

DECISION NOTICE

KISATCHIE NATIONAL FOREST REVISED LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT TO MODIFY AN OBJECTIVE, STANDARD, AND GUIDELINES FOR PRESCRIBED BURNING (AMENDMENT 11)

U.S. FOREST SERVICE

KISATCHIE NATIONAL FOREST

CLAIBORNE, WEBSTER, WINN, GRANT, NATCHITOCHES, RAPIDES,
AND VERNON PARISHES, LOUISIANA

DECISION

Based upon my review of the *Kisatchie Plan Amendment and Caney Ranger District Fuels Program Environmental Assessment* (EA) and associated Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), incorporated by reference, and the *Biological Evaluation for the Kisatchie Plan Amendment and Caney Ranger District Fuels Program* (Biological Evaluation), I have decided to select the Proposed Action from the EA and authorize the following changes to the 1999 Kisatchie National Forest (KNF) Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (the Plan; USDA Forest Service 1999a¹). The specific changes amended into the KNF Revised Land and Resource Management Plan are documented in Appendix A of this Decision Notice. This amendment:

- Updates the number of acres to which prescribed fire could be applied on the KNF to an average of 80,000 to 160,000 acres per year;
- Removes restrictions on the percentage of acreage burned during the dormant versus growing season;
- Modifies the guideline on where growing season burns could be used (i.e., growing season burns could be used in any ecosystem based on management objectives); and
- Updates some procedural forestwide management guidelines for the application of prescribed fire; these procedural changes are denoted with an asterisk (*) below.

¹ USDA Forest Service (United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 1999a. Kisatchie National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. Internet website:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/kisatchie/landmanagement/planning/?cid=STELPRDB5391441>.

DECISION RATIONALE

I have selected the Proposed Action because it best meets the need for the proposal to incorporate new scientific information, removes outdated information, and allows for greater flexibility when applying prescribed fire as a management tool. I believe it is the best way to improve our tools to manage the fire-adapted ecosystems and species on the KNF. The rationale for the specific changes is documented in Appendix A of this Decision Notice. In short, the rationale is as follows:

- Incorporating the best available scientific information into using prescribed burning more will help achieve desired conditions for vegetation communities and should thereby result in improved management.
- Removing restrictions on the amount of acres that can be burned during the growing season, and allowing growing season burns to be used in all fire-adapted ecosystems on the KNF, increases the flexibility to restore native ecosystems more efficiently, rather than relying on limited number of acres that can be prescribed burned during the growing season, more closely mimic historic fire behavior from lightning fires, and lead to more resilient forest ecosystems.
- Updating procedural forestwide management guidelines by incorporating the current Forest Service Manual and Handbook for the application of prescribed fire allows us to best achieve burn objectives, reduce potential for adverse impacts on resources, and incorporate best available science. Burn plans will also consider previously burned areas and rotate burn operations seasonally or annually to create a diverse fire return interval landscape. This will ensure that a mosaic of wildlife habitats in different fire successional phases will persist, and should provide a high-quality habitat that is suitable to a whole suite of wildlife species on the KNF.
- Removing the portion of guideline FW-066 about not scheduling understory burns during the nesting season (to avoid disrupting reproductive activities) allows us to optimize wild turkey nesting cover in uplands, while maintaining open forest understories that provide spring and summer forage for wild turkeys.

I have reviewed the EA and FONSI for the proposed amendment, and the analysis therein is incorporated by reference into this Decision Notice. The EA includes relevant information on a range of resource areas but focuses on those identified internally or by the public as most likely to be affected by the changes to the Forest Plan. The analyses in the EA and accompanying Biological Evaluation were based on the best available scientific information for the area, including experience managing vegetation on the KNF, coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and previous KNF prescribed burning analyses.

