

DECISION NOTICE
and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Recovery Plan Amendment to Kisatchie National Forest Plan

Kisatchie National Forest
Grant, Rapides, Natchitoches, Vernon, and Winn Parishes, Louisiana

October 2005

Decision

The Environmental Assessment (EA) documenting the environmental analysis of proposed management direction for the *Recovery Plan Amendment to Kisatchie National Forest Plan* (RP Amendment) on the Kisatchie National Forest is available for public review at the Forest Supervisor's Office in Pineville, Louisiana.

Based on the analysis documented in the EA, it is my decision to implement the management direction in **Alternative 2**. These actions are described below:

Amend the Kisatchie National Forest's 1999 Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) in order to add new direction and modify some of the Forest Plan's current direction for managing the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCW). The proposed changes will incorporate the findings presented in the January 2003 Recovery Plan for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*): Second Edition (Recovery Plan) issued by the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Southeast Region. These changes will provide management direction for the remainder of the current Plan period, or until modified by a subsequent amendment or revision.

Attachment A to this DN/FONSI provides a list of the page numbers and changes to be made to the existing Forest Plan direction. A detailed comparison between the Plan's current RCW management direction and the proposed new or modified direction can be found in the environmental analysis documentation done for this decision (Table 1 of the EA).

Forest-wide Mitigation

Through the use of protective measures (mitigation) the environmental effects of proposed activities can be minimized or eliminated. The protective measures are listed in the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Kisatchie National Forest (Chapters 2 and 3) and in the FEIS for the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Kisatchie National Forest, **except** as modified or added by the changes shown in Attachment A. In determining the effects in the EA, these management requirements were considered to be in place.

Amendment-specific Mitigation

Additional protective measures required by this Plan amendment to the management direction for RCW are listed below:

- Appendices 2, 3 and 4 of the Recovery Plan present protocols for monitoring reproduction, group compositions, translocations and RCW surveys. These (and other) changes and clarifications in the Recovery Plan are expected to become the means by which the Forest

Plan standards and guidelines are implemented, and evaluated. Such measures are impossible to fully list, as many times they are only minor variations on existing processes, procedures and protocols. In other cases, such as foraging guidelines, they represent a new and/or different way of evaluating foraging habitat. However, the revised Recovery Plan should be used as the primary reference for detailed guidance for RCW management on the Forest.

- Specific projects implemented as a result of this new Plan direction shall be subject to the usual review of forest ecologists. This is particularly relevant to those sensitive plant species that occur in only several locations on the Forest. In these cases, although increased (and growing season) fire favors pre-settlement conditions on much of the landscape, it may jeopardize these sparse populations. Pre-disturbance consideration of these rare populations should be used to insure mitigation or avoidance at the project level.

Reasons for the Decision

Alternative 2 and its mitigation measures were selected because they meet the purpose and need for the action and overall, best provides for implementing the following Forest Plan goals:

Goal 2: “Manage to provide for a variety of life by maintaining biologically diverse ecosystems and viable populations of all native and desirable nonnative plant, wildlife, fish and aquatic species. Conserve threatened, endangered, and rare species; restore and maintain ecosystems and ecological processes; identify and manage old growth forests; and protect riparian and streamside habitat areas.” (Forest Plan, page 2-1).

Goal 8: “Promote collaboration between researchers and land managers to incorporate new technologies, information, and scientific methods into the decision-making process.” (Forest Plan, page 2-1).

Other Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1 (No Action)

This no action alternative would retain the Forest Plan’s current management direction for RCW. No new or changed direction would be necessary to implement this alternative.

This alternative is required by NEPA and serves as a benchmark for other alternatives in order to analyze the effects on the environment from implementation of new or changed management direction.

Public Involvement

A scoping letter (EA, Attachment 2) describing the proposed change in management direction was mailed on August 10, 2004 to approximately 100 addressees on the Forest Plan mailing list, including some state and federal agencies and institutions. In addition, a scoping notice (EA, Attachment 1) requesting comments was published on August 11, 2004 in the legal section of the Alexandria newspaper, *The Town Talk*. The scoping letter and notice invited comments by August 31, 2004.

One telephone response was received during the scoping period. The respondent owned property adjacent to the Forest and was interested in how the proposed change in RCW direction might affect management on this land. He also expressed interest in obtaining a copy of the Recovery

Plan in order to see its guidelines for managing RCW on private lands. No other responses were received.

