

**Bankhead National Forest
Liaison Panel Meeting Summary
February 7, 2013
First National Bank
Double Springs, Alabama**

Forest Service Attendees:

Elrand Denson, District Ranger
Blake Addison, Timber Management Assistant
Tripp Gaskins, Silviculturist
Allison Cochran, Wildlife Biologist
Lorenzo Walton, Forester Trainee
Travis McDonald, Biological Scientist

Liaison Panel Members:

James Alexander	LaVerne Matheson
Mark Kolinski	David Cummings
Anthony Hood	Mike Henshaw
Matt Brock	Russell Miller
John Howell	Charles Borden
Randy Feltman	Shannon Holbrook
Jody Buttrum	

Public Attendees:

Lawayne Brock	Athel Wilhite
Patricia Alexander	Janice Barrett
Danny Holmes	Hank Byrnes
Randy Campbell	David Brown
James Barnacastle	Stewart Horn
John Green	Kevin England
Jerry	
Jim Hughes	

Meeting Agenda

6:00 **Welcome**

Elrand Denson,
District Ranger,
USFS, Bankhead

6:15	Collier Watershed Environmental Assessment Proposal	Tripp Gaskins, District Silviculturist, USFS, Bankhead
6:30	Pre-commercial Thinning Proposal	Tripp Gaskins
6:45	Slick Ford Salvage	Blake Addison Timber Management Asst, USFS, Bankhead
7:00	Restoration Monitoring Trip Report	Mark Kolinski Wild South
7:15	Water Quality Improvements	LaVerne Matheson, Winston County Smith Lake Advocacy, Inc
7:25	Backcountry Horsemen of Alabama Partnership Big South Fork Nat'l Rec Area Trip	Elrand Denson District Ranger, USFS, Bankhead
7:45	Closeout Next meeting & agenda items Panel business items	Elrand Denson District Ranger, USFS, Bankhead

Ranger Denson opened the meeting by summarizing the Liaison Panel's ground rules.

Tripp Gaskins presented a powerpoint presentation (see attached) on the proposed 2013/2014 Tree Release and Weeding Project and the Collier-Payne-Middle Brushy Watershed Project. The Tree Release and Weeding project proposal includes releasing young planted pine stands (majority 5 years old and younger) with a brush saw. Tripp introduced the Collier-Payne-Middle Brushy Watershed Project. These watersheds are in Area 2, with an emphasis in the uplands of shortleaf pine woodlands desired future condition. See attached powerpoint presentation for project goals and treatment proposals. This watershed project will include stand level management. While past Watershed Environmental Assessments have been using 2-5 acre patch cuts for pine restoration and regeneration, this proposal will include whole stand regeneration. The maximum size allowed for stand regeneration per the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan is 80 acres for pine and 40 acres for hardwood stands. Although these are the maximum acres allowed by the Land Management Plan, we may propose treating smaller stands. There were questions on stand level management and a discussion on even-aged management. In shortleaf pine, this proposal does include even-aged management. One hardwood stand is currently being considered is proposed for 2-aged management. There was discussion on the past use of patch cuts vs stand level regeneration. Patch cuts have been used and were a novel thing to do, but we are looking at management challenges with small acreage patch cuts. Some southern pine beetle spots were

underplanted to shortleaf pine and survival has been poor due to competition and shade. There was discussion on the size of the watershed and treatment acres. Again, we are in the early project proposal stages. There is interest from a panel member in spreading the activities (treatments) out over broader areas and over time, especially practices associated with providing early successional forests, to provide for wildlife. There were questions and a discussion on herbicide use. Herbicides will be proposed for the release of shortleaf pine and for site preparation. This will be a selective treatment using backpack sprayers. There was a question on the Forest Plan time frame. The Forest Plan is a 10 year or longer planning tool. With this Collier-Payne-Middle Brushy watershed we are looking at project level environmental analysis with more detail than the Forest Plan. Concerns with stand level management/regeneration include that the panel has only been monitoring patch cuts since the Rockhouse-Hoghouse Watershed Environmental Assessment (EA) concern about the public perception of clear-cutting, and perception of sliding back in to past management techniques. Past management techniques focused on volume. This EA is focused on woodland restoration. One comment from the public is that there is a concern there is too high of a percentage slated for a desired future condition of woodlands. The concern is that woodlands may have existed in small groups, but not over the landscape and that this management might change the whole ecology of the Bankhead.