The EA focuses on potential effects of the proposed management changes on forest resources. Allowing greater flexibility in the use of prescribed burn for managing the fire-adapted ecosystems and species on the KNF was the primary need for this project, and I have determined that this amendment will provide management direction necessary to achieve that goal. The EA

and Biological Evaluation disclose potential impacts of implementing the Plan amendment. In general, adverse effects would be minimal. Overall, long-term effects would be beneficial to forest resources. The proposed Plan amendment will allow the Forest Service to implement prescribed burns over a larger area and increase the acres available for growing season prescribed burns. The Plan amendment will not have direct effects, because it would not authorize any specific land management activities; however, implementation of the proposed Plan amendment will indirectly reduce fuel accumulations and lower the risk for stand-replacing wildfire from occurring in any given project area, as well as reduce the susceptibility to insects and disease. As a result, the KNF will have a greater likelihood of meeting desired conditions in the Forest Plan over a larger area, including providing a variety of forested conditions and recreational opportunities, commonly using prescribed burns to improve stands, and maintaining biological diversity (USDA Forest Service 1999a², pp. 2-2 and 2-3).

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The project was entered into the Schedule of Proposed Actions on January 4, 2021, and updated periodically during analysis. The Plan amendment process was conducted concurrently with the EA process. A 30-day designated scoping period was initiated via a legal notice in the *Minden-Press Herald* and Alexandria, Louisiana's *The Town Talk* on January 8, 2021. A copy of the legal notices and an electronic copy of the EA and supporting documents were published to the project website, and letters and emails were sent to approximately 500 agencies, organizations, and stakeholders (see project record for mailing lists). One non-specific, non-substantive comment was received during the designated scoping period related to the Forest Plan Amendment was considered during the environmental analysis process.

A 30-day Notice and Comment period for the EA began when a legal notice was posted in *The Town Talk* on April 23, 2021, notifying readers that the EA was available for review. A legal notice was also published in the *Minden Press-Herald* on the same date. Notification of the EA's availability and associated public comment period was also made on the KNF website and on the project website on April 23, 2021 (see project record). Notifications were also mailed or emailed to interested parties (see project record for mailing list). No comments were received during the 30-day comment period.

Following the 30-day comment period, minor clerical edits were made to the EA and Biological Evaluation and the documents were finalized. The EA and BE plan amendment proposed action were updated to replace the phrase "prescribed burn" to "prescribed fire." The EA was edited to add "FW-066" to the second-to-last row, right-hand column of Table 3 on draft EA page 6. This text was inadvertently omitted in the draft EA so was added to the final EA. The Biological Evaluation was edited to delete the "USFWS 2012" citation from the *Consultation History* and *Literature Cited* sections on draft Biological Evaluation pages 3 and 12, respectively. The *Consultation History* section was changed to cite "USDA Forest Service 2012a, 2012b," but not

² USDA Forest Service (United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 1999a. Kisatchie National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. Internet website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/kisatchie/landmanagement/planning/?cid=STELPRDB5391441>.

USFWS 2012. This correction was made to clarify the source of the USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) concurrence letter for a different project.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

U.S. Forest Service regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and forest planning procedures under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) require that decisions include “findings required by other laws and regulations applicable to the decision (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 220.7(c))” and that “plans must comply with all laws and regulations, including the NFMA, Multiple Use and Sustainability Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Wilderness Act, and Endangered Species Act (36 CFR 219.1(f)).” In general, because existing plans already comply with these requirements, decisions for plan amendments must only demonstrate compliance related to the proposed changes to management direction.

U.S. Forest Service planning regulations state that “Plan amendments may be broad or narrow, depending on the need for change, and should be used to keep plans current and help units adapt to new information or changing conditions” (36 CFR 219.13(a)). The proposed amendment was developed to better achieve forest plan goals and objectives by changing management direction to implement prescribed burns over a larger area and increase the acres available for growing season prescribed burns. Therefore, most of the potential effects of this change have previously been disclosed in the Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDA Forest Service 1999b³) or previous Plan amendments. The FONSI briefly describes the relationship between this amendment and potential effects on a range of resources protected by federal law or executive order, concluding that implementing the changes will not result in significant environmental effects beyond those already considered in the Forest Plan. Therefore, this section focuses on the procedural and content requirements of laws and regulations directly relevant to the subjects of this amendment, namely NEPA and the 2012 U.S. Forest Service regulations for implementing the planning requirements of NFMA (i.e., the 2012 planning rule at 36 CFR 219).

