



File Code: 1950

Date: April 16, 2013

Dear Interested Public:

In March of 2012, the Sylamore District presented a preliminary proposed action for the *Indiana Bat Habitat Restoration Project* involving integrated resource management of approximately 67,151 acres of National Forest System lands.

The Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the *Indiana Bat Habitat Restoration Project* has been completed and is attached. Alternative 2 (the proposed action alternative) has been identified as the preferred alternative; it is intended to:

- protect Indiana bat hibernacula from human disturbance;
- reduce and maintain canopy closure across primary and secondary conservation zones and,
- promote regeneration and recruitment to the overstory of oak, hickory and shortleaf pine species

Alternative 2 is summarized on pages 10 and 11 and is described in detail in Appendix A of the EA; a map illustrating the locations of proposed vegetation management activities may be found in Appendix B.

It is important to note that although a preferred alternative has been identified, the final decision on which alternative to select has not yet been made. Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.5, I am requesting comments on this proposed action. Information you provide could assist us in finalizing the EA; it may help us further refine the proposed action, identify pertinent issues related to the proposed action or develop additional alternatives for meeting the project's objectives. As you may recall, this project has been planned as an adaptive management project, and as such I envision many possible questions and concerns from you. I encourage you to contact me if you have any questions about this project. I'll also make an effort to contact you during the comment period to answer any questions you may have related to this project. Your thoughts are important to me, and I look forward to hearing from you.

The opportunity to comment will end 30 days following the date of publication of a legal notice initiating the comment period for this project in the newspaper of record, *The Stone County Leader*. The tentative publication date for the legal notice is April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013. All comments received prior to finalizing the EA and making the final decision will be considered. However, only those persons, non-Federal organizations or entities that comment or otherwise express interest during the 30-day comment period will be eligible to appeal the subsequent decision on this project. Individuals or representative(s) submitting comments must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request. Please note that comments received in response to



this solicitation, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection.

Your comments can be submitted via phone, the U.S. Postal Service, via e-mail, facsimile, or presented in person at our office. When submitting a comment, please provide the following information:

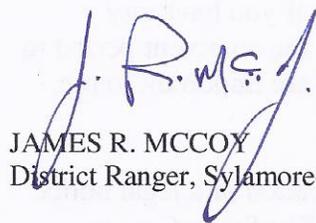
1. Your name and mailing address.
2. Title of the proposed action: *The Indiana Bat Habitat Restoration Project*
3. Your comments on the proposed action.
4. Your signature or other means of identification verification: For organizations, a signature or other means of identification verification must be provided for the individual authorized to represent your organization.

Please send written comments to me: District Ranger Jim McCoy, Sylamore Ranger District, Ozark-St. Francis National Forests, Attn: *The Indiana Bat Habitat Restoration Project*, 1001 East Main, Mountain View, AR 72560. Our telephone and FAX numbers are: Phone (870) 269-3228, FAX (870) 269-3000. Hand-delivered comments may be submitted at the Sylamore Ranger District office within the normal weekday business hours of 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. To mail a comment electronically, use a common digital format (without attachments), and submit it to the following e-mail address: [comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-sylamore@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-sylamore@fs.fed.us) .

Once the Decision Notice has been signed, it and the final EA will be posted at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/osfnf/landmanagement/projects> under the Sylamore Ranger District link. If you respond to this solicitation for comments, a copy of the final EA and the Decision Notice will be mailed to you.

If you have any questions regarding this proposal, please contact me or the District NEPA Coordinator, Jan Franks, at 870-269-3228 extension 3234. Thank you for your interest in the management of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests, and particularly, the Sylamore Ranger District.

Sincerely,



JAMES R. MCCOY  
District Ranger, Sylamore-St. Francis Ranger Districts

jlf  
Attachment (1)