

Amend #6

DECISION NOTICE
and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

USDA Forest Service, Region 8
National Forests in North Carolina
Nantahala National Forest
Non-significant Forest Plan Amendment
SUGAR CREEK TIMBER SALE

August 26, 1992

This decision covers actions to be taken in Environmental Assessment for the Sugar Creek Timber Sale involving the proposed Forest Plan Amendment to the Nantahala/Pisgah Land and Resource Management Plan.

The Sugar Creek Timber Sale Environmental Assessment (EA) discusses a proposed non-significant change in management areas within the project area along with associated timber harvest and connected actions of reforestation, road reconstruction, watershed improvement and wildlife improvement. The proposed action will adjust the Management Areas boundaries to include approximately 1250 acres within Management area 2A that are currently designated 2C. The area to be redesignated is within compartments 97, 98, and 102 on the Highlands Ranger District in Jackson County, North Carolina.

In the development of this project, a planning error was discovered in that a portion of the lands within the 11,085 acre analysis area, were incorrectly designated under Management Area 2C. A silvicultural prescription developed in 1988 revealed that current direction would not meet the objectives for long-term land management. Further on-site analysis in 1991 and 1992 supported this observation and recommended this area for inclusion into the timber base under Management Area 2A. (EA, Page 2-3). This decision concerns a 1250 acre portion of the area.

Public and internal scoping began on April 23, 1992 and demonstrated no additional concerns or public issues to the proposed actions developed by the Interdisciplinary Team. On July 22, 1992 a draft Environmental Assessment was distributed for review and incorporated individuals and agencies from the District and Forest mailing lists in an effort to reach a broader audience due to the nature of this action. This scoping indicated no additional concerns or public issues to the proposed actions.

The amendment to the Forest Plan is consistent with Forest Service manual 1922.5 (5), changes to correct planning errors and is considered a change in the Plan that is Not Significant under FSM 1922.51 (2). The adjustments of the management area boundrys resulting from further on-site analysis will not cause changes in the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management. (36 CFR 219.12 (k))

Based on the results of the analysis documented in the Sugar Creek EA, it is my decision to implement a forest plan amendment to change 1250 acres within the Sugar Creek drainage to Management area 2A.

The NFMA findings are as follows:

1. The actions of the project are consistent with the following Forest Land and Resource Management Plan's (FLRMP) management objectives given in Chapter III. Specifically the resulting future condition will be enhanced by perpetuating a continuous supply of wood products, increasing habitat for native vertebrates, and by improving water quality;
2. The actions of the amendment are consistent with FLRMP Amendments and Revisions in that the change resulting is not significant for the purposes of the planning process. (FLRMP, Page IV 3-4);
3. An analysis documented in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the FLRMP (pages B-18 to 34) assures that these lands can be adequately restocked in five years using these practices; and
4. The actions of this project which alter vegetation comply with the seven requirements of 36 CFR 219.27(b) by following the Forest-wide standards and guidelines (S&G), as well as the S&G's for Management Areas within 2A. (Sugar Creek EA, page 5)

Finding of No Significant Impact

I have determined that these actions are not a major federal action, individually or cumulatively, and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors concerning the context and intensity of the expected impacts:

Context:

The physical and biological effects are limited to these compartments and to its neighboring compartments.

1. Considering both beneficial and adverse impacts, there will be no significant effects as a result of the project (Sugar Creek EA page 17 to 49).
2. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed actions (Sugar Creek EA page 49).
3. There are no unique characteristics within the geographical area that will be significantly effected.
4. Based on public participation, the effects on the quality of human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. This refers to controversy over the effects as presented in the environmental assessment (Sugar Creek EA pages 5 and 17 to 49) rather than to the existence of opposition to the project itself.
5. The possible effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.
6. These actions do not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the FLRMP.

7. There are no known significant cumulative effects between this project and other projects implemented or planned on areas separated from the affected area of this project beyond those evaluated in Chapter IV of the FEIS for the FLRMP.
8. There are no effects to any cultural resources listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (Sugar Creek EA page 20). The Forest Service Archeologist concurrence is located within the project file.
9. Proposed endangered, threatened or sensitive species will not be significantly affected (Sugar Creek Biological Evaluation)
10. The actions do not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)].
11. For water quality management, the North Carolina Forest Practice Guidelines Related to Water Quality will be used for this project. (Sugar Creek EA page 30) If implementing BMPs on a specific site results in effects significantly higher than anticipated, because of unforeseen site factors or events, appropriate corrective measures will be considered and implemented. This project will fully comply with State approved BMPs and the Clean Water Act.

This decision may be implemented no sooner than 45 days, beginning the day after the legal notice of this decision is published.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of Notice of Appeal," including the reasons for appeal. It must be filed, in duplicate, with: John E. Alcock, Regional Forester, U.S. Forest Service, 1720 Peachtree Road NW, Atlanta, Ga. 30367--9102 no later than 45 days, beginning the day after the legal notice of this decision is published.



Bjorn Dahl
Forest Supervisor