National Environmental Policy Act

Project documentation and public involvement complied with requirements in the Council for Environmental Quality’s NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), as well as agency-specific regulations (36 CFR 220). Because the appropriate NEPA documentation for this amendment is an EA, it is not considered a significant change to the Forest Plan for purposes of the NFMA (36 CFR 219.13(b)(3)). Based on the analysis presented in the EA and FONSI, I have determined that this action will not have significant effects on the human environment and, therefore, will not require preparation of an environmental impact statement. Future proposals to implement land management activities (i.e., prescribed burns) related to this Forest Plan amendment will require documentation and public involvement to comply with NEPA regulations and U.S. Forest Service procedures.

³ USDA Forest Service (United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 1999b. Kisatchie National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement. Internet website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/kisatchie/landmanagement/planning/?cid=STELPRDB5391441>.

Endangered Species Act

Implementing the activities described in this Forest Plan amendment will support the KNF's obligations under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to contribute to the conservation of listed species. Consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) satisfies procedural requirements under Endangered Species Act Section 7(a)(1) and 7(a)(2). The USFWS provided a letter of concurrence on June 24, 2021 in response to the USFS submitted Biological Evaluation (BE) for the Kisatchie Plan Amendment and Caney Ranger District Fuels Program. USFWS concurs with the USFS determination that the proposed KNF Plan Amendment may adversely affect the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) however, the currently proposed actions would not result in incidental take beyond the take authorized in the 1999 RLRMP Biological Opinion and is not likely to adversely affect the Louisiana pearlshell mussel (*Margaritifera hembeli*) and the threatened Louisiana pine snake (*Pituophis ruthveni*). The forest plan amendment does not propose any site-specific management activities and implementation of the management strategy would require future project-specific analysis and if necessary further consultation. Some of the project area for the amendment occurs in parts of an LPS estimated occupied habitat area (EOHA), and much of the area contains preferable or suitable soils for LPS. However, not all of the KNF districts occur within an EOHA. For consultations on the site-specific management activities, the Service recommends the attached species protective measures to minimize impacts to the LPS. The forest plan amendment has no effect on the threatened earthfruit (*Geocarpon minimum*) and may affect the threatened northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) but no further consultation is needed at this time. In accordance in accordance with the final 4(d) rule and the programmatic biological opinion dated January 5, 2016, incidental take of NLEB is not prohibited unless it cuts down or destroys known occupied maternity roost trees or any other trees within a 150-foot radius from the known maternity roost tree during the pup season (June 1 to July 31). The USFS will consult with the Service before conducting activities if work needs to be completed within a 150-foot radius of the known maternity roost during the pup season.

National Forest Management Act

This amendment to the KNF Land and Resource Management Plan was prepared under the 2012 planning rule (36 CFR 219). The 2012 planning rule has different provisions than the 1982 Planning Rule procedures that the Forest Service used to develop the existing plan. Although the current Forest Plan was revised under an earlier planning rule, it must comply with the procedural provisions of the 2012 planning rule and meet the directly related substantive requirements in 36 CFR 219.8-219.11.