During the time between initial scoping and this final decision, additional management concerns related to reduced foraging direction were identified by the Forest Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). After additional examination, several clarifications and modifications to the initially proposed text were incorporated into the final direction. In addition, the list of Sensitive Species was updated, the expected effects to the new/different species were analyzed, and the additional information was incorporated into the EA and BE.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

From the results of the analysis documented in the EA, I have determined that this action is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. Both context and intensity of effects were considered (40 CFR 1508.27). Short- and long-term effects to the locale were the context considered in the determination (40 CFR 1508.27(a)). The proposed changes in management direction is within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Revised Land and Management Plan of the Kisatchie National Forest, as amended by the EA for this decision. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. Beneficial and adverse effects were given equal consideration (EA, throughout Environmental Consequences, pages 16 thru 30).
2. The actions will not affect public health or safety (EA, page 30).
3. The unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically-critical areas will not be affected (EA, page 30).
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial (EA, page 30).
5. We have considerable experience with the types of activities to be implemented. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk (EA, throughout Environmental Consequences, pages 16 thru 30).
6. The action will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (EA, analysis of cumulative effects throughout Environmental Consequences, pages 16 thru 30).
7. These actions are not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (EA, analysis of cumulative effects throughout Environmental Consequences, pages 16 thru 30).
8. The actions will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources (EA, page 30).
9. The actions will not adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (EA, pages 16 thru 30; EA, Appendix A, 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 (EA, throughout Environmental Consequences, pages 16 thru 30; below, in Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations).

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This amendment is not a significant change to the Kisatchie's Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. The determination that this is a non-significant amendment is made in accordance with 16 USC 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f) (1982 regulations), Forest Service Manual 1922.5 and the Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 5.32. This plan amendment meets the criteria for a non-significant amendment because these changes will not "significantly alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management" and they will not "significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goods and services originally projected" (FSM 1922.5).

In accordance with FSM 2672.4, a Biological Evaluation (fauna and flora) were prepared to evaluate the effects of the planned activities on PETS species (EA, Appendix A). The chosen management direction (Alternative 2) is not likely to adversely affect the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has concurred with this determination (EA, Appendix B) as it relates to threatened and endangered species. The proposed actions are not likely to cause a trend toward federal listing or a loss of viability for any sensitive species.

The effect of the chosen actions on Management Indicator Species (MIS) will be minimal. Acres of suitable habitat will not change significantly and habitat conditions desired by the Revised Land Management Plan for the Plan area will be improved and not be adversely affected. Forestwide MIS conditions and trends will continue to be monitored annually and reports updated at least once every five years in order to document that this assumption can be supported.

All areas that have a high or medium potential for heritage resources will be evaluated before site specific actions are taken if the potential exists for disturbance of undiscovered historic resources. To ensure that important historic and prehistoric sites are not damaged, all forestry management actions will be coordinated through the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) (VM-FEIS, Volume 1, pages IV-117; Forest Plan, page IV-8). In addition, all Federally Recognized Tribes with interests in the proposed actions will be consulted.

This management direction is compatible with the current land and resource allocation needed to achieve the desired future conditions described in the Kisatchie National Forest's Forest Plan.

The management practices and activities are consistent with the National Forest Management Act (NFMA 16 USC 1604(i), NFMA regulations (36 CFR 219) and agency manuals, handbooks, and directives in effect August 2005.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA,

Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Implementation and Review

This decision is effective **seven days** after publishing the legal notice of this decision in the newspaper of record (*The Town Talk*).

This decision may be appealed in accordance with 36 CFR 217 (1999) by filing a written notice of appeal, in duplicate, within 45 days of the publication of the legal notice. The appeal must clearly state that it is a Notice of Appeal being filed pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 217.9.

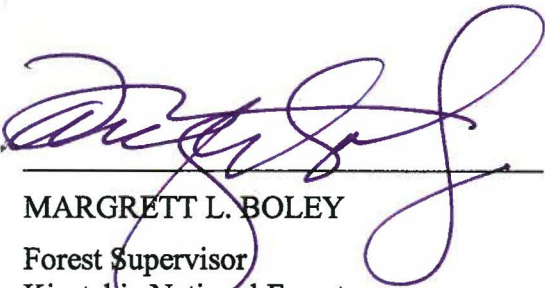
Appeals must be filed with the Regional Forester for the Southern Region at:

USDA Forest Service, ATTN: Appeals Deciding Officer,
1720 Peachtree Rd, N.W., Suite 811N,
Atlanta, Georgia 30309-9102.

Appeals may also be mailed electronically in a common digital format to appeals-southern-regional-office@fs.fed.us.

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Cynthia A. Dancak, 2500 Shreveport Highway, Pineville, La. 71360; phone (318) 473-7160.



