

**Bankhead National Forest
Liaison Panel Meeting Summary
May 16, 2013
First National Bank
Double Springs, Alabama**

Forest Service Attendees:

Elrand Denson, District Ranger
Kerry Clark, Fire Management Officer
Blake Addison, Timber Management Assistant
Tripp Gaskins, Silviculturist
Allison Cochran, Wildlife Biologist
Lorenzo Walton, Forester Trainee

Liaison Panel Members:

James Alexander
Anthony Hood
Matt Brock
Randy Feltman

LaVerne Matheson
Mike Henshaw
Daryl Lawson

Public Attendees:

Janice Barrett
Monday Mbila
Patricia Alexander

Jerry C. Bouldin
Edmon Smith

Meeting Agenda

6:00	Welcome	Elrand Denson, District Ranger, USFS, Bankhead
6:15	Prescribed Burning Update	Kerry Clark Fire Management Officer USFS, Bankhead
6:30	Recreation Project Horse Trail Work Day Planning	Jody Tetlow & James Alexander USFS, Bankhead Rec Program Manager & Back Country

		Horsemen of Alabama
6:45	Eddy Covariance Tower Project	Dr. Monday Mbila Professor, Alabama A&M University
7:10	Greater Collier Watershed Environmental Assessment Proposal	Tripp Gaskins, District Silviculturist, USFS, Bankhead
7:45	Herbicide Workshop Planning	Tripp Gaskins, District Silviculturist, USFS, Bankhead
8:15	Closeout Next meeting (August 29) & agenda items Panel business items	Elrand Denson District Ranger, USFS, Bankhead

Elrand Denson opened the meeting with an update on the April 25th Oil & Gas informational meeting held in Montgomery. He described how the meeting was arranged with individuals addressing the following subjects; Laws, regulations and how oil & gas fit into the NFs in AL Forest Plan, Leasing on Public Lands and how to get information/become involved, Application to drill – how the BLM process works and how FS is involved, Extraction, recovery and reclamation – how extraction occurs and the reclamation process, And Potential and existing leases on the NFs in AL. Elrand described the current lease situation. The National Forests in Alabama (NFs in AL) are comprised of about 666,000 acres. Of that, about 543,000 acres are available for leasing. Leases have been offered on all National Forests in Alabama except the Tuskegee in the past. Currently about 72,000 acres are under oil and gas lease on Conecuh and about 5,000 acres on the Oakmulgee. There are 3 active wells on the Conecuh currently. Recent expressions of interest (EOIs) from potential leasers have been received by the BLM on Bankhead and Conecuh. Elrand shared a map of the areas available for lease on Bankhead.

There was discussion and questions on this topic. Members inquired about the term of the lease. Janice Barrett expressed interest and has discussed with the Forest Supervisor in the need for a public meeting on Bankhead re: possible leases in June or September. Elrand advised the panel that the next meeting of the Bankhead Liaison Panel will be held on August 29, 2013 and a large portion of the agenda will cover oil & gas. The Bureau of Land Management will be invited to share information at that meeting. Elrand also advised that all of our information is available on the Forest Service and BLM websites.

Kerry Clark gave an update on the 2013 prescribed burning and wildfire seasons. Approximately 18,697 acres were burned in 2013. Of that, 2,858 acres were burned in the growing season (after bud break). Aerial ignition (use of a helicopter during prescribed burns) was used on 11 of our burns this year. Kerry shared photos of aerial ignition operations and described the process. A machine on board the helicopter drops aerial ignition spheres to the ground. The machine injects antifreeze into the sphere with potassium permanganate inside of it. This causes a chemical reaction and the sphere combusts.

Kerry updated the group on Bankhead's wildfire activity to date. There have been 15 wildfires including approximately 345 acres burned.

There was discussion on the intensity of fire and how it can be controlled with the use aerial ignition. Janice Barrett mentioned that there were hardwoods killed in the Shelton Prescribed Burn. Kerry explained that is a Research Burn and we wanted to get good coverage and intensity. Also, the Shelton Burn Area has a long term desired future condition of Oak Woodland and is managed for open understory with short rotation burning. There will be mortality in smaller trees. That's part of the goal in the woodland systems. Where we burn in areas predominately hardwoods, we try to burn those areas earlier in the day and earlier in the season. Daryl Lawson stated that recent research has shown that red and white oaks benefit more from fire than we might have thought and the fire exclusion may be a factor in loss of oaks across the region.