Compliance with the Planning Rule's Procedural Provisions

As explained below, this amendment complies with the procedural provisions of the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR Part 219.13(b)). Concurrence on the Plan amendment was received pursuant to 36 CFR 219.2(b)(4). The relevant procedural provisions are the following:

Using the Best Available Scientific Information to Inform the Planning Process (36 CFR 219.3)

The 2012 planning rule requires documentation of how the best available scientific information was identified, the basis for that determination, and how it was applied to the issues considered (36 CFR 219.3). For this project, the need for management changes and the proposed Plan amendment were based on new scientific information discovered since the 1999 Plan (USDA Forest Service 1999a⁴), as follows:

- Physiological status of shrubs in southeastern longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris* Mill.) savannas affects how effective prescribed burns are on resprouting shrubs; Drewa et al. (2002)⁵ found that shrubs resprouted more following dormant season fires due to the investment of carbohydrates and nutrients in the leaves leaving less available for resprouting.
- Frequent, lightning season fires (i.e., growing season fires) were recorded at both a mainland and island site in Huffman 2006⁶. She notes that prior to European settlement, only lightning season fires were recorded in dendrochronologically-dated longleaf pine and slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) fire scars.
- A fire scar study in the Kisatchie Hills Wilderness reflects that fires occurred every 2.2 years over 252 years (1650-1902), and fire events were prevalent late in the growing season (Stambaugh et al. 2011⁷); in a fire scar study in Florida, data back to the 1800s for one longleaf pine reflected 60 percent of fires occurred in the early lightning season (May through June) and the remaining during the dormant season (January through February) (Huffman and Jones 2020⁸).
- The relationship between prescribed burning in the longleaf pine ecosystem and its effects on wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) and other nesting birds is not readily established; however, recent studies suggest varying fire return intervals provide for the various needs of broods, but short intervals do not provide needed vegetation for females to roost broods (Wood et al. 2018⁹) and management of stands should focus on maintaining open-canopied forests with sufficient understory vegetation to serve as

⁴ USDA Forest Service (United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 1999a. Kisatchie National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. Internet website:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/kisatchie/landmanagement/planning/?cid=STELPRDB5391441>.

⁵ Drewa, P. B., W. J. Platt, and E. B. Moser. 2002. Fire effects on resprouting of shrubs in headwaters of southeastern longleaf pine savannas. *Ecology* 83(3):755-767.

⁶ Huffman, J. M. 2006. Historical fire regimes in southeastern pine savannas. LSU Doctoral Dissertations. Baton Rouge, Louisiana. 71 pp.

⁷ Stambaugh, M. C., R. P. Guyette, and J. M. Marschall. 2011. Longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris* Mill.) fire scars reveal new details of a frequent fire regime. *Journal of Vegetation Science* 22:1094-1104.

⁸ Huffman, J., and N. Jones. 2020. Secrets of the Stumps: Saving Fire History at Tall Timbers. Tall Timbers eJournal, Spring 2020, pp. 17-21.

⁹ Wood, J. W., B. S. Cohen, T. J. Prebyl, L. M. Conner, B. A. Collier, and M. J. Chamberlain. 2018. Time-since-fire and stand seral stage affect habitat selection of eastern wild turkeys in a managed longleaf pine ecosystem. *Forest Ecology and Management* 411(2018):203-212.

nesting and brooding-rearing cover (Streich et al. 2015¹⁰). Streich et al. (2015)¹¹ also suggested that frequent return intervals are conducive to maintaining wild turkey populations.

- Prescribed burning data do not show any significant negative impacts on nesting turkeys or brood, but do suggest a nesting preference for 1- to 2-year roughs (time since previous burn).¹²

Providing Opportunities for Public Participation (36 CFR 219.4)

This information is provided in the *Public Involvement* section above.

The Applicable Format for Plan Components (36 CFR 219.13 (b)(4) and 219.7(e))

The plan components changed by this amendment are forestwide Objectives, Standards, and Guidelines. The formatting for these changes were not changed to the 2012 plan components because the change is limited to existing plan direction 36 CFR 219.13(b)(4)).

