

White Mountain National Forest



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Forest
Service

Eastern
Region

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2003 Timber Stand Improvement

Decision Memo

Ammonoosuc/Pemigewasset Ranger District
White Mountain National Forest
Grafton County, New Hampshire

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Table 1: 2003 TSI Troject Treatment Areas

Area	MA	Comp.	Stand	Acres
1	3.1	2	26	14
2		3	54	20
3		6	4, 7, 10, 24	40
4		10	59	5
5		11	7, 25, 31	13
6		12	6, 8, 9, 20	47
7		15	13, 23	48
8		2	27, 32	19
9		28	59	9
10		29	29, 31, 38	41
11		34	40	28
12	2.1	150	73	7
13		157	2	7
Total				323

Decision

Description of the Decision

I have decided to proceed with a timber stand improvement project on 323 acres. The proposed work is located in the following towns: 74 Ac in Benton, 109 Ac Warren, 48 Ac Wentworth, 78 Ac Ellsworth, 7 Ac Thornton, and 7 Ac in Sandwich (see enclosed map). The project will release minority species, trees of value to wildlife and high quality stems that can be released by cutting other trees that compete for light and soil nutrients.

Purpose of the Proposal

The purpose of this project is to maintain important, but less common, species in regenerating stands and improve growing stock of other valuable species.

The TSI Project will use three criteria to identify individual young trees to be released from adjacent, competing trees.

- 1 **Minority species** - those that are native and common to the area but are not well represented in the stand such as white pine, basswood, black ash, or red pine or a more common tree such as yellow birch, white ash or sugar maple that is not well represented in the stand stocking but is suited to the site;
- 2 **Trees of interest for wildlife habitat** - those that could provide thermal cover such as red spruce or hemlock or provide mast such as red oak; or
- 3 **Quality stems of high-value timber species** - those that need to be released from adjacent, fast growing but low quality species such as pin cherry or striped maple or low quality stump sprouts.

Over time, treated stands will become a better mixture of desirable trees. Forest Service employees using chain saws over a 3-year period will accomplish the work. The stands considered for treatment are 8 to 15 years old. Stocking surveys have been completed and indicate that it will be desirable to do this work before the stands get older and the desirable trees are eliminated or suppressed by the competition.

The release work will be done only when a tree meeting one of the three criteria is identified. Two possible methods could be used to accomplish this work. One method will require cutting all competing trees in a fixed, eight-foot area around each tree to be released. The other method will be to cut only those trees in direct competition for sunlight around the trees to be released. I prefer the latter method, because the personnel doing the work are highly skilled and could minimize the total number of trees being cut and still accomplish the treatment objectives.

Reasons For Categorically Excluding The Decision

	<p>Decisions may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment when they are within one of the categories identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 sections 31.1b or 31.2, and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect.</p>
Category of Exclusion	<p>The project is within the category of exclusion 31.2 (6.) b. that includes thinning or brush control to improve growth or to reduce fire hazard including opening a road to a dense timber stand.</p>
Relationship to Extraordinary Circumstance	
Threatened and Endangered Species or Their Critical Habitat	<p>The Endangered Species Act requires that federal activities do not jeopardize the continued existence of any species, federally listed or proposed as threatened or endangered, or result in adverse modification to such species' designated critical habitat. In accordance with Section 7(c) of this Act, a list of the listed and proposed, threatened or endangered species that may be present in the project area was requested from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The information indicated that there is no critical habitat for TEPS plant and animal species within the decision area. As required by this Act, potential effects of this decision on listed species have been analyzed and documented (Clara Weloth, August 27, 2003, project file).</p> <p>It was determined that this decision will have 'no effect' on listed species or their critical habitats.</p>
Floodplains, Wetlands, or Municipal Watersheds	<p><u>Floodplains:</u> The project is not located in floodplains. This has been validated by map and site-review. This decision will not affect floodplains.</p> <p><u>Wetlands:</u> The project is not located in or near wetlands. This has been validated by map and site-review. This decision will not affect wetlands.</p> <p><u>Municipal Watersheds:</u> The project areas do not include municipal watersheds.</p>
Congressionally Designated Areas	<p><u>Wilderness:</u> This decision does not affect Wilderness. The project is not in or near Wilderness. Wilderness is identified on the Forest as Management Area 5.1 (Forest Plan, pp. III-42 through III-46). The project is located in Management Area 2.1 or 3.1(Forest Plan, pp III-30 through III-35).</p> <p><u>Wilderness Study Areas:</u> Wilderness Study Areas are Management Area 9.1 on the White Mountain National Forest. All treatment areas for this project are either MA 2.1 or 3.1 lands. This decision, with impacts lim-</p>

