



File Code: 1950
Date: June 1, 2011

Dear Reader,

The Pleasant Hill Ranger District of the Ozark National Forest is proposing to maintain forest health and manage vegetation through regeneration harvests and thinning. The actions we are proposing also include enhancing wildlife & fish habitat, decommissioning roads (some by gating) while improving others, and reducing the build-up of hazardous fuels through prescribed burning or mechanical fuel reduction. The project area, which includes a total of 11,094 acres, has been defined and includes compartments 327, 333, 341, 342, 343, 346, and 347. Approximately 4,485 acres are privately owned. The legal description is T12N R24W Sections: 22-27, 33-36; T11N R24W Sections: 1-4, 9-11, 15, and 16; T12N R23W Sections: 16, 17, 19-21, 28-33; and T11N R23W Sections: 4-6. The project area is bounded by JO 4490 (Low Gap Road) on the south, JO 4291 on the west, JO 5440 on the north, and Highway 21 on the east. The project area falls within Management Areas: Mixed Forest (3.C), Oak Decline Areas (3.D), and Pastures and Large Wildlife Openings (3.J). The designated "wild and scenic" Mulberry River flows along the northern boundary (JO 5440) of the project area. We are asking for suggestions or ideas you may have that will help us make the best decisions on managing your public lands in this area. The proposed action will be called the "**Lock Hollow**" project.

Pine and hardwood stands are recommended for regeneration cutting to perpetuate this forest type and to create a variety of age classes, thereby, promoting diversity; thinning other forest stands is proposed to promote vigor and thriftiness of the remaining trees. Prescribed burning and herbicide/handtool treatments would follow harvesting/thinning of hardwood and pine to: prepare the ground for seedfall or planting, and stimulate wildlife benefits. Timber products in the form of sawlogs, small roundwood, and firewood would be generated by these actions in the near term as well as providing for a future sustainable supply of timber products. Habitat diversity for animals and plants, including threatened, endangered, and/or sensitive species would be maintained or improved by the effects of the timber, wildlife, recreation, and access management. Reduction of wildfire risk by prescribed burning is also proposed as well as closing roads no longer needed for land management. This proposal would maintain or improve the plant and animal diversity to meet overall multiple-use objectives as described in the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan.

All work being proposed is on National Forest lands only. ***No work would occur on privately-owned land.*** However, the Forest Service would solicit cooperation with private landowners via Wyden/Stevens agreements, which allow the Forest Service to carry out prescribed burn treatments on private lands surrounded by or adjacent to federal land.

Vegetation Management

Hardwood Shelterwood followed by Site Prep Herbicide & Burning would occur on 291 acres. This treatment would sustain long term forest health, provide for the succession of early seral habitat, and contribute to providing a sustainable forest. The objective of a shelterwood is to open up the stand allowing sunlight to reach the forest floor while leaving an adequate amount of trees to provide seed. As the name implies, several trees would be left in the overstory to give shelter to the developing regeneration on the ground. The mature hardwood left over from the harvests will remain until the new stands receive their first thinning. The combination of stump/root sprouts from oak species and the other existing desirable seedlings will establish the new stands. An average basal area of 20-40 ft² would be retained.

After harvest, these stands will have herbicide applied to undesirable stems by the hack and squirt and foliar methods, then site prep burned.

Connected Treatments for the Hardwood Shelterwood stands: If desired species adequately replenish the new stands by natural means, **release** measures may be implemented using



handtools/herbicide, if necessary, to reduce competing vegetation. This would occur within 3-7 years after harvest. If desired species fail to adequately establish new stands, **planting & release** of oak species will be required.

Hardwood Pre-commercial Thinning (PCT) with Handtools would occur on 10 stands (218 acres). This is a treatment used in stands that are not commercially mature. The purpose of PCT would be to cut small, unmerchantable trees that are competing with desired hardwood species. This treatment would allow for the selection of the trees with the best form to remain and to free them of competition. Prescribed burning may follow this treatment to further control unwanted competitors of oak.

Hardwood Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) - Midstory Treatment by Herbicide would occur on 268 acres (5 stands). These stands are mostly immature sawtimber but do have a component of mature trees; they have a dense midstory and understory of undesirable species. Removal of these undesirable species will allow oak and other desirable species currently in and underneath the midstory to be released and become competitive. The success of this treatment would allow a regeneration harvest to be considered next entry. Prescribed burning may follow this treatment to further control unwanted competitors of oak.