The Plan Amendment Process (36 CFR 219.13), Including Specific Information in a Decision Document (36 CFR 219.14)

As described in the *Public Involvement* section above, the plan amendment process (36 CFR 219.13) was conducted concurrently with the EA process. The specific information required in a decision document (36 CFR 219.14) is included in the various sections of this decision notice.

Project and Activity Consistency with the Plan (36 CFR 219.15(a))

All future projects and activities must be consistent with the amended Forest Plan. The 2012 Planning Rule consistency provisions at 36 CFR 219.15(d) apply only to the Plan components added or modified under the 2012 Planning Rule. With respect to determinations of project consistency with other Plan provisions, the Forest Service's prior interpretation of consistency (that the consistency requirement applies only to Plan standards and guidelines) applies (USDA Forest Service 2015¹³). The implementation of the proposed changes to the Forest Plan forestwide Objectives, Standards, and Guidelines would be carried forward into all planned future projects and activities (including those that are covered by existing NEPA decisions, but not yet implemented on the ground or contracted for implementation) to allow greater flexibility in the use of prescribed burn for managing the fire-adapted ecosystems and species on the KNF. The proposed changes to the forestwide Objectives, Standards, and Guidelines would not apply to any project or activity that has a previous commitment, documented in an agreement or

¹⁰ Streich, M. M., A. R. Little, M. J. Chamberlain, L. M. Conner, and R. J. Warren. 2015. Habitat characteristics of eastern wild turkey nest and ground-roost sites in 2 longleaf pine forests. *Papers in Natural Resources* 729:164-170.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Dr. Michael Chamberlain, University of Georgia, telephone call with Jason Nolde, USDA Forest Service, in March 2019, regarding turkey response to prescribed burning.

¹³ USDA Forest Service (United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 2015. Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12, Land Management Planning Handbook (WO Amendment 1909.12-2015-1; effective January 30, 2015). Chapter 20, Land Management Plan, Section 21.33, Project consistency with Prior Plans amended using the 2012 Planning Rule. Internet website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/planningrule/home/?cid=stelprdr3828310>.

contract, at the time the NEPA process for this amendment is completed and a decision document is signed, unless the agreement or contract is modified through mutual agreement by both parties to fully meet the proposed changes. A supplemental information report may be completed that would conclude whether or not a correction, supplement, or revision is needed, and if not, the reasons why.

Giving Public Notice (36 CFR 219.16)

This information is provided in the *Public Involvement* section above.

Setting the Effective Date for Amendments (36 CFR 219.17(a)(2))

The Plan amendment will be effective the day the decision is signed.

Providing an Objection Opportunity (36 CFR 219.50 through 219.62)

This information is provided in the *Administrative Review Opportunities* section below.

Compliance with the Planning Rule's Applicable Substantive Provisions

The 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219) requires notification on which of the substantive rule requirements at 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11 are likely to be directly related to the Plan direction being changed by the amendment. For this Plan amendment, the planning rule requirements relating to sustainability (36 CFR 219.8), diversity of plant and animal communities (36 CFR 219.9), and multiple use (36 CFR 219.10) are the rule requirements that are likely to be directly related to the Plan direction being changed. The applicable substantive provisions apply only within the scope and scale of the amendment (36 CFR 219.13(b)(5)).

Scope and Scale of the Amendment

The scope and scale of the amendment are defined by the purpose of the amendment. The KNF identified a need to update the Forest Plan forestwide Objectives, Standards, and Guidelines to allow greater flexibility in the use of prescribed burn for managing the fire-adapted ecosystems and species on the KNF. New scientific information collected since the Forest Plan was finalized in 1999 indicated a need for greater flexibility in the use of prescribed burn. So, the scope of the amendment included both procedural and actionable elements specific to amending Plan components regarding the application of prescribed fire. The procedural elements were updated for consistency with current Forest Service Manuals. The actionable elements included updating, adding, and/or deleting forestwide Objectives, Standards, and Guidelines. The scale of the amendment covers the entire KNF.

