresses the need to improve and maintain healthy forest conditions and provide for fire dependent forest communities that are historically a part of the Southern Cumberland Plateau ecosystem in this geographic region, but are no longer present. The proposed action includes:

- ♦ Intermediate thinning on approximately 9,452 acres of loblolly pine stands.
- ♦ Silvicultural site preparation of SPB affected areas to ensure successful reforestation efforts.
- ♦ Natural and artificial reforestation to restore SPB affected areas on approximately 6,860 acres killed by SPB.

No treatments are proposed in the Proposed Botanical Area, the Historic Districts, or the Cultural Study Areas (see Alternative 5 map). A complete listing of the areas proposed for treatment and the treatment proposed for each, including descriptions of the forest community types are located in the Environmental Impact Statement.

Alternative 5 describes the Desired Future Conditions (DFC) by dividing the forest into three separate geographic areas- Area 1, Area 2, and Area 3. Following are the recommendations provided to the US Bankhead National Forest Service from the Bankhead Forest Liaison Panel for each of the three areas based on the respective treatment for the next 5 years.

DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION - ALTERNATIVE 5	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3
Reduce/Increase/No Change Acres for Thinning	No change	No change	No change
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3
Reduce/Increase/No Change Acres for SPB Treatment	No change	No change	No change
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3
Recommendations on Management Practices for Thinning and Treatment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Base burning on assessment of fuel buildup on a three to five year rotation for oak woodlands, ten years for some of the rest. The prescribed burns may occur more often at the beginning of the restoration work, less often later. 2. USFS staff will explore, and wherever possible 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Base burning on assessment of fuel buildup on a three to five year rotation for oak woodlands, ten years for some of the rest. The prescribed burns may occur more often at the beginning of the restoration work, less often later. 2. USFS staff will explore, and wherever possible 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Base burning on assessment of fuel buildup on a three to five year rotation for oak woodlands, ten years for some of the rest. The prescribed burns may occur more frequently at the beginning of the restoration work, less often later. 2. USFS staff will explore, and wherever possible

	<p>use, new techniques and technologies to minimize environmental impact from thinning and treatment work.</p> <p>3. USFS staff will continue to use best management practices to minimize impacts.</p>	<p>use, new techniques and technologies to minimize environmental impact from thinning and treatment work.</p> <p>3. USFS staff will continue to use best management practices to minimize impacts.</p>	<p>use, new techniques and technologies to minimize environmental impact from thinning and treatment work.</p> <p>3. USFS staff will continue to use best management practices to minimize impacts.</p>
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3
Revise Percentages of Desired Future Conditions	No change	Closely monitor the success of the initial 772 acres of shortleaf pine through the first 5 years of restoration work. Rigorously assess short leaf pine restoration before pursuing desired future condition of 38% short leaf - bluestem forest community.	No change.
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3
Recommendations on Management Actions to Protect Special Habitats (wildlife openings, etc.)	<p>1. Anticipate impact on recreation areas and users and plan to mitigate impacts.</p> <p>2. Explore use of temporary access roads for firebreaks and wildlife openings.</p> <p>3. Protect species in all</p>	<p>1. Anticipate impact on recreation areas and users and plan to mitigate impacts.</p> <p>2. Explore use of temporary access roads for firebreaks and wildlife openings.</p> <p>3. Protect species in all</p>	<p>1. Anticipate impact on recreation areas and users and plan to mitigate impacts.</p> <p>2. Explore use of temporary access roads for firebreaks and wildlife openings.</p> <p>3. Protect species in all</p>

	<p>three areas.</p> <p>4. Develop and implement management practices to increase early successional habitat to 10%. The successional habitat will be spread throughout Area 1 to increase transition zones and habitat interfaces. Management practices may include prescribed burns, thinning, maintaining temporary access roads for habitat, and others as appropriate for site and species.</p>	all three areas.	three areas.
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3
Recommendations on Management Actions to Protect Heritage Resources	<p>Work actively and consistently with Liaison Panel, Echota Cherokee Cultural Heritage Committee, the Warrior Mountain Culture and Historical Society, and any contractual vendors to protect cultural and heritage sites from negative impacts from restoration work.</p>	<p>Work actively and consistently with Liaison Panel, Echota Cherokee Cultural Heritage Committee, the Warrior Mountain Culture and Historical Society, and any contractual vendors to protect cultural and heritage sites from negative impacts from restoration work.</p>	<p>Work actively and consistently with Liaison Panel, Echota Cherokee Cultural Heritage Committee, the Warrior Mountain Culture and Historical Society, and any contractual vendors to protect cultural and heritage sites from negative impacts from restoration work.</p>

<p>Monitoring (who, when, how, for what indicators) for Area 1, Area 2, & Area 3.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. USFS will monitor impact of health and restoration activities on indicator species, including aquatic, threatened, and endangered species. 2. USFS will work actively with academic and research communities to monitor, assess, and learn from health and restoration activities; to approach health and restoration initiative as a "learning lab". 3. Create community based work groups to monitor progress and performance each aspect of the health and restoration work. These Work Groups will be accountable - members will participate actively, attend meetings/field trips as needed, document learnings and monitoring observations, follow through on action items, interface with the USFS staff and report to the Liaison Panel. The work groups will establish an operating structure that allows them to be accountable, to follow-through, and focus on monitoring. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Timber and Thinning Performance Work Group will work with USFS to ensure thinning work is performed according to best management practices and contract specifications. Monitoring group will look over thinning operations and work with USFS to develop approaches to overcome challenges of accomplishing work with least environmental impacts. b. Recreation Work Group will work with USFS to monitor restoration work impact on recreation sites and users will help notify recreation users of restoration work, and develop approaches to mitigate negative impacts on recreation users and sites from restoration work. c. Cultural and Historic Work Group will assist, as needed USFS staff with survey work, will work with USFS to monitor impact of restoration activities on cultural and historic sites. d. Wildlife Work Group will work with USFS to monitor impact of restoration activities on wildlife and develop approaches to protecting wildlife and enhancing habitat. e. Desired Future Conditions Work Group will work with USFS and academic partners to monitor the restoration activities, burning impacts, pest, and disease of treatment areas, monitor health of short leaf experiments and long leaf pine plantings, and monitor success of oak forest and oak woodlands transition.
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APPENDIX G: ALTERNATIVE 5 MAP

Bankhead Ranger District Forest Health and Restoration Project Alternative 5

- Canyon Prescription
- Alt. 5 Thin - DFC Pine
- Alt. 5 Thin - DFC Hardwood
- Alt. 5 Restoration - DFC Pine
- Alt. 5 Restoration - DFC Hardwood
- Alt. 5 Prescribe Burn - 3 Year Rotation
- Alt. 5 Prescribe Burn - 10 Year Rotation
- Major Roads
- Water
- Private Land
- Wild and Scenic River
- Sagey Wilderness
- Proposed Botanical Area
- HTP, ITH, KRS

scale = 1:160,000

