



File Code: 1950-1

Date: December 14, 2011

Dear Reader:

The Boston Mountain Ranger District is proposing watershed, timber harvesting, silvicultural, roads, recreation, and wildlife habitat management treatments on National Forest land in the Lee Creek Unit in Crawford and Washington Counties, Arkansas (Figure 1). More detailed maps of our proposed actions are at the end of this document.

The proposal, referred to as the **Bundle Pine Project**, is in multiple compartments within the project area, comprising approximately 31,641 acres. This letter serves as notification to local landowners and others who have an interest in these types of activities. If you do not have an interest in this project, you do not need to respond.

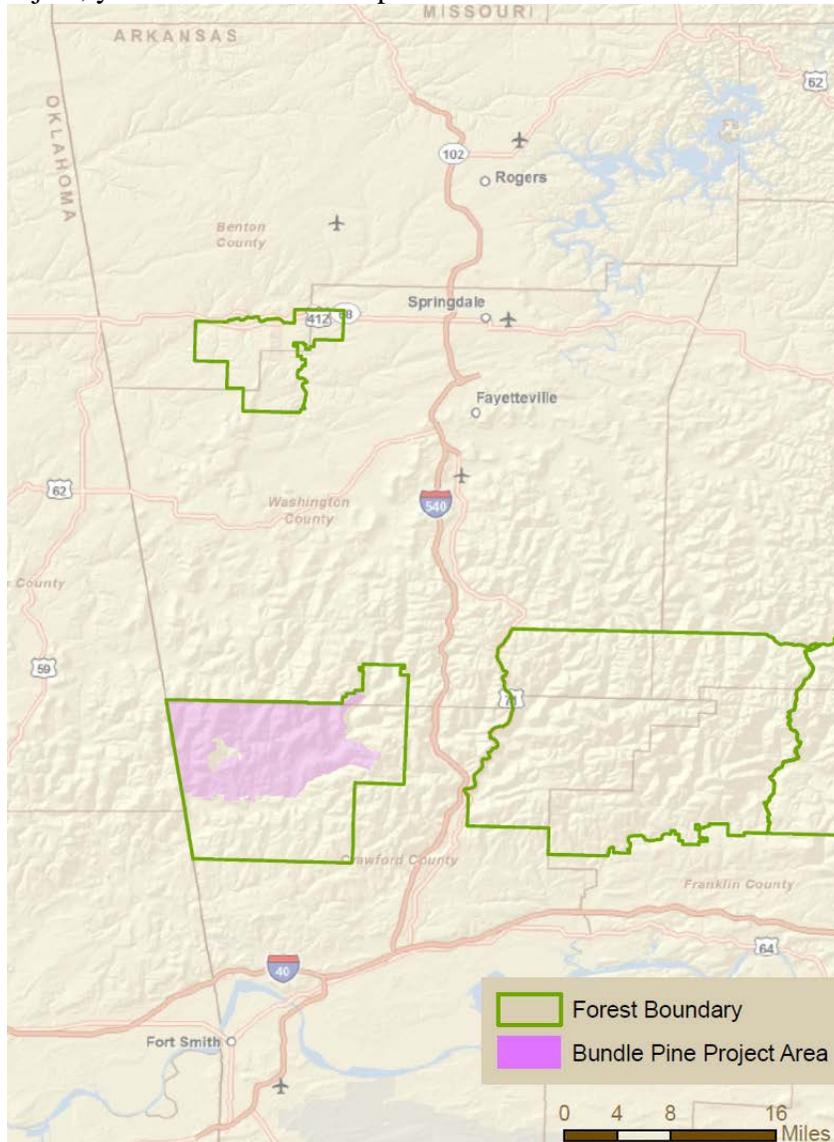


Figure 1. Project Area Vicinity



This project is in the Cove Creek watershed: an important municipal water supply for western Arkansas and Eastern Oklahoma. Many of the tributaries of Lee Creek, one of the major streams of the watershed, are monitored by the City of Fort Smith.

WHY THESE ACTIONS ARE NEEDED

The Bundle Pine Project has been proposed in order to improve forest and ecosystem health, recreation opportunities, watershed conditions, the transportation system, and to protect forest resources. Healthy forests and watersheds, diversity of plant and animal species, safe and suitable access to the forest, a balance of traditional and emerging recreational opportunities, and continued local economic support are the desired future conditions for the project area as well as the Ozark National Forest as a whole.