MARGRETT L. BOLEY
Forest Supervisor
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2500 Shreveport Hwy.
Pineville, LA 71360

OCT 27 2005

Date

Attachment A

Amendment #5
to
Kisatchie National Forest's Revised Land Management Plan
October 2005

This **Amendment #5** to the Kisatchie National Forest's Revised Land Management Plan (Plan) makes the following substitutions or additions to the current text found in the Plan. Environmental analysis documentation linked to these changes can be found in the environmental assessment (EA) and decision notice (DN) titled the Recovery Plan Amendment to Kisatchie National Forest Plan, signed by Margrett Boley, October 27, 2005.

Plan, page 2-3

Replace the original text:

~~The Forest provides one recovered population and four support populations to the overall Red-cockaded Woodpecker recovery. [Plan, page 2-3]~~

with:

The Forest provides one primary core population (Vernon), one secondary core (Catahoula), and three significant support populations (Evangeline, Kisatchie, and Winn) to the overall Red-cockaded Woodpecker recovery. [Plan, page 2-3]

Plan, page 2-61

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-711** with:

FW-711: Management direction for the RCW is based upon the *Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record Of Decision For the Management of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Its Habitat on National Forests in the Southern Region* (RCW FEIS) and the USFWS' *Recovery Plan for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Picoides borealis): Second Edition* (Recovery Plan). Reference these documents for additional ecological information, analysis, rationale and discussion. Obtain Regional Forester approval of any thinning or restoration project which reduces foraging below the standards and guidelines presented in this Forest Plan. (KNF) (STANDARD)

Plan, page 2-61

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-716** with:

FW-716: Maintain clusters, replacement and recruitment stands in an open park-like condition with a basal area ranging from 50 to 80 square feet per acre. Minimum tree spacing of 20 to 25 feet to reduce SPB risk is more important than actual BA, especially in non-longleaf forest types. (KNF/RP) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, page 2-62

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-721** with:

FW-721: Recruitment stands shall be established in each HMA where the population objective exceeds the current RCW population. The number of recruitment stands shall, at a minimum, equal the HMA population objective minus the current number of groups in that HMA. The selection criteria include: (RCW/RP) (GUIDELINE)

> At least 10 acres in size.

- > Nesting suitability considering stand age, forest type, and availability of relicts.
- > The oldest available stands or younger stands with sufficient relicts shall be selected. Inactive clusters may also be designated as recruitment stands.
- > Distance to a cluster: recruitment stands should lie within ¼ mile to ¾ mile from a cluster or other recruitment stands to ensure good spatial distribution and increase probability of colonization.
- > Must have adequate foraging habitat connected to the cluster or recruitment stand (see FW-784).
- > Clusters on private land: recruitment stand(s) shall be established for RCW groups living on adjacent private lands within ¾ mile of national forest lands. These stands shall be located on national forest lands as close to the private cluster as possible.

Recruitment stands that meet the conditions specified in **FW-RP2** may be designated as *recruitment clusters*.

Plan, page 2-63

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-728** with:

FW-728: Prescribed burning on a one to five year rotation is preferred for midstory vegetation control within active clusters, recruitment clusters, and replacement stands. In areas with dense but small (less than two inches diameter) hardwood midstory, more frequent burning may be necessary to achieve control. Move to implement an effective broad-scale burning program to maintain and enhance the quality of RCW nesting and foraging habitat. (**RCW/RP**) (**GUIDELINE**)

Plan, page 2-63

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-733** with:

FW-733: No more than 10 ft²/ac hardwood overstory basal area per acre can be retained within active clusters, recruitment clusters, and replacement stands. Remove all hardwoods within 50 feet of cavity trees. (**RP**¹) (**GUIDELINE**)

Plan, page 2-63

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-738** with:

FW-738: The procedures and methods specified by Copeyon (1990) will be the preferred method for drilled cavities. (**RP**) (**GUIDELINE**)

Plan, page 2-63

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-741** with:

FW-741: The following priorities will be followed to schedule installation of artificial cavities: (**RCW/RP**) (**GUIDELINE**)

- 1) Active clusters without enough cavities for each individual.
- 2) When needed to support augmentation of single bird groups.
- 3) Active clusters with fewer than 4 usable cavities.
- 4) Recruitment clusters with fewer than 4 suitable cavities.

¹ **RP** = guidance derived from Recovery Plan; **RCW** = guidance derived from RCW FEIS; **KNF** = guidance derived from KNF Revised Plan. In some cases, guidance is derived from more than one source and is shown using a slash (/) to separate them.

