



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

# Farwell Mountain Project

Forest  
Service

## Scoping Report

April 2005

**Androscoggin Ranger District  
White Mountain National Forest  
Oxford County, ME**



For Information Contact: NEPA Coordinator Pat Nasta or  
Project Team Leader Stephen Bumps  
Androscoggin Ranger District  
White Mountain National Forest  
300 Glen Road  
Gorham, NH 03581  
(603)466-2713  
FAX/TTY (603) 466-2856  
[www.fs.fed.us/r9/white](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/white)

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## **Farwell Mountain Project**

### **What is the Forest Service Proposing?**

The Androscoggin Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest is proposing the following activities within the Farwell Mountain Project Area:

- Vegetation Management by Commercial Timber Harvest
- Wildlife Habitat Improvement
- Restoration of existing Forest Service Roads
- Reclassify and decommission existing road segments
- Prescribed burning for white pine seedling establishment
- Restore portions of the East Branch of the Pleasant River

### **Location and Features of the Farwell Mountain Project Area**

The Farwell Mountain **Project Area** is Compartment 326, located in Albany Township, Oxford County, Maine (Map 1). Compartments are parcels of land designated for the purpose of forest management, including management of the timber resource. Compartment 326 (917 acres) is part of the 9,056 acres of Habitat Management Unit (HMU) 307. Habitat Management Units are larger parcels of land, comprised of several Compartments that are studied and managed to provide a diverse mix of wildlife habitats. Sixty seven percent of HMU 307 (6,088 acres) is assigned to Management Areas (MA) 2.1 and 3.1, which permit vegetation management to achieve the goals and objectives of the White Mountain Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan, 1986). The remaining 2,968 acres (33%) are in 5.1 and 6.2, which do not allow vegetation management.

Compartment 326 is situated in the East Branch of the Pleasant River watershed and is bounded by the national forest boundary to the north and east and ridgelines to the south and west extending through Tyler, Caribou, Haystack, Butters, Red Rock, Peter, Albany, and Bell Mountains.

The proposed timber harvest is located within Compartment 326, and is mostly a northern hardwood forest type intermixed with hemlock, spruce/fir and white pine forest. It is located on moderately sloping terrain, ranging in elevations from 1,000 to 1,700 feet.

Recreational use in the area includes berry picking, fishing, hunting and dispersed camping. There are no hiking or snowmobile trails in the compartment.

## **Background**

**Why is the Forest Service considering activities in the Farwell Mountain Project Area at this time?**

The Forest Plan identifies and seeks to create a desired mix of wildlife habitats ranging from early successional to over-mature stands (Forest Plan, III-13). A review of existing habitats within HMU 307 identifies a trend toward a mature northern hardwood forest type with little early-successional habitat. Early-successional habitat is the seedling, grassy, and shrubby habitat that generally exists during the first decade after clearing a forested area. Timber harvesting can help us provide a diverse range of habitats and move certain forest community types (i.e. northern hardwoods, paper birch, and white pine) closer toward the desired future acreage levels identified in the Forest Plan.

At the same time, the Forest Plan permits harvesting on a sustained yield basis to provide high quality saw timber and pulpwood for the forest products industry. Many of the stands in the proposed harvest were partially harvested over fifteen years ago and are ready for silvicultural treatment. The trees removed would not only provide commercial value, but also open up small and large openings within the stand to allow regeneration of trees and vegetation, provide additional growing space for young trees.

In conjunction with analyzing opportunities to accomplish our vegetation and wildlife habitat objectives, it is also an opportune time to analyze the existing Forest transportation system and identify opportunities and priorities for managing the network of roads within Compartment 326. Our goal is to maintain a road system that is safe, affordable, and responsive to public needs, meets forest and wildlife management goals, and has minimal adverse ecological effects.

There are sections of the East Branch of the Pleasant River on the National Forest that have unstable stream banks. At least some of these are related to the location of an old county road. There is also an old snowmobile bridge that should be removed due to its unsafe condition.

There are no inventoried roadless areas or rivers eligible for Wild and Scenic classification within the Farwell Mountain project area.