Pine Thinning followed by TSI- Midstory Control would occur on 777 acres (43 stands). Thinning would increase growth of residual trees, reduce the susceptibility of the stand to insect and disease, and improve habitat for wildlife. The pine stands would be thinned to a target basal area of 60-70 ft²/acre. Trees that are suppressed or that have poor form would be removed. Trees of good form and/or close to the correct spacing would be favored over trees that are simply of larger size. The target pine spacing would depend on the average DBH of the stand. Prescribed burning following thinning would provide beneficial effects for wildlife. TSI treatments of the midstory using herbicide and/or handtools may be utilized to further reduce competition of the pines.

Pine Seedtree followed by Site Prep Herbicide and Burning is proposed on 16 units that total approximately 446 acres. This type of regeneration harvest would remove 90% of the overstory (BA=20 ft²). Site preparation will be done with herbicide treatments and with a prescribed burn in order to prepare a proper seed bed. The remaining mature overstory trees would be harvested when the new stand is ready for its first thinning.

Pine Shelterwood followed by Site Prep Herbicide and Burning would occur on fifteen stands totaling about 348 acres would be treated. Shelterwood cutting would reduce the current density from about 130 trees per acre to 25-35 trees per acre (BA=30-40), allowing more sunlight to reach the forest floor and provide for the growth of new trees underneath the overstory. This harvest is similar to the hardwood shelterwood in that several trees would be left (more than in the Seedtree harvest method) in the overstory to give shelter to the developing seedlings on the ground. The remaining mature overstory trees would be harvested when the new stand is ready for its first thinning.

These stands are mature; growth has slowed and the trees are beginning to decline. Removing some of the larger trees would open up the area and allow young productive trees to become established. After harvest, these stands will have site prep treatments of herbicide and burning to prepare a good bed for seed fall.

Connected Treatments for all Pine Shelterwood & Seedtree stands: If desired species adequately replenish the new stands by natural means, **release** measures may be implemented using handtools/herbicide to competing vegetation within 3-7 years after harvest. If desired species fail to adequately establish new stands, **planting & release** of oak species will be required.

Pine Pre-commercial Thinning (PCT) is proposed for six stands, about 157 net acres. These stands are between the ages of 15-24 years old. Hardwood encroachment is becoming more intense; the pine is in danger of losing its dominance. Herbicide/handtool means to control the competition is recommended. Rx burning may also be employed to further control the hardwood species.

Pine TSI- Midstory Treatment with Rx Burning/Herbicide is proposed in seven stands, around 207

acres. These stands were thinned 10-15 years ago but have not accumulated any pine regeneration to be adequately stocked. They are approaching maturity and need more pine seedlings on the ground to be prepared for final harvest in the next entry. Hardwood competition needs to be controlled by herbicide treatments and the seed bed prepared by Rx burning for natural seedfall.

Site Preparation, Pine Planting, and Release is recommended in five stands, approximately 157 acres. These stands were harvested about fifteen years ago to start a new generation of trees. However, natural regeneration methods have not been able to fully restock these sites. Now, hardwood brush and saplings have encroached to the point that only scattered pine regeneration has been able to become established. Treatments in the form of handtool/herbicide/mechanical means should be employed in order to prepare these units for seedfall. Where pine seedlings do occur, release treatments can be employed to eliminate hardwood competition using handtools and/or herbicides. Finally, where pine regeneration has not much chance of occurring, planting by hand is recommended.

The following road work would be done to access timber stands, improve/maintain watershed and riparian conditions, and protect/enhance wildlife habitat:

Reconstruction is proposed on approximately 0.5 mile of road. This will help improve watershed conditions by reducing erosion and sediment that reaches streams. The road proposed for reconstruction/realignment is a segment of 1425.

Maintenance on approximately 25.75 miles of open and closed roads would be performed in this project in order to obtain a suitable road condition for hauling timber. County roads that would be used are regularly maintained by their respective counties, along with Forest Service assistance. Closed roads are temporarily opened during the timber/silvicultural activities, then re-closed after activities are completed with gates or mounds to reduce erosion caused from vehicle traffic and to protect wildlife habitat.