Rule Provisions Directly Related to the Amendment

The planning rule requirements “directly related” to this amendment are as follows:

36 CFR 219.8(a)(1) – Sustainability, Ecological sustainability, Ecosystem integrity: The proposed Plan amendment provides the ability to burn more acres per year and to use more growing season burns to achieve ecosystem restoration objectives and reduce risk of

catastrophic, stand-replacing wildfire. The previous *Environmental Impacts, Forest Plan Amendment* sections of the EA document how the proposed changes and additions to Plan components address potential effects on ecosystem integrity.

36 CFR 219.8(b) – Sustainability, Social and economic sustainability: The proposed amendment does not change any forest Plan components directly related to social and economic sustainability. The *Environmental Impacts, Forest Plan Amendment, Issue #8 – Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice* section of the EA documents that social and economic sustainability would be improved because lower-intensity prescribed burns would minimize economic losses to timber or other economic sectors from higher-intensity wildfires. Preservation of recreation opportunities would maintain economic contributions to natural resource-related and hospitality sectors of employment locally. Further, the reduced likelihood for larger, higher-intensity wildfires would reduce suppression costs and risks to firefighters.

36 CFR 219.9(a) – Diversity of plant and animal communities, Ecosystem plan components: The proposed Plan amendment identifies the Plan components that would either be changed or added to address the need for this amendment. The previous *Environmental Impacts, Forest Plan Amendment* sections of the EA document how the proposed changes and additions to Plan components address potential impacts on at-risk species. EA Appendix A, Wildlife, and the Biological Evaluation document the summary of “findings” or “determinations” of how the amendment will affect the various at-risk species.

36 CFR 219.10(a) – Multiple use, Integrated resource management for multiple use: The effects of the proposed Plan amendment on the ecosystem, local economy, and species are described above. The previous *Environmental Impacts, Forest Plan Amendment* sections of the EA document how the proposed changes and additions to Plan components address potential effects on air quality, recreation and access, scenery, soil, water quality, and vegetation. Otherwise, the management changes would not affect Forest Plan components directly related to uses such as heritage resources, as discussed in the *Environmental Impacts, Forest Plan Amendment* sections of the EA.

In summary, I have considered the substantive requirements of 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11 of the 2012 planning rule, identified those directly relevant for the proposed Forest Plan amendment, and concluded that the amendment has met or is consistent with those requirements. Furthermore, I have also reviewed the substantive requirements in 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11 that are not directly relevant to the amendment and have concluded that the changes in management direction are not contrary to these requirements.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

Because no substantive comments (36 CFR 219.62) were received on this project during either of the designated comment periods, pursuant to 36 CFR 219.51, this Forest Plan amendment is not subject to objection.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

The amendment will be effective immediately.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact:

Mary Wimberly, KNF, 2500 Shreveport Highway, Pineville, LA 71360, (318) 500-0841.

Based on the information provided in this document, I authorize the proposed changes to the KNF Forest Plan.



Lisa W. Lewis

8/5/2021

Date

Forest Supervisor, Kisatchie National Forest

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APPENDIX A – SPECIFIC AMENDED LANGUAGE AND AMENDED PAGES

U.S. FOREST SERVICE KISATCHIE NATIONAL FOREST REVISED LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT 11

Specific changes to the 1999 Kisatchie National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan are as follows:

Old (Deleted) Text from 1999 Forest Plan	Amended (New) Text in Forest Plan Amendment Proposed Action	Rationale for Change
Fire frequency, season of use, and intensity will be used to shape landscape vegetation composition and patterns on up to 105,000 acres per year. (page 1-10)	Fire frequency, season of use, and intensity will be used to shape landscape vegetation composition and patterns on up to 160,000 acres per year.	Removing restrictions on the amount of acres that can be burned during the growing season, and allowing growing season burns to be used in all fire-adapted ecosystems on the KNF, increases flexibility to restore native ecosystems more efficiently, rather than relying on limited number of acres that can be prescribed burned during the growing season, more closely mimic historic fire behavior from lightning fires, and lead to more resilient forest ecosystems. See also the rationale for change to Objective 6-2, below.
The use of growing season burns will be emphasized in upland longleaf pine [<i>Pinus palustris</i> Mill.] landscapes, and will be allowed on approximately 21,000 acres	The use of growing season burns will be used in fire-adapted ecosystems on the forest.	See the rationale for change to Objective 6-2, below.