## **Purpose and Need**

### **Why does the Forest Service need to implement the Farwell Mountain Project at this time?**

The purpose of this project is to accomplish resource objectives to meet the overall management direction of the White Mountain National Forest as established in the Forest Plan (Forest Plan III 36-41). Within the Farwell Mountain Project Area, the Forest Plan establishes the following applicable goals for Management Area 3.1:

The vegetation emphasis of MA 3.1 is to:

- Provide large volumes of high quality sawtimber and other forest products on a sustained yield basis through intensive timber management practices, and
- Increase wildlife habitat for the full range of wildlife species with emphasis on early-successional species

When comparing the existing condition (EC) of HMU 307 to the desired future conditions (DFC) as outlined in the Forest Plan, there is a need to increase species and age class diversity, and to increase spruce/fir/hemlock and paper birch. An increase in the number of Permanent Wildlife Opening (PWO) acres is also needed. Opportunities exist to maintain oak and pine community types. Based on field visits and data analysis, Table 1 shows opportunities where the DFC might be achieved through vegetative management at this time. The project record contains the full comparison of EC to DFC.

**Table 1. Acres by Community Type in MA 2.1 and 3.1 for HMU 307**

<b>Community Type</b>	<b>Existing Condition</b>	<b>Desired Future Condition</b>	<b>Need</b>
Hardwoods/mixedwoods (regeneration)	0	178	178
Spruce/Fir/Hemlock	770	1262	492
Paper Birch (regeneration)	0	52	52
Permanent Wildlife Openings	39	182	143

“Even-aged” harvest methods such as clearcuts, seed tree cuts, or shelterwood cuts remove most of the existing woody vegetation from a stand, and thus promote a component of regeneration and young growth within a larger landscape of mostly mature, closed canopy forest. Even-aged harvests are used with species and community types that regenerate best in larger openings with moderate or limited shade, such as paper birch, aspen, white pine and red oak.

Species that regenerate best in shaded conditions are suited for “uneven-aged” harvest methods that remove individual trees or small groups of trees to open pockets of sunlight. Species and community types that regenerate best with uneven-aged harvest include spruce/fir, hemlock, and some hardwoods (sugar maple, yellow birch and beech).

Prescribed fire can be used in conjunction with harvesting to reduce competing growth and prepare the seedbed necessary for pine to become well established in the understory.

Table 1 reflects the need to establish regenerating stands of northern hardwoods and paper birch, increase the amount of light and growing space for spruce-fir and hemlock in the understory, and increase the number of permanent wildlife opening acres for those species that require grassy or shrubby habitat. Commercial timber harvest can be used to achieve these objectives.

Economically, harvesting selected mature and overmature trees on a 15 to 20 year cycle would provide a sustainable yield of high quality sawtimber to the forest industry. At the same time, lower quality or damaged trees can be harvested to provide fiber and improve future quality and productivity.

Restoration projects in the project area include a restoration of existing Forest Roads to provide suitable and safe access for logging and automobile traffic and a stabilization of portions of the East Branch of the Pleasant River to improve conditions within the watershed.

## Proposed Action

### What activities is the Forest Service proposing to meet the needs identified above?

The following activities in Table 2 are proposed to achieve the Purpose and Need and move the Farwell Mountain Project Area toward the Forest Plan's desired condition. Acres proposed are approximate.

**Table 2. Proposed Activities for the Farwell Mountain Project**

<b>Proposed Activity</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Timber Harvest</b>	
Clearcut & Patchcut	
• Regeneration objective	<b>47</b>
• Permanent Wildlife Opening expansion	<b>3</b>
Seed Tree Cut	<b>26</b>
Shelterwood	
• Prep Cut	<b>25</b>
• Seed Cut	<b>16</b>
Group Selection Cut	<b>88</b>
Individual Tree and Group Selection Cut	<b>160</b>
<b>Stand Improvement</b>	
Prescribed Burning	<b>26</b>
<b>Transportation</b>	
Bennett School Road (FR 756) Restoration	<b>1.0</b>
Spur Road (FR 2014) Restoration	<b>0.2</b>
<b>Permanent Wildlife Opening Maintenance</b>	
Mowing/prescribed burning/hand brushing every 3-5 years	<b>3</b>

The Proposed Action is to harvest timber on about 365 acres, which represents 4 percent of HMU 307 and 6 percent cent of Management Area 3.1 within HMU 307. Table 3 lists the areas, types of harvest, approximate acres, estimated volume, season of operation and objectives. Map 2 shows the locations of the proposed harvests.

One permanent wildlife opening would be expanded and have the stumps removed and would also be maintained through mowing, prescribed burning or hand brushing every three to five years.

Fire would be used to prepare a seedbed through reducing the duff on the forest floor and to limit hardwood competition in the white pine of Stands 1 and 17.