Jody Tetlow and James Alexander shared plans for a trail project to take place on May 17 and 18 with Forest Service and Back Country Horsemen of Alabama. All volunteers are welcome to participate in this initial project. The project includes spreading gravel to bring trail tread up to grade.

Wild South's volunteers completed a project on Trail 203. They built rock steps by hand down to the trail. The project will reduce erosion and entrenchment on this area.

Dr. Monday Mbila, Alabama A&M University, shared a powerpoint presentation on AAMU's Eddy Covariance Project which includes a tower on Bankhead and the Alabama Mesonet. Dr. Mbila's presentation is attached. There was discussion on how to access data and how it is used.

Tripp Gaskins provided an update on Hemlock Woolly Adelgid monitoring. There was a false alarm of HWA at Camp McDowell. Auburn University entomologist confirmed scale and other insects at Camp McDowell, but HWA was not present. Tripp visited all Bankhead HWA monitoring plots this week and there were no signs of HWA in any of the plots.

Tripp Gaskins shared a powerpoint presentation on the Greater Collier Watershed Environmental Assessment. The Greater Collier Watershed EA will cover an area from Payne Demonstration Area to Brushy Lake. Tripp shared treatments he has proposed through the silvicultural prescription process in the area. He shared maps of proposed treatments and desired future conditions. The prescription process and NEPA process are in progress. See attached powerpoint presentation. There were no questions or discussion on this project.

Tripp also asked for Panel Members to volunteer to assist the Bankhead in having an Herbicide Workshop. There is an interest among Forest Service staff, landowners and panel members in learning about herbicide. Herbicide use is proposed for a number of treatments in the Greater Collier Watershed EA. We would like to have a workshop for the public, similar to the Hardwood Field Day. We would like to talk and learn about forestry practices proposed for use on Bankhead, but also for private landowners. Dr. Ezell at Mississippi State has agreed to participate on August 3 or August 10. Tripp requested that panel members volunteer to help plan the workshop and to suggest topics and speakers. Janice Barrett suggested we need independent experts with an ecological background. Mike Henshaw asked in NNIS are an issue in the Greater Collier watershed and that many private landowners are interested in herbicide treatment of NNIS. This should be included in the workshop. Mike Henshaw volunteered and the Winston County Natural Resources Council has funding to assist if needed. Matt Brock volunteered and has some speaker ideas and topics. Janice Barrett

volunteered and Mark Kolinski will be involved. A conference call will be held on Thursday, May 23 to plan the Herbicide Workshop.

Daryl Lawson asked about the potential tie in with shortleaf workshops. We briefly discussed a recent National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and International Paper meeting at Bankhead on shortleaf restoration in the Cumberland Plateau. It is expected a range wide plan for shortleaf will be prepared. Landowner incentives are expected over time for shortleaf restoration. Also, we intend to apply for a grant to restore shortleaf in the Payne Demonstration Area when the opportunity arises.

Randy Feltman tied all of the topics together – clean air, CO studies, and shortleaf – Which cleans the air better? Shortleaf? Loblolly? Hardwood? Plantations? Old growth? Randy feels young growing loblolly plantations are most effective at holding carbon. Dr. Mbila replied that we don't have the information among pines yet. Of course we know any tree is better than no tree and that hardwoods are different than pines in how much/when they sequester Carbon.

Anthony Hood inquired about the commercial market for shortleaf pine. It can be very valuable as sawtimber.

The next meeting of the Bankhead Liaison Panel will be held August 29, 2013. The agenda will include primarily oil and gas leasing. We will need a larger meeting space, so the location is TBD. Janice Barrett expressed concern with the August 29th meeting date. Leases might be announced in June according to her information and she would like to see an earlier meeting. Elrand advised that this date is best for the Forest Supervisor and also we want to include the BLM.

Please contact the Bankhead National Forest at 205-489-5111 or bkinfo@fs.fed.us for copies of power point presentations.