- 5) Recruitment stands, which may be inactive clusters, with fewer than 4 usable cavities, within 1 mile of an active cluster.
- 6) Recruitment stands, which may be inactive clusters, with fewer than 4 usable cavities, 3 miles of an active cluster.
- 7) Inactive clusters or recruitment stands more than 3 miles from an active cluster.

Plan, page 2-64

Replace the original standard/guideline FW-744 with:

FW-744: Use cavity restrictors judiciously to control cavity enlargement. (RP) (GUIDELINE)

- > Use only when necessary on active cavities. Do not restrict all cavities. Slightly enlarged cavities may be restricted but do not use to repair excessively enlarged cavities.
- > Use restrictors to minimize potential damage to any cavity, natural or artificial, by Pileated Woodpeckers, or if there is a good possibility, based on past experience, that cavities may be damaged.
- > Use full restrictors on all cavity inserts and previously installed modified-drilled cavities.
- > Do not use on un-enlarged cavities for the purpose of excluding cavity kleptoparasites.

Plan, page 2-64

Replace the original standard/guideline FW-754 with:

FW-754: Prior to any translocation, at least 4 suitable cavities must be available in the cluster, midstory control shall be completed, and adequate foraging must be available. (KNF) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, page 2-65

Replace the original standard/guideline FW-766 with:

FW-766: Protect all cavity trees (active or inactive) and relict pines during burning operations if one or more of the following conditions exist: (RP) (GUIDELINE)

- > PBG is < 30.
- > Fire intensity might ignite an unprotected tree.
- > Potential cavity trees are limited.

Protect only active cavity trees during burning operations if all of the following conditions exist:

- > PBG is > 30.
- > The area has been burned recently so fuel loads have been reduced to acceptable limits.
- > Potential cavity trees are not limited.

Protect cavity trees by reducing fuels for a minimum distance of 10 feet from the trunk. If using aerial ignition, increase distance to 20 feet. Use some or all of the following methods:

- > Small preparation burns
- > Raking
- > Mowing
- > Light bark scraping

> Wetting trees

Plan, page 2-65

Replace the original standard/guideline FW-767 with:

FW-767: Plow lines will be kept 200 or more feet from cavity trees *unless* an emergency or site-specific circumstance such as location of a property boundary, etc., dictate the need to locate them closer. If conditions dictate plow lines be placed within 200 feet of cavity trees, use of a dozer blade to lightly scrape away fuels is preferable to using a deep cutting plow. Never use circular plow lines around individual trees. (RCW/RP) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, page 2-67

Replace the original standard/guideline FW-784 with:

FW-784: Adequate levels of foraging habitat shall be provided for all active clusters, recruitment clusters, and recruitment stands (both the established recruitment stands and the tentatively identified recruitment stand locations). An exception would be where reduced foraging levels are allowed (see FW-794 and FW-832). (RCW/RP) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, page 2-67

Replace the original standard/guideline FW-788 with:

FW-788: Adequate foraging habitat will be provided according to USFWS' guidelines for preparation of biological assessments and evaluations for the RCW, whenever pine tree removal is planned within ½ mile of clusters or recruitment stands. (RCW/RP) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, page 2-67

Replace the original standard/guideline FW-789 with:

FW-789: The following foraging habitat requirements (USFWS' recovery standard) must be met for all active and recruitment clusters: (RP/KNF) (GUIDELINE)

1. Area provided by site productivity:
 - a) In systems of medium to high site productivity (site index 60+ for the dominant pine species), provide each group of woodpeckers 120 acres of Good Quality Foraging Habitat (GQFH) as defined below in FW-790. A specific exception to this area requirement is made for longleaf and shortleaf habitat types under group selection silviculture (see USFWS Recovery Plan, p. 200).
 - b) In systems of low site productivity (site index <60 for the dominant pine species), provide each group of woodpeckers 200 to 300 acres of GQFH.
2. Foraging for active clusters and replacement stands must meet all the requirements of GQFH. Foraging for recruitment clusters must meet all requirements of GQFH except (a) and (e) in FW-790 and should contain no more than 70 ft²/acre total BA. Efforts should be made to increase the amount of foraging habitat that meets all elements of GQFH.