Blake Addison introduced a Salvage Timber Sale Proposal. On January 30, an EF1 tornado and straight line winds impacted Forest lands in the Black Pond community near County Road 8. There is a project proposal to remove damaged timber from this storm through a salvage timber sale. The proposal includes removing timber from drains using streamside management zones and cabling. The proposal is to salvage timber in April or May of this year. An area of about 250 to 300 acres in size is proposed for salvage. The proposal will include restoring (preparing and planting) longleaf pine in some areas.

Mark Kolinski shared a presentation on the last Restoration Monitoring Team's field tour and review. The powerpoint presentation is attached. There was a discussion on Compartment 148 stand 17 and hardwood restoration, particularly in relation to prescribed burning.

LaVerne Matheson shared information on water quality issues (pollution potential) related to septic tank systems in Alabama. LaVerne has learned that the Alabama Health Department doesn't use bacteria counts as an indicator of water pollution. The Ala. Health Dept. is responsible for wastewater systems up to 15,000 gallons/day, for example like small condos, RV parks, mobile home parks, etc. LaVerne also learned that Ala. Health Dept. doesn't have any enforcement powers or fines with regard to septic tanks. Smith Lake has over 5000 homes which all use septic tanks. There is concern around failing septic tanks and water quality on Smith Lake. LaVerne has been reviewing how other states handle this issue and meeting with Health Dept. officials and state legislators on this issue.

Ranger Denson shared a summary of a trip to the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area (BISO). Backcountry Horsemen of Alabama (BCHAL) members and Forest Service personnel traveled to the BISO to look at how the National Park Service is managing the BISO National Park, specifically trails programs, facilities, and endangered species. The Park Superintendent and all of her staff talked with the visitors on a number of issues. Key take home messages were partnerships and collaboration are how the BISO gets a lot of their work done. BISO has about 5 major partnerships and additional hundreds of individual volunteers working with their trails programs. The BISO is similar in size to Bankhead. Elrand highlighted the collaboration piece. Bankhead has a Trails Analysis which is a document partners and the FS can rally around to move forward, look at water quality and sediment issues, and look at grant and partnership opportunities. Elrand emphasized that the BNF is looking at a sustainable, long-term trail system that doesn't require annual major work like infrastructure change. There was discussion about managing a volunteer program of the BISO magnitude. Panel member Mr. James Alexander, who attended the BISO trip, shared that the trip went well and that BISO staff have a "let's go do it" attitude. BNF has a trails assessment and hasn't moved on it. Mr. Alexander wants to revitalize the Trails Group, a sub-group of the Liaison Panel. Mr. Alexander had received a message from Forest Supervisor Steve Lohr asking what are BCHAL's priorities. He expressed an interest in

wanting to start on some of the trails assessment work ASAP and encouraged other groups to help by volunteering. Mr. Lawayne Brock who attended the trip shared that BISO has 5 people on staff who are supervising volunteers and they would take groups of volunteers out on work days and ensured volunteers were qualified for the work they were doing. Panel member Mark Kolinski expressed that groups who want to partner have to have effective leadership because Bankhead doesn't have the manpower to oversee that kind of volunteer effort. Panel member Jody Buttrum expressed that BISO has a huge equestrian community contributing to the Park system, that BISO has a lot of trail systems, and that they don't have erosion issues or problems with endangered species and crossings. Elrand confirmed that BISO has a vast array of resources, including funding. There are some things that BNF can do now, like implementing pieces of the Trails Assessment that don't require an Environmental Assessment. Mr. Randy Campbell who also attended the trip encouraged people to come to the BCHAL to get educated and that endangered species resources can go hand in hand with trails. Members of BCHAL expressed that volunteers need to see forward movement. Elrand highlighted a number of things that are moving forward with the horse trail system including the completion of the trails assessment, construction of trailhead parking lots for horse trailers and repairing problem areas along the Owl Creek system. There is a need for collaboration. There was continued discussion on trail system needs including tread work on Wilderness trails and that much needed work can be done strictly with labor. There was discussion of the National Park's fee structure and funding sources and Bankhead's trails budget.

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for Thursday, May 16th in Moulton. Jody Buttrum will make inquiries about a free meeting room in Moulton and coordinate with Allison Cochran. The Liaison Panel agreed to replace James Alexander representing recreation (horse trails) on the Panel as Jeff Stihl and Mary Lee Ratliff resigned. Lawayne Brock will serve as James' alternate.

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