Access to the harvest area would be gained using existing roads (FR 7, FR 756, FR 2014) and the use of 5 existing log landings. The Bennett School Road (FR 756) would be re-surfaced as an

element of long-term routine maintenance to address normal wear and tear on the road surface. Road 2014 would require a minimum amount of restoration (brushing and shaping road surface) to make it usable for winter hauling, and upon completion of the sale would be re-closed.

**Table 3. Proposed Stands and Treatment**

**Comp (Compartment), Std (Stand), Rx (Stand Prescription), Acres, Vol (Volume), SO (Season of Operation), and Treatment Objective by Stand.** Stand prescription codings are: 111 (Patch Clearcut), 113 (Stand Clearcut), 121 (Shelterwood Prep), 131 (Shelterwood Seed), 132 (Seed Tree Cut), 152 (Group Selection) and 153 (Individual Tree and Group Selection). Since Group Selection harvests only a percentage of the stand; the actual harvest acres are listed in parentheses. Volume is by MBF (Thousand Board Feet, where one board foot is equivalent to a plank 1 inch thick and 1 foot square). The Season of Operation (SO): S (6/30-8/1), F (8/1-10/15), W (12/15-3/20)

Comp	Std	Rx	Acres	Vol	SO	Treatment Objective
326	1	121	10	35	S/F	Harvest mature trees, perpetuate white pine
326	3	153	13	40	S/F	Wildlife habitat (softwood regeneration)
326	4	152	21(4)	30	W	Harvest mature trees, perpetuate white ash and yellow birch
326	5	153	16	50	F/W	Perpetuate mixedwood habitat & paper birch component
326	10	113	15	120	W	Wildlife habitat (northern hardwood regeneration)
326	14	153	18	50	S	Harvest mature trees, perpetuate red & white pine
326	15	153	10	30	W	Wildlife habitat (softwood regeneration)
326	17	131	16	55	S, F	Harvest mature trees, perpetuate white pine
326	18	153	13	35	W	Improve stand quality & perpetuate hemlock
326	23	113	14	50	W	Wildlife habitat (northern hardwood regeneration)
326	25	153	7	20	F/W	Wildlife habitat (softwood objective)
326	26	152	9(2)	15	F	Wildlife habitat (softwood regeneration)
326	27	153	18	55	F/W	Perpetuate mixedwood
326	27a	111	3	25	S, F	Wildlife opening expansion
326	32	152	45(8)	65	S, F	Wildlife habitat (softwood objective)

Comp	Std	Rx	Acres	Vol	SO	Treatment Objective
326	43	132	20	150	W	Wildlife habitat (paper birch regeneration)
326	44	153	49	145	W	Perpetuate mixedwood
326	50&50a	111	5	40	W	Wildlife habitat (northern hardwood regeneration)
326	51	153	16	45	W	Improve stand quality & perpetuate hemlock
326	54	152	13(3)	25	W	Wildlife habitat (softwood regeneration)
326	56	132	6	45	S	Wildlife habitat (paper birch regeneration)
326	59	121	15	45	W	Perpetuate mixedwood while favoring red oak and white ash
326	62	113	13	100	W	Wildlife habitat (northern hardwood regeneration)
Total			365	1270		

### **Roads Analysis Proposals**

Table 4 presents one currently *unclassified* road that would be converted to *classified* and one *unclassified* road that would be *decommissioned*. See Map 3 for road location.

- ***Decommissioned Roads*** are closed permanently and returned to a natural state.
- ***Classified Roads*** are needed and maintained for long-term vehicle access. Some are used constantly or annually and others may be used only intermittently.
- ***Unclassified Roads*** are generally closed and not maintained for long-term vehicle use. This is a temporary classification until the road is decommissioned, designated as a trail, or converted to a classified road.

**Table 4. Forest Roads within Project Area**

<b>Forest Road Name and Number</b>	<b>Current Classification</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Proposed Action</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
2014	Unclassified	0.2	Classify 0.2 miles	Landing access to west side of Compartment 326
Unnumbered	Unclassified	0.9	Decommission	Not needed for Forest Service long term use <sup>1</sup>
FR 756 – Bennett School Road (south of East Branch, Pleasant River bridge)	Classified	1.0	No change in gate location at bridge. Surface road with gravel	Road surface is very stony and difficult to grade
FR 756 – Bennett School Road (north of East Branch, Pleasant River bridge)	Classified	0.5	Decommission at time of permit expiration	Not needed for long term Forest Service use <sup>2</sup>
FR 7 – Patte Brook Road	Classified	1.1	No changes	Separate restoration project planned <sup>3</sup>

1. This unnumbered road is an old County road apparently discontinued by the County in 1939. It has not been used by vehicles for many years. It is not needed for present or long-term Forest Service use. The road would be blocked at the eastern national forest boundary and stabilized.
2. It cannot be decommissioned at this time due to an existing permit agreement with an abutting owner. The section of FR 756 north of the East Branch, Pleasant River bridge and west to the national forest boundary is not needed for long-term use.
3. A separate restoration project has been planned for portions of the Patte Brook Road but a definite time frame has yet to be established.