Decommissioning on approximately 10.3 miles of existing roads no longer needed for management or access are proposed. This entails restoring roads to a more natural state. Activities used to decommission a road can include, but are not limited to, the following: reestablishing former drainage patterns, stabilizing slopes, restoring vegetation, blocking the entrance to the road, installing water bars (earthen mounds), and removing culverts. Unnamed and illegally accessed OHV trails that are present in the project area may be closed using debris, rocks, earthen mounds, or gates.

Reconditioning on approximately 5.6 miles of roads is proposed. These roads are not maintained on a regular basis thus requiring slightly more work than the roads that require maintenance. However, these roads are not degraded enough to be categorized as reconstruction. Therefore, reconditioning activities would be slightly more than maintenance but less than reconstruction. Reconditioning would bring these roads to their approved traffic service level.

Temporary roads, approximately 6.45 miles would be needed to access timber stands. These roads would be blocked and following completion of use and rehabilitated with seeding and/or natural re-vegetation. Temporary roads are not intended to be included as part of the forest transportation system as they are managed for projects or activities, then decommissioned after use.

Gate installation- Approximately 22 gates would be erected to improve/maintain watershed conditions and wildlife habitat by reducing disturbance from vehicles and providing recreational experiences to forest users by limiting areas to walk-in hunting and wildlife viewing.

Wildlife Habitat Improvement

Fifteen New Permanent Wildlife Openings will be constructed by marking small clearcuts in sale units (where applicable), dozing, herbicide application, seeding, liming and fertilization. Established openings will be maintained with brush hogging, herbicide application and seeding/fertilizing on an approximate 2-year rotation. New access roads associated with wildlife openings would be gated.

Ten Existing Permanent Wildlife Openings (Reconstruction) will be reconstructed by marking additional timber around their perimeters (where applicable), dozing, herbicide application, seeding liming and fertilization. Reconstructed openings will be maintained with brush hogging, herbicide application and seeding/fertilizing on an approximate 2-year rotation.

One Linear Wildlife Opening would be constructed along an unnamed road in 341/22. No timber harvest is anticipated in this stand. Approximately 50 feet along either side of the road will be treated with herbicide and chainsaw falling to create the opening. Dozing, herbicide application, seeding, liming and fertilization would follow. Linear openings will be maintained with brush hogging, herbicide application and seeding/fertilizing on an approximate 2-year rotation.

Wildlife Stand Improvement (WSI) is proposed in Compartment 333, stand 15 on approximately 30 acres in the southern portion of the stand, and in Compartment 342, stand 48 on approximately 13 acres adjacent to Cowan Fields on suitable sites within the stand. Chainsaw falling and cut surface application of herbicide would be used for these treatments.

Large Wildlife Opening Restoration is proposed for the Cowan Fields. This area is in Management Area 3.J-Pastures and Large Wildlife Openings. Compartment/stands that comprise this area include: 342/47 (13.4 acres) and 346/11 (40.4 acres). The management objective is to return these fields to open condition. Timber harvest would be used to remove the majority of the trees from the old fields. Remnant basal area would not exceed 20ft² /acre. Herbicide application would be used to treat remnant hardwood and cedar following the timber harvest. Fields would be maintained with prescribed fire on a 1-3 year rotation. Native warm season grasses are present in the old fields. However, if necessary, seeding with native warm season grasses would occur at a later date. This would entail site preparation with prescribed fire, stump removal, herbicide use, and seeding native species.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction Burning

All of the Forest Service land within the project area (6,609 acres) would potentially receive low to moderate intensity prescribed burns to reduce hazardous fuels and wildfire risk during both the dormant and growing seasons. Prescribed burning may be done on a 3-10 year rotation throughout the Lock Hollow project area in Management Areas 3.C and 3.D and on a 1-3 year rotation in Management Areas 3.J. Prescribed burning would provide associated benefits to wildlife through improvement in forest floor vegetation abundance and diversity. Fire would also benefit wildlife by improving hard-mast producing species (oak/hickory) in the seedling and sapling stage by reducing competition from fire-intolerant species.

