United States Department of Agriculture | **Forest Service** | **Boston Mountain Ranger District** | **1803 North 18th Street**
Ozark, AR 72949
Phone 479-667-2191
TTY 479-667-1931 | **FAX 479-667-5807**

January 8, 2013

Dear Reader:

On September 14, 2012, the Boston Mountain Ranger District sent you a letter seeking your comments regarding a proposal to prescribe burn, beginning in 2013, approximately 43,000 acres of National Forest land in the Main Unit (see enclosed map) in Franklin, Crawford and Madison counties of Arkansas. The approximate dates for each burn unit in Appendix A may not have appropriately captured the return interval or frequency for prescribed burning within the project area. There were also other incorrect descriptions or omissions in that original project proposal. So, we are now sending you this letter that contains a **corrected proposal** to prescribe burn the area described above. This scoping letter serves as notification of the project to parties that may be affected or are interested in these types of activities. Please note that none of the activities would occur on private land unless a written agreement is in place with the landowner. The proposed activities are referred to as the **White Rock Prescribed Burning Project**.

The White Rock Management area encompasses the main unit of the Boston Mountain Ranger District of the Ozark National Forest and consists of primarily hardwoods and pine adapted to periodic disturbance regimes such as fire. Decades of fire suppression in the area has resulted in a buildup of fuels, the dominance of early successional trees with reductions of overstory diversity, and declines in the quality of open areas for wildlife forage. In addition, natural mortality caused by red oak borer infestations and several severe droughts over the last decade has increased the volume of dead trees across the landscape.

Prescribed burning is an appropriate management tool to improve wildlife habitat and viewing opportunities while reducing the spread of non-native invasive vegetation and pests. Prescribed burning also enhances recreational settings and reduces fuel buildup for protection of infrastructure. Additionally, prescribed burning can increase the amount of sunlight reaching the forest floor resulting in improved conditions for small herbaceous plants and forbs that provide browse and soft mast for wildlife.

The entire project area would **not** be burned all at one time. The project area would be sub-divided into more manageable burn units (Please see Appendix A for a list of separate burn units). These burn units may be divided into smaller blocks based on resource availability, weather conditions, and smoke management guidelines. Not all burn units would be burned in one year. On a rotational basis, specific units would be identified to burn each year based on forest plan objectives and guidelines as well as fuel and weather conditions. Burn units may be burned more than once to mimic the natural fire regime and meet management objectives. Burn frequency following initial burns would also be based upon monitoring, but would likely be every 3 to 5 years. Control lines would consist primarily of previously established control lines, roads, and/or creeks. There may be as much as 10 miles of new fire line needed throughout the entire project area to protect timber regeneration areas and divide units. Ignition of separate units may be done with the use of a helicopter and/or hand crews.

Protection measures for the controlled burns include burning within Forest Service guidelines and protecting travelers on major forest roads from reduced visibility due to smoke. The area would be monitored after burning by Forest Service personnel to assess the effectiveness of the prescribed burn.

This project complies with the Revised Ozark-St. Francis National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for the following Management Areas (Table 1).

Table 1: Management Areas represented within the White Rock Prescribed Burn Project

Management Area	Acres
3.E. - High Quality Forest Products	24079
3.B. - Oak Woodland	6058
3.C. - Mixed Forest	5737
3.F. - Old Growth Area	2288

Other management areas represented in the burn areas include:

1.C. - Designated Wild and Scenic Rivers
1.H. - Scenic Byway Corridors
2.A. - Ozark Highlands Trail
2.C. - Developed Recreation Areas
3.A. - Pine Woodland
3.I. - Riparian Corridors
3.J. - Pastures and Large Wildlife Openings

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 White Rock Prescribed Burn Project has been proposed in order to improve forest and ecosystem health as well as to enhance watershed conditions. Improving wildlife habitat, reducing competition between trees, improved visual quality and access for forest users are important in this area. Reducing fuels buildup from natural mortality caused by red oak borer infestations and severe drought is a crucial step toward meeting the goals for this area.

Restoration of native ecological systems and improvement of wildlife habitat are the highest priorities in managing our natural resource base in order to have a lasting effect on future conditions of the forest. Habitat diversity for animals and plants, including threatened, endangered, and/or sensitive species would be maintained or improved by the management activities proposed.

I invite your comments on this proposal. These comments will be used by an interdisciplinary team to develop issues and analyze the project. A decision document will then be prepared and mailed to those who commented on this project. In order to be most helpful, please return your comments referencing this project using the attached comment form by mail to the above address no later than 30 days after the publication of notice of this project in the *Southwest Times Record*, the newspaper of record for projects on the Boston Mountain Ranger District. Oral or hand-delivered comments must be received within our normal business hours of 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. local time. You may also call or fax your comments to the numbers in letterhead, or email them to *comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-bostonmtn@fs.fed.us*. All comments will become part of the project record available for public review. I appreciate your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM DUNK

District Ranger

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Date: _____ Phone:_____

Email: _____

Would you like us to contact you about your comments? _____

Comments:

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

Appendix A. Burn Units

Burn Unit	**Approximate size (acres)**
Spud Rock Waggley Hollow	2,406
Dry Fork 5B (East Side of Mineral Hill)	1,586
Rosson Spirit	3,425
Big Eddy	2,503
Shores Lake Campground	6
Brannon Fields	79
Spud Rock NE Plus Blocks A & B	1,694
Dry Fork Area 2	3,087
Dry Fork Area 3	2,205
Dry Fork Area 4	2,313
Dry Fork Area 5A (West Side of Mineral Hill)	1,308
Deer East	1,382
Plymouth	1,087
Spud Rock Northeast	4,130
Spud Rock West	2,467
Spud Rock Deer Trap	1,155
Spud Rock Central	4,115
Dry Fork Area 1	2,038
McGlendon	1,397
Spud Rock SE	3,674
John Turner CK	1,194

Please contact our office for more information on the burn units.