**Mitigation Measures**

In addition to the Forest Plan Standard and Guidelines (Forest Plan Section III and VII-B) the following site specific mitigation measures would be used in implementing the proposed action or alternatives:

- Retain disease resistant beech trees as well as trees with an abundance of bear claw marks;
- Follow vernal pool protection guidelines;
- Reserve 2-3 early-successional species (paper birch and aspen) and softwoods per acre in mature hardwood stands;
- Remove slash within 50 feet and lop and scatter slash an additional 50 feet along Forest Roads;

- Harvesting with a feller buncher would be required in selected stands to protect softwood regeneration;
- For all perennial streams, no trees will be harvested from within the active channel/floodplain or a minimum of 25 feet to either side of the top of the bankful mark. Harvesting cannot reduce basal area below 70 square feet for an additional 75 feet from the channel;
- Restore stream crossings to their original morphology and function;
- Consider weed prevention measures to minimize the chances of new infestations occurring because of project activities and take action where possible to minimize opportunities for invasive species to become established;
- Known heritage resources would be protected prior to harvesting. If unknown sites or artifacts are found, harvest activities would be halted until the Forest archaeologist and district paraprofessionals can evaluate the findings and make recommendations on how to proceed;
- Limit the area used for landings to minimize soil compaction from heavy machinery and;
- Hazard safety signs will be posted on FR 756 and FR 7 during harvest activity.

## **What Decision Will Be Made?**

An environmental assessment (EA) will evaluate site-specific issues, consider alternatives and analyze effects of the proposed action and alternatives on resources. Based on this analysis, the deciding official would make the following decisions:

1. Which alternative would best move the Farwell Mountain Project toward the DFC outlined in the Forest Plan, and best address the purpose and need identified for this project?
2. Which alternative best addresses relevant issues raised by the public and the interdisciplinary team?
3. Would the proposed project have any significant environmental impact to warrant further analysis in an environmental impact statement?
4. Does the project require a Forest Plan amendment?

## **How Are You Involved In The Decision?**

We are soliciting your comments to help define significant issues associated with the project, to develop alternatives to the Proposed Action, and to refine the analysis of effects. The results of our analysis for the Farwell Mountain Project will be documented in an environmental assessment and a decision is expected in the fall of 2005.

The regulations for notice, comment and appeal have been revised. Before a decision is made on this project, you will be given another opportunity to comment (30-Day Comment Period). If you provide substantive comments relevant to the project during the 30-Day Comment Period, you will be eligible to file an administrative appeal on the project's Decision Notice. You are not eligible to appeal the decision if you respond only to this scoping letter. If you wish to receive further information on this analysis, please fill out and return the enclosed form.

## How Can You Comment?

In order for your comments to be considered in the next stage of analysis, they should be received by May 13, 2005 and submitted in one of the following ways:

### Written comments

**By letter** – Androscoggin Ranger District, White Mountain National Forest,  
300 Glen Road, Gorham, NH 03581, c/o Katherine W. Stuart, District  
Ranger

**By FAX** – (603) 466-2856, ATTN: Farwell Mountain, c/o Katherine W. Stuart

**By e-mail** – [kstuart@fs.fed.us](mailto:kstuart@fs.fed.us)

### Oral Comments

Oral comments must be received in person at the Androscoggin Ranger Station or via telephone (603) 466-2713 (TTY 603-466-2856), during normal business hours (8:00am – 4:30pm).

In your comments, please include the following information:

- Your name, address and telephone number.
- The project you are commenting on: Farwell Mountain Project.
- Site specific comments about the Farwell Mountain Project, along with supporting information you believe will help me identify issues, develop alternatives, or predict environmental effects of our proposal.

Please direct questions to Pat Nasta, NEPA Coordinator, at the above address or call 603-466-2713 extension 222. Please be aware that your name, address and comments will become part of the public record and may be available for public inspection. If this is a concern, please contact us at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your interest in the management of the White Mountain National Forest.

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