The Forest Service has had this land since about 1940. The area has a history of poor agricultural practices such as uncontrolled overgrazing and excessive sedimentation of streams from a patchwork of user-created roads. Water quality problems are exasperated by shallow soils, locally steep gradients, and thin duff layers which cause excessive runoff and not enough percolation of water into the ground.

Unauthorized OHV use is prevalent despite the Forest-wide prohibition in areas not designated for their use. This is evident in the degradation of biological and historical resources in areas where access is possible with motorized vehicles. To help restore and protect our resources including historical ones, some user-created roads need to be fenced/gated or otherwise blocked off.

The stands in these areas need help to promote regeneration. The overstory needs to be thinned to let the healthier remaining trees grow and to let more light in to the forest floor so that early successional-dependent wildlife such as deer and turkey can thrive. These actions would also provide forest products to the public and improve over-all forest health.

Field surveys of the area revealed serocia lespedeza, multi-flora rose, air-potato, Japanese honeysuckle, tree of heaven, mimosa, fescue and stiltgrass. These are aggressive non-native invasive plants which out-compete native plants leading to declines in native flora and fauna.

The actions proposed were developed from field reviews that determined management needs for this area based on the goals established by the 2005 Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Ozark-St. Francis National Forest, hereafter referred to as the Forest Plan. The interdisciplinary team proposing these actions consists of foresters, biologists, archaeologists, a recreation specialist, engineering technician, and fire management officer.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

All activities proposed are in Forest Plan designated management areas 3B-Mixed Forest (29,995 ac), 3I – Riparian Corridors (761 ac), 2C - Developed Recreation Areas (135 ac), and 3J - Pastures and Large Wildlife Openings (424 ac).

Management activities in these areas must comply with the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960 (Forest Plan 2005). Forest and watershed health, scenery management, and habitat improvement activities for wildlife are strongly emphasized. The proposed treatments seek to accomplish improvements in these goals for this area.

Thinning Methods

Thinning removes less vigorous trees to reduce competition between remaining trees. This would increase growth and vigor of the remaining trees and increase their resistance to disease and insects. Vigorous growth also aids in carbon sequestration which occurs at a higher rate if trees are allowed to grow unhindered by competition. Thinning these stands would also increase the amount of sunlight reaching the forest floor and improve conditions for ground level plants such as bluestem grasses and various forbs.

Commercial Thin - 3665 acres: (Pine) Many stands in this category are considered to be overstocked at 90 to as much as 110 - 150 ft² basal area. This treatment thins the stand by removal of lower quality trees leaving the residual stand at approximately 50 to 70 ft² of basal area. To be followed where needed with a non-commercial removal of cedar in stands with cedar.

Pre-Commercial Thin - 12 acres: This is an existing shortleaf pine seedling/sapling stand that is overstocked with pine and hardwood seedlings/saplings. This stand would be thinned using handtools on 12'x12' spacing.

Regeneration Methods

Shelterwood - 13 acres: Method of regenerating an even-aged stand in which a new age class develops beneath the residual trees. The initial harvest prepares the seedbed and creates a new age class where natural regeneration is preferred. In the first phase, 70 percent of the overstory is removed. Site preparation would be accomplished utilizing chemical and controlled burning methods. Periodic chemical releases would often be necessary to promote desirable tree species. With adequate regeneration, the second phase removes the remaining overstory.

Silvicultural Treatments

1. Chemical site prep
2. Site prep burn
3. If stand adequately stocked after five years remove sheltering trees
4. If stand not adequately stocked, implement artificial regeneration as directed by the RLRMP
5. Apply two chemical releases of preferred growing stock
6. Apply chemical pre-commercial thin

Site Prep for Planting - 20 acres: Stems would be severed mechanically except for shortleaf pine crop trees. To be followed with prescribed fire to reduce slash and expose mineral soil for seedlings.

Pine Planting for Artificial Regeneration - 20 acres: After site prep the areas would be planted in winter with shortleaf pine seedlings on 8' x 8' spacing.