The comment period for the Lock Hollow project lasts for 30 days following publication in the Johnson County **Graphic**. If you can provide additional information that will help us make the best decision on the proposed project, please contact me or Mindi Lawson at (479) 754-2864; or mail to: District Ranger, Pleasant Hill Ranger District, 2591 Hwy 21, Clarksville, Arkansas, 72830. Our e-mail address is: comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-pleasanthill@fs.fed.us

Sincerely,

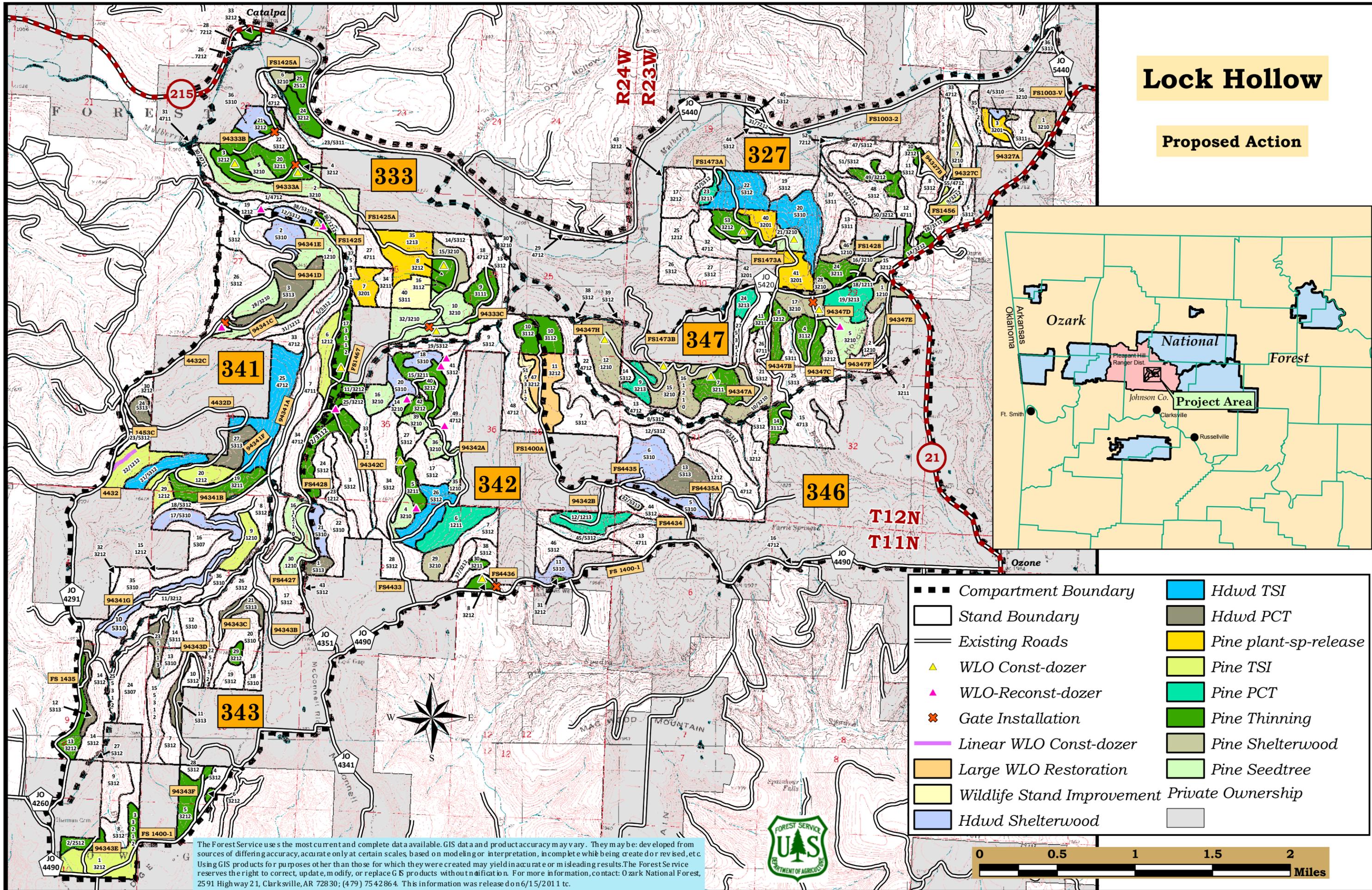
/s/ Pat Kowalewycz

PAT KOWALEWYCZ
District Ranger

enclosure:

Lock Hollow

Proposed Action



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