



File Code: 1950-1

Date: October 20, 2010

Dear Forest Neighbor:

The U.S. Forest Service is proposing to implement the **F-32 Project** on the Mio Ranger District of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. The F-32 Project is made up of a variety of activities to meet natural resource management objectives. These objectives are based on multiple-use management in compliance with the Forests' Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan, 2006). We would like your comments on the proposed project.

Background

The F-32 Project area and the Huron National Forest, in general, have a history of large destructive wildfires that can be life threatening, destroy homes and property, and damage natural resources. The creation of fuelbreaks and reduction of hazardous fuels are necessary to help protect local communities from wildfire.

Producing timber products, ensuring future timber availability, and creating wildlife habitat are also important parts of managing natural resources that benefit local communities.

Project Location

A total of approximately 3062 acres of treatments are proposed through the F-32 Project. The proposed actions are located on National Forest System lands in Mentor Township, Oscoda County, Michigan. The legal descriptions of the proposed actions are as follows:

- Township 26N, Range 3E, Sections 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, and 36

Please refer to the attached maps for specific locations of proposed actions. Maps can also be viewed at the following website: <http://fs.usda.gov/goto/hmnf/lrm-mio>

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of the F-32 project is to treat hazardous fuel loading, manage timber resources, and promote old growth conditions where applicable. Specific objectives include:

1. Move the project area towards the desired future condition set forth in the Forest Plan, particularly in regards to hazardous fuels reduction, vegetation composition, and species viability needs.
2. Reduce fuel loading to protect public and firefighter safety and restore fire into fire adapted ecosystems through prescribed burning.
3. Produce a diverse mix of timber products and ensure future timber availability.
4. Promote old growth conditions within designated areas.
5. Create and improve wildlife habitat, including early successional habitat.
6. Identify and treat high priority non-native invasive plant species (NNIS) infestations.
7. Rehabilitate user-created resource damage



The F-32 Project is designed to move the area towards the desired future condition set forth in the Forest Plan by meeting the goals and objectives for the specific Management Areas (MA). Forest-wide goals and objectives include:

- Implement fuels reduction and fuelbreak projects where conditions warrant for the protection of life, property and safety. (Forest Plan, page II-3)
- Use of fire to mimic natural processes (Forest Plan, page II-3)
- Maintain or improve the populations of endangered, threatened, or sensitive species (Forest Plan, page II-4)
- Meet species viability needs, achieve fire hazard reduction, and accomplish fiber production from regulated and non-regulated forest lands primarily through timber harvest. (Forest Plan, page II-4)
- Reduce NNIS infestations and prevent new invasive species from becoming established, when possible (Forest Plan, page II-4)
- Restore and maintain shrub/scrub and oak/pine barrens in areas where they were known to previously occur, to provide for habitat diversity and to meet species viability needs. (Forest Plan, page II-4)
- Achieve vegetation composition objectives (Forest Plan, Table II-3, page II-7)
- Restore disturbed areas (Forest Plan, page II-21)

The F-32 Project is within Management Areas (MA) 4.2, 4.2KW, 4.4, and 8.1, as identified and described in the Forest Plan. MA 4.2 and 4.2KW are managed to increase a variety of wildlife habitats including Kirtland's warbler, produce high volumes of softwood, and reduce hazardous fuel loads (Forest Plan, page III-4.2-2). MA 4.4 is managed to maintain or increase wildlife habitat diversity, provide recreational opportunities, emphasize hazardous fuels treatments in Wildland urban interface and intermix areas, and provide moderate to high volumes of softwood timber products (Forest Plan, page III-4.4-2-3). MA 8.1 is managed to maintain and protect the outstandingly remarkable values of the Au Sable River and to follow the management direction provided by the Au Sable River Management Plan (USFS, 1988).