Old (Deleted) Text from 1999 Forest Plan	Amended (New) Text in Forest Plan Amendment Proposed Action	Rationale for Change
each year. (page 1-13)	Over the past 5 years, the Forest applied prescribed fire on about 72,119 acres annually. In the revised Forest Plan, prescribed fire will be allowed on approximately 105,000 acres each year. Management-ignited fire will be conducted during dormant and growing seasons. The use of growing season burns will be emphasized in upland longleaf pine landscapes, and will be allowed on approximately 21,000 acres each year. (page 1-13)	Prescribed fire will be allowed on approximately 160,000 acres each year. Management-ignited fire will be conducted during dormant and growing seasons. The use of growing season burns will be used in fire-adapted ecosystems on the forest.
Objective 6-2: Utilize prescribed fire in fire-dependent ecosystems — including the Kisatchie Hills Wilderness, to maintain natural plant communities by varying the timing, frequency, and intensity of fire. Apply prescribed fire on 80,000 to 105,000 acres annually, with 10 to 20 percent of the area burned during the growing season. Focus growing season burning on longleaf pine landscapes. (page 2-6)	Objective 6-2: Utilize prescribed fire in fire-dependent ecosystems, including the Kisatchie Hills Wilderness, to maintain natural plant communities by varying the fire timing, frequency, and intensity. Apply prescribed fire on 80,000 to 160,000 acres annually.	This change increases the number of acres to which prescribed burn could be applied on the KNF. See the rationale for change in the first row of this table, above.
		Changing the acres allowed to burn annually, and removing restrictions on the percentage of acreage burned during the dormant versus growing season, are based on best available science and have been demonstrated to be effective at achieve desired conditions for vegetation communities.
		This newer science that has emerged since the

Old (Deleted) Text from 1999 Forest Plan	Amended (New) Text in Forest Plan Amendment Proposed Action	Rationale for Change
		development of the 1999 Forest Plan provides evidence from fire scars for biannual burning and the prevalence of fires later in the growing season (Stambaugh et al. 2011 ¹⁴ ; Huffman 2006 ¹⁵ ; Huffman and Jones 2020 ¹⁶ ; Drewa et al. 2002 ¹⁷). Such frequent fire creates a mosaic of vegetation communities through the rotation of burns.
		Overall, in the long term, increasing the annual acreage and ability to implement more growing season prescribed burns will increase plant and animal community diversity.
<p>FW-049: Site-specific planning for all prescribed burns is done by trained resource specialists and approved by the appropriate Forest Service line officer prior to project implementation. This planning includes description of treatment area, burn objectives, weather factors and fuel moisture conditions, and</p>	<p>*FW-049: Prescribed fire planning utilizes a systematic interdisciplinary process. This includes use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts, as required by NEPA.</p> <p>A written site-specific burn plan for all prescribed burns is prepared by a qualified burn boss with input from resource</p>	<p>This updates procedural forestwide management guidelines for the application of prescribed fire. This will allow the Forest Service to best achieve burn objectives, reduce potential for adverse impacts on resources, and incorporate best available science. Burn plans will also consider previously burned areas and rotate burn</p>

¹⁴ Stambaugh, M. C., R. P. Guyette, and J. M. Marschall. 2011. Longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris* Mill.) fire scars reveal new details of a frequent fire regime. *Journal of Vegetation Science* 22:1094-1104.

