

**WHITE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST
SCOPING REPORT**

Project Proposal for a 55 acre pine stand Thinning near Chatham Town Cemetery

Introduction

The White Mountain National Forest is initiating a public scoping and environmental analysis process for a proposed action to thin a National Forest Parcel as described below under Purpose and Need, and Proposed Action and shown on the enclosed Map. This Report includes the Purpose and Need for the project, the Proposed Action, the Decisions to be Made, and How You Can Submit Comments to the Forest Service.

You may contact us directly for more information regarding the proposed action. As you review this project proposal, you may find that you have information about this specific area that you believe is not known by, or is overlooked by the Forest Service, and which may be important to consider in arriving at a decision. If you choose to comment on this proposal, you are asked to submit information specific to this project within thirty days after the postmark date on this letters envelope.

Purpose and Need

- The stand to be treated is heavily stocked with large and intermediate white pine trees. Tree densities are high, shading out intermediate and understory trees, preventing establishment of new seedlings, and reducing growth and vigor on existing trees as they compete for available resources.

Proposed Action

The White Mountain National Forest is proposing to thin individual trees based on their condition. The stand would be thinned to a specified tree density, leaving a mosaic of large and intermediate trees on the site. The stand will remain stocked with large and intermediate pine trees. Removal or chipping of the tops and limbs would be allowed but not required. Residual logging slash not removed would be lopped to 18 inches from the ground. Thinning would create a more open condition. The residual stand would increase in vigor due to decreased competition for available resources. The proposed thinning is consistent with direction found in the White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). The thinning project would be completed within one harvest season.

Decision to be Made

Based on your input, on the recommendations of an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists, and on the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Saco District Ranger Terry Miller, as the Responsible Official, will decide:

- 1) The level of analysis necessary to assess and document the environmental effects of this proposed project. This includes determining whether this project meets criteria for categorical exclusion from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment, including assessment of extraordinary circumstances (as defined in FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30.3).

- 2) Whether there is sufficient information and analysis to make a decision to implement the proposed project.
- 3) What mitigation measures and monitoring requirements are needed to assure the proposed project meets the 1986 Forest Plan standards and guidelines for all resources.
- 4) Whether a Forest Plan amendment will be required to accommodate this project.

This thinning proposal may be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement under FSH 1909.15, Chapter 31.2-6, Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction (Service level D, FSH 7709.56). Under the new regulations for “Notice, Comment, and Appeal Procedures for National Forest System Projects and Activities; Final Rule (36 CFR 215, Code of Federal Regulations)” published June 4, 2003 in the Federal Register, projects that qualify for this categorical exclusion are not eligible for comment and/or appeal following publication of a Decision Memo. As such, this may represent your only opportunity to provide formal comment on this project. Once the level of documentation is determined and the analysis is completed, copies of the decision will be mailed to people who submit comments during the scoping period and to people who request copies.

How You Can Submit Comments

You may submit your comments to the Forest Service via any one of the following means:

- 1) **Mail** – send to Rod Wilson, Project Team Leader, Saco Ranger Station, 33 Kancamagus Highway, Conway, NH 03818
- 2) **FAX** – send attn: Rod Wilson @ 603-447-8405
- 3) **Phone** – contact Rod Wilson @ 603-447-5448 or use TTY @ 603-447-3121
- 4) **E-mail** – rmwilson@fs.fed.us

Comments must be submitted or mailed within thirty days after the postmark date of this letters’ envelope, and should include the following information:

- 1) Your name, address, and, if possible, your phone number and e-mail address
- 2) The title of the project you are commenting on
- 3) your specific concerns and reasons the concern may lead to environmental effects.

The purpose of soliciting your comments during this scoping period is to collect additional information and to identify any unresolved issues regarding the proposal. To make your comments responsive they should be specific to the proposed action. Be sure to provide supporting rationale for your comments, including concerns about environmental effects of the proposed project. Please be aware that your name, address and comments will become part of the public record and may be available for public inspection.

Chatham Thin Project Area