Proposed Actions

Summary of Activities

1. Thin approximately 538 acres of red pine in 19 different areas to improve growth of remaining trees, reduce hazardous fuels, and restore old growth conditions.
2. Prescribe burn approximately 1894 acres to reduce hazardous fuels, improve timber stand conditions, and improve wildlife habitat. Prescribed burn activities may be repeated as needed to achieve desired management objectives.
3. Create and subsequently maintain, approximately 126 acres of fuelbreaks through timber harvest, mechanical or manual cutting, and prescribed burning. Linear fuelbreaks would be approximately 300 feet wide. The Parliament Road fuelbreak would be approximately 150 feet wide on either side of the road.

4. Create and improve approximately 259 acres of wildlife openings. Create 201 acres of new wildlife openings; improve approximately 58 acres of existing wildlife openings. Treatments include cutting encroaching vegetation by mechanical or manual means or prescribed burning. Treatments may be repeated as needed to achieve desired management objectives.
5. Rehabilitate user-created resource damage on approximately 5 acres. Rehabilitation efforts would include closure to motorized vehicles and reforestation.
6. Create and subsequently maintain, approximately 142 acres of barrens through prescribed burning and/or mechanical or manual treatments.
7. Harvest by clearcutting approximately 84 acres of aspen to promote regeneration.
8. Harvest by clearcutting approximately 49 acres of short rotation oak to release the advanced oak regeneration.
9. Thin and/or remove overstory on approximately 178 acres short rotation oak and approximately 56 acres long rotation oak to promote growth of the residual stand.
10. Perform timber stand improvement (TSI) activities on 133 acres of long rotation oak. This would be accomplished through the use of prescribed fire, mechanical or manual cutting and/or application of herbicide to reduce the growth of competing tree species (red maple and witch hazel).
11. Control or eradicate non-native invasive plant species (NNIS) within the entire project area (3062 acres) as funding permits. The need for approximately 56 acres of openings treatments and 169 acres of linear treatments along road, trails, and powerline corridors has been identified. NNIS would be treated with herbicides, biological controls, mechanical and/or manual means.

Comments

We would like your input concerning the proposed actions listed above. The input you provide will be factored into the analysis as we look to identify issues and/or concerns and develop alternatives to the proposed action.

Please submit your written or hand-delivered comments to District Ranger, USDA Forest Service, Mio Ranger Station, 107 McKinley Road, Mio, MI 48647-9314, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Comments may be submitted via telephone during business hours by calling (989) 826-3252 or (989) 826-3592 TTY. Comments may be faxed to (989) 826-6073, or emailed to comments-eastern-huron-manistee-mio@fs.fed.us (must be readable by Microsoft Office 2007 or Adobe Acrobat 6.0 formats). Please send us your comments by 30 days from the publication date in the Oscoda County Herald and include the following information:

1. Name, address, organization represented and title (if appropriate);
2. Title of project for which comments are being submitted (F-32 Project);

3. Specific facts and supporting reasons you believe should be considered in reaching a final decision.

Please note that there will be a public meeting regarding the proposed activities of the F-32 Project on Monday November 1, 2010 from 3:00 to 6:00 PM at the Mio Ranger Station. Formal presentations will be offered at 3:30 PM and 5:00 PM and Forest Service staff will be available to answer questions from the public. Written comments will be accepted at this meeting.

The Forest Service is willing to work with landowners to reduce hazardous fuels on private property adjacent to National Forest lands. In certain instances federal funding may be available to conduct those treatments. For more information on the *FIREWISE* program, call Paul Lyden, Assistant Fire Management Officer – Fire Prevention and Education at (989) 826-3252 ext. 3350 or visit www.firewise.org.

Comments received in response to this project will become a matter of public record¹. Copies of the final decision will be mailed to people who request a copy of these documents. There will be a formal 30 day comment period after the comments are evaluated from the scoping period. If you have questions, or need further information about this proposal, please contact Carrie Scott at the Mio Ranger Station (989) 826-3252 ext 3305.

Sincerely,

/s/ Steven A. Goldman

Steven A. Goldman
District Ranger

Enclosures

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit such comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27 (d), any person may request that a submission be withheld from the public record by showing how the Freedom of information Act permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that confidentiality is granted in only very limited circumstances. The Forest Service will inform the requester of its decision regarding a request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the submission will be returned and the requester notified that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's target center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-w, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD).