Plan, page 2-67

Replace the original standard/guideline FW-790 with:

FW-790: Foraging habitat stands for active and recruitment clusters should be maintained according to the USFWS' definition of Good Quality Foraging Habitat (GQFH). GQFH has some large old pines, low

densities of small and medium pine, sparse or no hardwood midstory, and a bunchgrass and forbs groundcover. It has all of the following characteristics: **(RP/KNF) (GUIDELINE)**

- a) 18+ stems/acre of pines ≥ 60 years in age *and* ≥ 14 inches DBH. Minimum BA for these pines is 20 ft²/acre.
- b) BA of pines 10 to 14 inches DBH is between 0 and 40 ft²/acre.
- c) BA of pines < 10 inches DBH is below 10 ft²/acre *and* below 20 stems/acre.
- d) BA of all pines ≥ 10 inches DBH is at least 40 ft²/acre; i.e., the minimum BA for pines in categories (a) and (b) above is 40 ft²/acre.
- e) Groundcovers of native bunchgrass and/or other native, fire-tolerant, fire-dependent herbs total 40% or more of ground and midstory plants and are dense enough to carry growing season fire at least once every 5 years.
- f) No hardwood midstory exists, or if hardwood midstory is present it is sparse and < 7 feet in height.
- g) Canopy hardwoods are absent or $< 10\%$ of the number of canopy trees in longleaf forests and $< 30\%$ of the number of canopy trees in loblolly and shortleaf forests. Xeric and sub-xeric oak inclusions that are naturally existing and likely to have been present prior to fire suppression may be retained but are not counted in the total area dedicated to foraging habitat.
- h) All of this habitat is within 0.5 mile of the center of the cluster, and preferably, 50% or more is within 0.25 mile of the cluster center.
- i) Foraging habitat is not separated by more than 200 feet of non-foraging areas. Non-foraging areas include (1) any predominantly hardwood forest, (2) pine stands less than 30 years in age, (3) cleared land such as agricultural lands or recently clearcut areas, (4) paved roadways, (5) utility rights of way, and (6) bodies of water.

Plan, page 2-67

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-794** with:

FW-794: Foraging habitat may be provided at a level below that given for the recovery standard if the following situations occur, and provided there is a finding that RCW populations would benefit in the long term by demonstration of reasonable progress: **(KNF/RP) (GUIDELINE)**

- > If the project itself (e.g. pine thinning) **will** move the habitat dedicated to specific clusters toward the desired structure identified in the USFWS' recovery standard.
- > If the project **will not** impact the best 120 acres dedicated to foraging habitat (or the best 200 – 300 acres in sites of low productivity) and that dedicated foraging habitat is being actively moved toward the desired structure.
- > Any project that **will not** move the habitat dedicated to specific clusters toward the desired structure identified in the USFWS' recovery standard and **will** impact some of the best 120 acres dedicated to foraging habitat (or the best 200 – 300 acres in sites of low productivity), requires a case-by-case review by the USFWS.
- > To expedite the restoration of pine species preferred by RCW, foraging habitat for *recruitment stands* may, in some cases, be reduced. Site appropriate pine restoration activities may be allowed within the best 120 acres dedicated to foraging habitat (or the best 200 – 300 acres in sites of low productivity) provided that the effects from that loss of habitat are weighed against future benefits. Such projects would require written concurrence from the USFWS.

Plan, page 2-68

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-798** with:

FW-798: Stands approaching an age of providing potential nesting habitat, generally 70–100 years depending on pine species, should be managed as follows: (KNF/RP) (GUIDELINE)

- > Maintain a pine BA of 50–80 square feet and maintain a minimum spacing of 20–25 feet between dominant and co-dominant trees. Spacing is especially critical in the non-longleaf types.
- > Maintain an open, park-like structure through regular prescribed burning.

Plan, page 2-68

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-799** with:

FW-799: Unless otherwise limited by specific sub-management area direction, apply prescribed fire to foraging habitat every 1 to 5 years, preferably during the growing season, to protect and restore native herbaceous groundcovers and control densities of midstory hardwoods and pines. (RP/KNF) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, pages 3-16, 3-22, 3-30, 3-36, 3-40, 3-42, 3-44, 3-47

Replace the original standard/guidelines **MA²-5-08, MA-6-08, SMA-9DL-11, SMA-10DM-05, SMA-11DL-13, SMA-11DS-12, SMA-11DM-11, SMA-12D-07** with:

MA-5-08, MA-6-08, SMA-9DL-11, SMA-10DM-05, SMA-11DL-13, SMA-11DS-12, SMA-11DM-11, SMA-12D-07: Adhere to guidance presented in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record Of Decision For the Management of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Its Habitat on National Forests in the Southern Region* and the USFWS' *Recovery Plan for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Picoides borealis): Second Edition*. See Forestwide standards and guidelines for direction on vegetation management, habitat improvement, and other practices pertaining to the RCW. (KNF) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, pages 3-17, 3-23

Replace the original standard/guidelines **SMA-5CL-01, SMA-6BL-01** with:

SMA-5CL-01, SMA-6BL-01: Apply prescribed fire at the landscape scale every 1–5 years, with increased emphasis on growing season burns. (RP/KNF) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, page 2-68

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-803** with:

FW-803: In stands where SPB hazard is rated as moderate or higher, thin to achieve a minimum spacing of 20–25 feet between trees while retaining 40–70 square feet of overstory pines BA. (KNF/RP) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, page 2-69

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-808** with:

FW-808: In MILs 3 and 4, clearings, other than those re-establishing areas created by catastrophic events such as hurricanes and tornadoes, are not allowed within ¼ mile of RCW groups **unless** it is needed to restore off-site pine stands to native pine species and other applicable guidelines including required foraging habitat are met. (RCW/RP) (GUIDELINE)

² SMA = Sub-Management Area; MA = Management Area

Plan, page 2-69

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-820** with:

FW-820: During thinning operations, provide for the following in foraging habitat: (RP/KNF) (GUIDELINE) (See also FW-798)

- > Retain a minimum BA of at least 40 ft²/acre for pines ≥ 10 inches DBH.
- > Maintain a maximum total BA of 70 ft²/acre in foraging habitat for active or recruitment clusters.
- > In order to reduce SPB risk, maintain a total BA below 80 ft²/acre in off-site loblolly forests designated as foraging habitat for *recruitment stands*.
- > In shortleaf pine forests, maintain the overstory hardwood component at or below 30%.
- > Do not remove more than 30 ft²/acre of BA in the dominant or codominants in any single thinning operation.
- > Use the following priority to select pine trees to retain:
 - 1) Relict trees
 - 2) Other potential cavity trees
 - 3) Trees greater than 10 inches DBH that are not potential cavity trees
 - 4) Trees less than 10 inches DBH.

Plan, page 2-70

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-825** with:

FW-825: No pine stands within ¼ mile of an active cluster in an HMA classified as MIL 3 or 4 may be regenerated using even-aged or two-aged systems **unless** it is needed to restore off-site pine stands to native pine species and other applicable guidelines including required foraging habitat are met. An exception would be the planting or seeding of stands destroyed by catastrophic events such as hurricanes and tornadoes. Intermediate vegetative treatments to enhance RCW habitat or uneven-aged management may also be used if minimum habitat requirements are met. (RCW/RP) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, page 2-70

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-826** with:

FW-826: Unless otherwise limited by specific sub-management area direction, limit regeneration patch size (even-aged or two-aged systems) to: (RP/KNF) (GUIDELINE)

- 25 acres when less than 100 PBG.
- 40 acres when greater than 100 PBG.
- 80 acres if restoring native pine habitat beyond 1 mile from active or recruitment clusters and the conditions given in FW-794 and FW-832 are met.

Plan, page 2-70

Replace the original standard/guideline **FW-827** with:

FW-827: Do not create openings greater than 200 feet in width, that completely sever clusters / recruitment stands from their foraging habitat, or that sever corridors linking sub-populations and isolated clusters. (RCW/RP) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, page 2-70

Replace the original standard/guideline FW-829 with:

FW-829: The following apply to all restoration efforts, including accelerated pine restoration: (KNF/RP) (GUIDELINE)

- > In a population classed as MIL 3 or 4, restoration using an even-aged or two-aged system may not occur within ¼ mile of an active cluster *unless* all other applicable guidelines including required foraging habitat are met.
- > Plan restoration to avoid excessive age class bulges, especially if the new stands are to be managed with an even-aged system.
- > No existing stands of the desired pine type (species being restored) may be regenerated until they reach rotation age, although thinning may occur.
- > Do not create openings greater than 200 feet in width which completely sever active or recruitment clusters and recruitment stands from their foraging habitat or that sever corridors linking sub-populations or isolated clusters.
- > During restoration, all existing trees of the desired species shall be retained, with two exceptions. Clumps of desired species that are dominant or codominant with a basal area greater than 70 ft²/acre can be thinned to improve RCW habitat conditions. Clumps of desired species less than 10 inches DBH and less than 30 years old can be thinned to promote growth and vigor.
- > Conversion of longleaf pine on suitable habitat to another pine species within an HMA requires consultation with the USFWS.