ROADS/RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Table 1. Roads activities throughout the project area. *(All distances are approximate).*

Action	Total Miles
Close	10.07
Decommission	25.85
Decommission, close	0.95
Pre-haul	19.76
Pre-haul, close	2.77
Pre-haul decommission	1.27
Reconstruct	5.94
Relocate	0.66

Up to five miles of temporary roads may be needed to accomplish vegetation management activities. Up to three borrow pits would be needed for fill material.

Recreation: Build a new Buckhorn OHV Trail Head at the intersection of FSR 1716 & FSR 1723 and decommission existing trailhead on Hwy 220.

WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Non-native invasive species treatments

Treat no more than 1,000 acres per year of non-native invasive species. Treatments would include spot spraying or boom-mounted tractor spraying. Chemicals used would be glyphosate, triclopyr, imazapyr or a combination of any of the three. Any federally or state listed non-native invasive species would be treated as budgets and time allows. Areas expected to be treated include:

- All roadsides: *Serecia lespedeza* is present along every road side in the project area.
- Wildlife openings: *Serecia lespedeza*, fescue, Korean lespedeza and Japanese honeysuckle are the primary non-native invasive species present in these areas. Other treatments may include herbicide spraying of encroaching woody vegetation in order to maintain the open areas.
- Trails, trailheads and recreation areas: All of the above listed species have been found in the Buckhorn Trails area and would be treated with herbicide where needed.
- The areas described above are the most common places where non-native invasive species are found, however, small inclusions of non-native invasives may be found throughout the project area and may also be treated as they are discovered.

Wildlife Openings/Pastures

Restore eight existing wildlife openings

Work can include one or a combination of the following: Brush hogging, disking, seeding with native warm season grasses or Forest approved wildlife forages, fertilizing, liming, herbicide applications to remove non-native invasive plants or woody encroachment, hay cutting, and prescribed burning.

Restore existing hay fields to native warm season grasses

Eradicate non-native invasive fescue from Natural Dam and Cove City hay fields if permittees give up their special use permits. Treatments may include one or a combination of the following: brush hogging, disking, seeding with native warm season grasses or Forest approved wildlife forages, fertilizing, liming, herbicide applications to remove non-native invasive species or woody encroachment, hay cutting, prescribed burning, planting of native shrub/tree species for soft mast, and seed removal/harvesting.

Watershed Protection

Illegal OHV trails and roads: Close any illegal OHV road or trail that is not in the transportation system with a closure structure (gate). Rip, seed and plant any roads or trails that would not be utilized in the future.

COMMENTS REQUESTED:

I invite your comments on the proposed action. The Interdisciplinary Team will use your comments as they identify issues and develop alternatives to the proposal for my consideration. The team will analyze the proposed action and alternatives and summarize the disclosure of environmental effects in an environmental document which will be available to the general public on our website. The environmental document will be mailed to those who have commented on this proposal and to those who request a copy.

The Forest Service will accept appeals of the decision only from those who commented or expressed interest in the proposal before the close of the 30-day comment period beginning the day after the date of the legal notice of availability of this information in the *Southwest Times Record*, the newspaper of record for projects on the Boston Mountain Ranger District.

You may use the enclosed comment form. Our mailing address is: U. S. Forest Service, 1803 N 18th Street, Ozark, AR 72949. You may also call, or email your comments to: *comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-bostonmtn@fs.fed.us*. All comments are public information and will be available to the public. If you have questions on this proposal or the analysis decision process, please call Mike Hennigan or me at 479-667-2191.