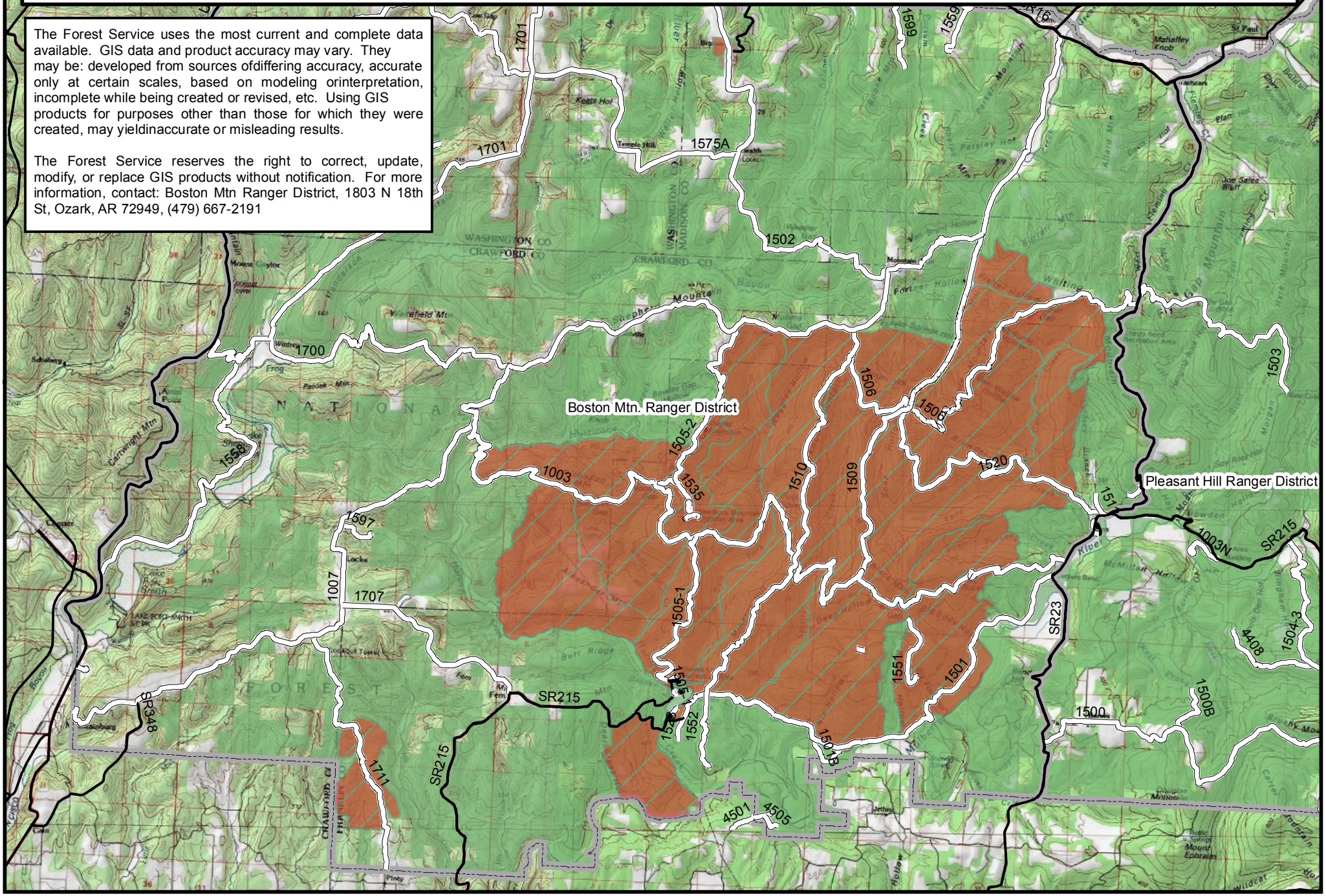
Ozark-St. Francis National Forests

Boston Mountain Ranger District
White Rock Rx Burn Project

Highway
Road
USFS Land
District Boundary
White Rock Rx Burn Area

0 1 2 3 Miles
0 10,000 20,000 Feet

cds8/27/2012

The Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. They may be: developed from sources ofdiffering accuracy, accurate only at certain scales, based on modeling orinterpretation, incomplete while being created or revised, etc. Using GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were created, may yieldinaccurate or misleading results.

The Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace GIS products without notification. For more information, contact: Boston Mtn Ranger District, 1803 N 18th St, Ozark, AR 72949, (479) 667-2191