Plan, page 2-71

Replace the original standard/guideline FW-832 with:

FW-832: Emphasize HMAs with sparse or scattered RCW populations. In order to expedite restoration in portions of an HMA that are 1.5 miles or more from an active cluster the 0-10 and 0-30 guidelines may be exceeded and a reduced level of foraging habitat may be allowable for recruitment stands provided all of the following conditions are met: (RCW/RP) (GUIDELINE)

- > During the first 20 years of RCW strategy implementation the area in the 0-10 age classes cannot exceed 15%, and the area in the 0-30 age classes cannot exceed 40%.
- > Rotation intervals are not less than 120 years for longleaf and shortleaf pines and 100 years for loblolly and slash pines. An exception to this for loblolly and shortleaf stands under high risk of mortality due to insects, disease, or other site-related problems may be given on a case-by-case basis through consultation with the USFWS.
- > The project **will not** impact the best 120 acres dedicated to a specific active or recruitment cluster's foraging habitat (or the best 200-300 acres in sites of low productivity), and that dedicated foraging habitat is being actively moved toward the desired structure by demonstration of reasonable progress.

Plan, page 2-72

Replace the original standard/guideline FW-846 with:

FW-846: Monitoring requirements for RCW populations and habitat is in accordance with that given in the RCW FEIS, the USFWS' 2003 *Recovery Plan: Second Edition*, and in Chapter 5 and Appendix F of this Forest Plan. (KNF) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, page 3-16, SMA 5CL

Replace the original text:

~~Moderate longleaf restoration areas up to 40 acres are scattered throughout the landscape.~~
with:

Moderate longleaf restoration areas averaging 40 acres, but up to 80 acres (if restoring native pine communities beyond 1 mile of active or recruitment RCW clusters), are scattered throughout the landscape.

Plan, page 3-17

Replace the original standard/guideline SMA-5CL-06 with:

SMA-5CL-06: Limit regeneration patch size (even-aged or two-aged systems) to: (RP/KNF)
(GUIDELINE)

- 25 acres when less than 100 PBG.
- 40 acres when greater than 100 PBG.
- 80 acres if restoring native pine habitat beyond 1 mile from active or recruitment clusters and the conditions given in FW-794 and FW-832 are met.

Plan, page 3-18, SMA 5CS

Replace the original text:

~~There are moderate-sized SOH restoration areas of up to 25 acres scattered throughout the landscape.~~
with:

There are moderate-sized SOH restoration areas averaging 25 acres, but up to 80 acres (if restoring native pine communities beyond 1 mile of active or recruitment RCW clusters), scattered throughout the landscape.

Plan, page 3-18

Replace the original standard/guideline SMA-5CS-03 with:

SMA-5CS-03: Use clearcutting with shortleaf reserves as the primary two-aged regeneration method to restore shortleaf pine / oak-hickory forest to upland areas. Limit regeneration patch size to: (KNF/RP)
(GUIDELINE)

- 25 acres when less than 100 PBG.
- 40 acres when greater than 100 PBG.
- 80 acres if restoring native pine habitat beyond 1 mile from active or recruitment clusters and the conditions given in FW-794 and FW-832 are met.

Plan, page 3-19, SMA 5CM

Replace the original text:

~~Moderate-sized MHL restoration areas of up to 25 acres are scattered throughout the landscape.~~
with:

Moderate-sized MHL restoration areas averaging 25 acres, but up to 80 acres (if restoring native pine communities beyond 1 mile of active or recruitment RCW clusters), are scattered throughout the landscape.

Plan, page 3-20

Replace the original standard/guideline SMA-5CM-03 with:

SMA-5CM-03: Use shelterwood with reserves as the primary two-aged regeneration method to regenerate pine and pine-hardwood forest types within this sub-management area. Retain 40 ft²/acre pine basal area during initial cut. In addition to the pine, retain desirable overstory hardwoods, up to 20 ft²/acre basal area. All residual pine trees and hardwoods are to be retained until the RCW HMA improves to the next management intensity level. If the stand is later designated as a foraging stand for an active or recruitment cluster, provide adequate foraging habitat, leaving as much desirable hardwood as allowable. Priorities for selecting trees to be retained as shelterwood are:

- 1) Relict trees
- 2) Other potential cavity trees
- 3) Other trees larger than 10 inches DBH that meet requirements as seed producers

Limit regeneration patch size to:

- 25 acres when less than 100 PBG.
- 40 acres when greater than 100 PBG.
- 80 acres if restoring native pine habitat beyond 1 mile from active or recruitment clusters and the conditions given in FW-794 and FW-832 are met.

See Forestwide standards and guidelines for additional RCW shelterwood with reserves direction. (KNF/RP) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, page 3-21, MA 6

Replace the original text:

~~There are small regeneration areas of up to 25 acres and moderate-sized longleaf restoration areas of up to 40 acres scattered throughout the landscape.~~

with:

There are small regeneration areas of up to 25 acres and moderate-sized longleaf restoration areas averaging 40 acres, but up to 80 acres (if restoring native pine communities beyond 1 mile of active or recruitment RCW clusters), scattered throughout the landscape.