ited to the immediate area of activity, will not affect the Wilderness Study Areas.¹

National Recreation Areas: There are no National Recreation Areas on the White Mountain National Forest. This decision will not affect National Recreation Areas.

Scenic Areas: This decision does not affect Scenic Areas. The project is not in or near Scenic Areas. Scenic Areas are identified on the Forest as Management Area 8.1 (Forest Plan, pp. III-64 through III-83). The project is located in Management Area 2.1 and 3.1 (Forest Plan, pp III-30 through III-35).

National Scenic Byway: None of the areas proposed for treatment in this project are adjacent to or visible from a National Scenic Byway.

Inventoried Roadless Areas

There are no inventoried roadless areas (RARE II or Forest Plan) in the decision area. This decision will not affect inventoried roadless areas.¹

Research Natural Areas

Research Natural Areas are Management Area 9.3 on the White Mountain National Forest. All treatment areas for this project are either MA 2.1 or 3.1 lands. This decision, with impacts limited to the immediate area of activity, will not affect the Research Natural Areas on the Forest

Native American Religious or Cultural Sites, Archaeological

Now ground disturbance will result from this project. This project complies with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

Public Involvement

This project was listed in the January-March 2003 WMNF Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions. Public involvement for the project also included sending a Scoping letter and map to 12 people or groups who consistently comment on timber projects on 4/9/03. Four (4) comments were received. The comments were supportive of the project (see Appendix A).

Findings Required By And/Or Related To Other Laws And Regulations

My decision will comply with all applicable laws and regulations. I have summarized some pertinent ones below.

Forest Plan Consistency (National Forest Management Act)

This Act requires the development of long-range land and resource management plans (Forest Plans). The White Mountain Forest Plan, as amended was approved in 1986, as required by this Act. The amended plan provides for guidance for all natural resource management activities on the Forest. The Act requires that all projects and activities be consistent with the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan has been reviewed in consideration of this project. This decision is responsive to guiding direction contained in the Plan, as summarized in Section 1.0 of this document. This decision is consistent with the standards and guidelines contained in the Forest Plan for Management Areas 2.1 and 3.1 (Forest Plan, pp III-31 and III-34).

**Vegetation
Manipulation
(National Forest
Management Act**

In addition to the consistency findings pertaining to the White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended, this act establishes specific guidelines for prescriptions involving vegetative manipulation in National Forest Management (see Forest Plan, Appendix M, pp. VII-M-9). My decision is consistent with these guidelines for management prescriptions that involve vegetative manipulation of tree cover [36 CFR 219.27(b)] as follows:

- 1 *The prescription should be best suited to the multiple-use goals established for the area with potential environmental, biological, cultural resource, aesthetic, engineering, and economic impacts, as stated in the regional guides and Forest Plans [36 CFR 219.27(b)(1)]. The prescription should assure that lands can be adequately restocked except where permanent openings are created for wildlife habitat improvement, vistas, recreation uses and similar practices [36 CFR 219.27(b)(2)]. The lands in the project area have been successfully restocked following harvesting*
- 2 *The prescription should not be chosen primarily because it would give the greatest dollar return or the greatest output of timber, although these factors shall be considered [36 CFR 219.27(b)(3)]. Releasing high quality stems will increase the economic value of treated stands. Releasing minority species or wildlife, value trees is not likely to increase the economic value of stands but would provide quality or viability to the ecosystem as a whole.*
- 3 *The prescription should be chosen after considering potential effects on residual trees and adjacent stands [36 CFR 219.27(b)(4)] The prescription should avoid permanent impairment of site productivity and ensure conservation of soil and water resources [36 CFR 219.27(b)(5)]. The prescription will not affect the site productivity of any of the project area. Residuals or adjacent stands will also be unaffected.*
- 4 *The prescription should provide the desired effects on water quantity and quality, wildlife and fish habitat, regeneration of desired tree species, forage production, recreation uses, aesthetic values, and other resource yields [36 CFR species without effecting the production or other resource benefits of the stands.*
- 5 *The prescription should be practical in terms of transportation and harvesting requirements and total costs of preparation, logging, and administration [36 CFR 219.27(b)(7)]. The prescription is low cost and will not affect future transportation or logging costs.*

**Endangered Species
Act**

See above, §2.2.2 Threatened and Endangered Species or Their Critical Habitat.

Sensitive Species (Forest Service Manual 2670)	This Manual direction requires analysis of potential impacts to sensitive species, those species for which the Regional Forester has identified population viability is a concern. Potential effects of this decision on sensitive species have been analyzed and documented in a Biological Evaluation (Project Record, 5/13/02). This decision will have “no impact” on sensitive species.
Clean Water Act	There will be no ground disturbance resulting from this project.
Wetlands (Executive Order 11990), Floodplains (Executive Order 11988)	See above, §2.2.3 Floodplains, Wetlands, or Municipal Watersheds.
Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)	Public involvement occurred for this project and did not identify any adversely impacted local minority or low-income populations. The limited scale of this project and resulting decision is not expected to adversely impact minority or low-income populations.
National Environmental Policy Act	This Executive Order requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects. The documentation for this decision supports compliance with this Act.I

Administrative Review Or Appeal

Administrative Review Or Appeal

This document is nor subject to a higher level of administrative review or appeal pursuant to 36CFR215.8mplementation Date

This decision may be implemented immediately. Implementation is expected to begin in September 2003.

Contact Person

Further information about this decision can be obtained from Steve Wingate at the Pemigewasset Office of the Ammonosuc-Pemigewasset Ranger District (Address: RFD #3, Box 15, Plymouth, NH 03264; Voice: 603-536-1315; TTY/TDD: 603-536-3281; Fax: 603-536-5147, e-mail: swingate@fs.fed.us.Endangered Species Act Sensitive Species (Forest Service Manual 2670) Clean Water Act Wetlands (Executive Order 11990),

Floodplains (Executive Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898) National Environmental Policy Act

Signature And Date

I have concluded that this decision may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment as it is within one of the categories identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 section 31.2, and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect. My conclusion is based on information presented in this document and the entirety of the Planning Record.

JOHN J. SERFASS
DistrictRanger

Date

Endnotes

- ¹ Area numbers 3 and 4 (45 acres) are in a roadless category that could eventually be considered for wilderness designation. The 45 acres (5 stands) in the current roadless study areas will be evaluated as appropriate for wilderness designation during Forest Plan Revision. The effect of the proposed treatment would not change the character of the area or its inclusion in the roadless inventory for possible wilderness designation.

Appendix A - Comments Received in Response to Scoping

This project was listed in the January-March 2003 WMNF Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions. Public involvement for the project also included sending a Scoping letter and map to 12 people or groups who consistently comment on timber projects on 4/9/03. Comments were received from the following three (3) individuals:

- 1 Robert Miller, Southwick MA
- 2 Vincent Macilvain, Westport CT
- 3 Pierce Beij, Ashland NH

The comments were supportive of the project. A full mailing list for Scoping and the text of comments received can be found in the Project File at the Pemigewasset Ranger Office.

2003 TSI Project Map