Sincerely,



WILLIAM DUNK
District Ranger

***Bundle Pine Project
Boston Mountain Ranger District, Ozark National Forest***

Name: _____

Address: _____

Date: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

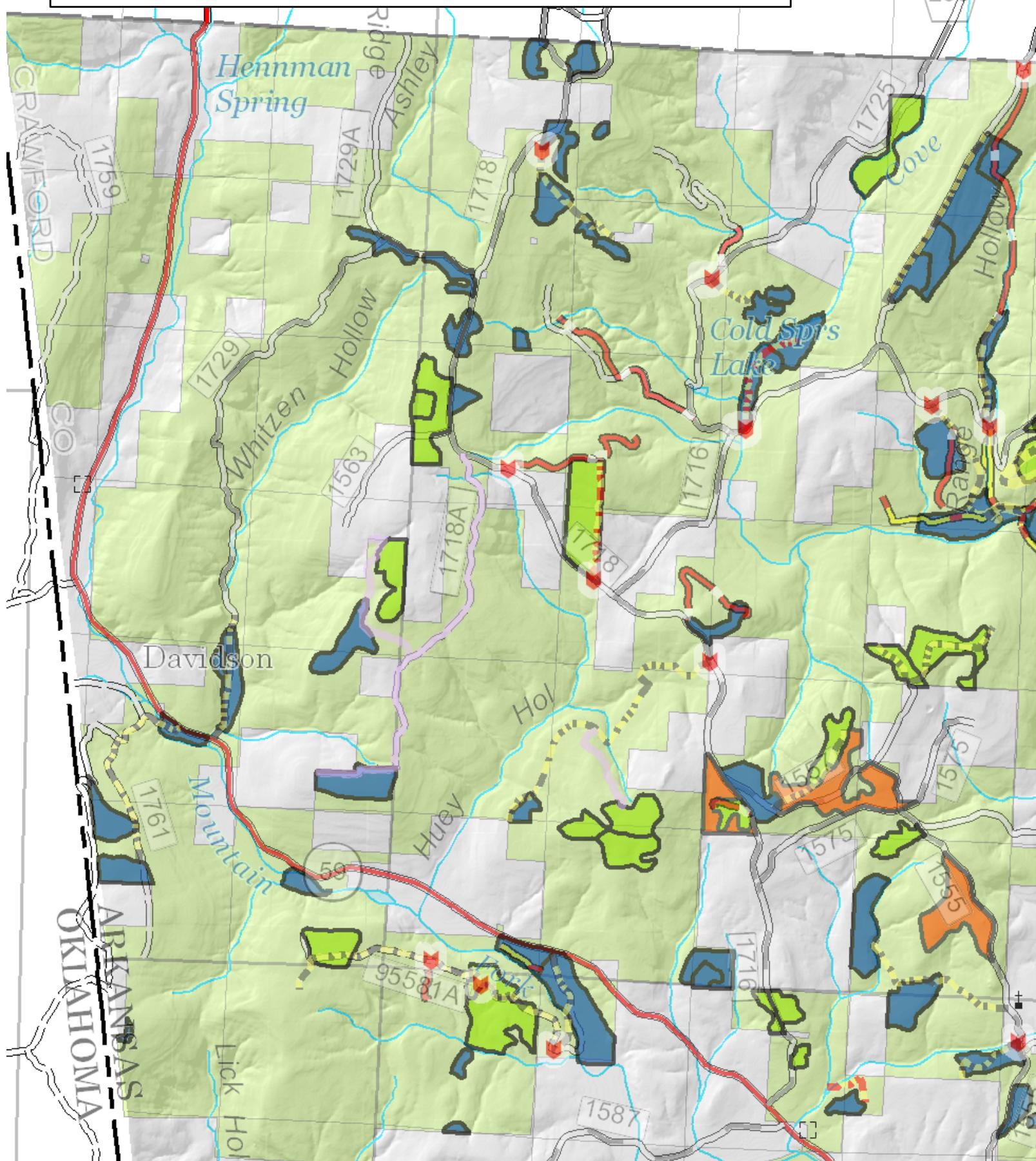
Comments:

_____ Please check if you wish us to contact you about your comments.

Please mail your completed comment form to Jobi Brown at 1803 North 18th Street, Ozark, AR 72949. Comments are also accepted verbally at 479-667-2191 or TTY 479-667-1931, or by email at comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-bostonmtn@fs.fed.us. Your input is important.