Plan, page 3-22, SMA 6BL

Replace the original text:

~~Small regeneration areas of up to 25 acres, and moderate-sized restoration areas up to 40 acres are widely scattered throughout the landscape.~~

with:

Small regeneration areas of up to 25 acres, and moderate sized restoration areas averaging 40 acres, but up to 80 acres (if restoring native pine communities beyond 1 mile of active or recruitment RCW clusters), are scattered throughout the landscape.

Plan, page 3-23

Replace the original standard/guideline SMA-6BL-04 with:

SMA-6BL-04: Use clearcutting with longleaf reserves as the primary two-aged regeneration method to restore longleaf pine forest to upland areas dominated by off-site pines (loblolly, slash). Limit regeneration patch size to: (KNF/RP) (GUIDELINE)

- 25 acres when less than 100 PBG.
- 40 acres when greater than 100 PBG.
- 80 acres if restoring native pine habitat beyond 1 mile from active or recruitment clusters and the conditions given in FW-794 and FW-832 are met.

Plan, page 3-23

Replace the original standard/guideline SMA-6BL-06 with:

SMA-6BL-06: Use shelterwood with longleaf reserves as the primary two-aged regeneration method to regenerate longleaf pine forest type within this sub-management area. During the initial cut, retain 25–30 ft²/acre of pine basal area within the Vernon HMA; and 40 ft²/acre of pine basal area within all other HMAs. Retain 10 ft²/acre of pine basal area but not less than 6 longleaf trees per acre (longleaf reserve trees) clumped through the area indefinitely or until the HMA achieves management intensity level 1. Priorities for selecting trees to be retained as seed sources are:

- 1) Relict trees
- 2) Other potential cavity trees
- 3) Other trees larger than 10 inches DBH that meet requirements as seed producers

Limit regeneration patch size to:

- 25 acres when less than 100 PBG.
- 40 acres when greater than 100 PBG.
- 80 acres if restoring native pine habitat beyond 1 mile from active or recruitment clusters and the conditions given in FW-794 and FW-832 are met.

See Forestwide standards and guidelines for additional direction pertaining to regeneration of longleaf pine within a HMA. (KNF) (GUIDELINE)

Plan, Chapter 2

Add the following new direction:

FW-RP1: When installing artificial cavities within active and recruitment clusters: (RP) (GUIDELINE)

- > Do not provision excessive numbers (i.e., natural + artificial ≤ 6) of artificial cavities within active or recruitment clusters.
- > Maintain at least four suitable cavities in each active cluster. Ensure that there are sufficient cavities for all group members post-breeding season.
- > Use inserts when heartwood is insufficient to house a drilled cavity and cavities are needed as soon as possible. All inserts must use full restrictor plates and be coated with a thick layer of non-toxic sealant.
- > Use drilled starts when heartwood is insufficient to house the cavity and cavities are not needed for a year or more. Provide more than one start for each new cavity.
- > Install inserts as close to existing cavity trees as possible, preferably within 200 feet.
- > If installing inserts, select a tree older than 45 but not a relict, flat-top, or very old pine.
- > Select location of artificial cavities as high as heartwood diameter will allow, within the range of natural cavity heights, and oriented west, if possible.
- > All techniques must protect birds from sap intrusion.

FW-RP2: Recruitment clusters must be located in habitat containing mature and old pines (greater than 60 years in age), with little or no hardwood midstory and a healthy grass and forb groundcover. Provide recruitment clusters at the rate of 10 % of total actives. Do not establish more recruitment clusters than can reasonably be occupied within 1 to 3 years. Place no closer than ¼ mile to actives, and no farther than 2 miles, preferably 1 mile. *Recruitment stands* that meet these criteria may be developed and managed as *recruitment clusters*. (RP/KNF) (GUIDELINE)

FW–RP3: Recruitment clusters should contain 3 cavities and 2 starts or 4 cavities. Habitat should be ready prior to installation of artificial cavities. **(RP) (GUIDELINE)**

FW–RP4: For active and recruitment clusters, assess quality and quantity of foraging habitat at a minimum frequency of once every 10 years. Assess midstory every 5 years. Evaluate foraging habitat for all habitat elements described within the USFWS' recovery standard (Section 8I of Recovery Plan), including ages of pines, pine size class distribution, presence of hardwood midstory, and percent native, site-appropriate, herbaceous groundcover. **(RP) (GUIDELINE)**