Boston Mountain Ranger District
 Lee Creek Unit
 Bundle Pine Project Map 1:
 West Side



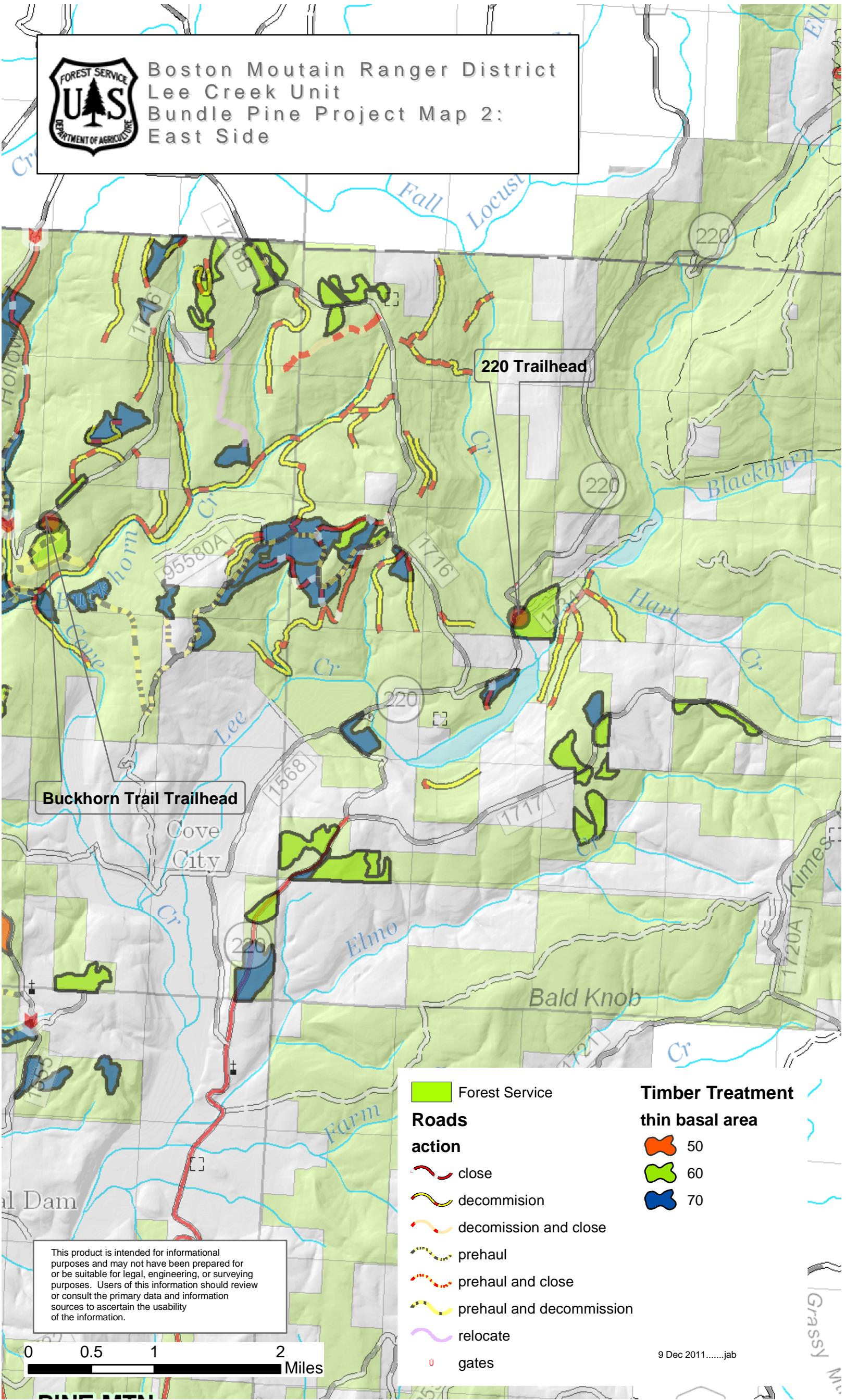
Forest Service	Timber Treatment
Roads	thin basal area
action	50
close	60
decommission	70
decommission and close	
prehaul	
prehaul and close	
prehaul and decommission	
relocate	
gates	

This product is intended for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. Users of this information should review or consult the primary data and information sources to ascertain the usability of the information.





Boston Mountain Ranger District
 Lee Creek Unit
 Bundle Pine Project Map 2:
 East Side



Forest Service

Roads

- close
- decommission
- decommission and close
- prehaul
- prehaul and close
- prehaul and decommission
- relocate
- gates

Timber Treatment
thin basal area

- 50
- 60
- 70

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