¹⁵ Huffman, J. M. 2006. Historical fire regimes in southeastern pine savannas. LSU Doctoral Dissertations. Baton Rouge, Louisiana. 71 pp.

¹⁶ Huffman, J., and N. Jones. 2020. Secrets of the Stumps: Saving Fire History at Tall Timbers. Tall Timbers eJournal, Spring 2020, pp. 17-21.

¹⁷ Drewa, P. B., W. J. Platt, and E. B. Moser. 2002. Fire effects on resprouting of shrubs in headwaters of southeastern longleaf pine savannas. *Ecology* 83(3):755-767.

Old (Deleted) Text from 1999 Forest Plan	Amended (New) Text in Forest Plan Amendment Proposed Action	Rationale for Change
<p>resource coordination requirements. Coordination requirements include provisions for public and worker safety, burn day notification of appropriate agencies and persons, smoke management to comply with air quality regulations and protect visibility in Class I areas, protection of sensitive features, as well as fireline placement, specific firing patterns, ignition methods, and mop- up and patrol procedures. A post-burn evaluation compares treatment results with plan objectives. (VM-27) (GUIDELINE) (page 2-12)</p>	<p>specialists and approved by the appropriate Forest Service line officer prior to project implementation. This burn plan includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Description of the treatment area, restoration objectives, and site-specific burn objectives needed to achieve the objectives• Weather factors and fuel moisture conditions• Mitigations to protect vulnerable resources and sensitive features identified and agreed upon by resource specialists through the interdisciplinary process• Additional coordination requirements, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Provisions for public safety, burn day notifications of appropriate agencies and persons◦ Smoke management to comply with air quality regulations and protect visibility in smoke-sensitive areas◦ Fireline placement, firing patterns, ignitions methods and timing, and mop-up and patrol procedures◦ Consideration of any established Forest design	<p>operations seasonally or annually to create a diverse fire return interval landscape. This will ensure that a mosaic of wildlife habitats in different fire successional phases will persist, and should provide a high-quality habitat that is suitable to a whole suite of wildlife species on the KNF.</p>

Old (Deleted) Text from 1999 Forest Plan	Amended (New) Text in Forest Plan Amendment Proposed Action	Rationale for Change
	<p>criteria for prescribed burns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post burn monitoring requirements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Following Region 8 prescribed fire monitoring requirements. A post-burn evaluation will be completed, as identified in each burn plan, to compare treatment results with plan objectives. <p>(KNF) (GUIDELINE)</p>	
<p>FW-056: Use only trained and qualified personnel to execute each prescribed fire. Conduct each prescribed fire under the direct supervision of a type 1 or 2 burn boss consistent with the project size, complexity, and risk level. (KNF) (STANDARD) (page 2-12)</p>	<p>*FW-056: Prescribed fires are conducted under the direct supervision of a burn boss qualified at the appropriate complexity level. All personnel must meet the requirements in Forest Service Manual 5140 and Forest Service Handbook 5109.17. (KNF) (STANDARD)</p>	<p>This updates procedural forestwide management guidelines for the application of prescribed fire by incorporating the current Forest Service Manual and Handbook.</p>
<p>FW-057: Critical values of fuel moisture, relative humidity, wind speed, and Keetch-Bryam Drought Code are set for growing season and dormant season burns. Allow burning only on those days when measured values are within the range of prescribed values as set forth in the KNF supplement to Forest Service Manual 5140. (KNF) (GUIDELINE) (page 2-12)</p>	<p>*FW-057: Regional parameters are developed for several prescribed fire indices (e.g., drought index, days since rain, wind speeds, etc.). A burn plan amendment can occur in the form of a variance for particular parameters that exceed regional or forest parameters, per the Region 8 Forest Service Manual 5140. (KNF) (GUIDELINE)</p>	<p>This updates procedural forestwide management guidelines for the application of prescribed fire by incorporating the current Forest Service Manual.</p>
<p>FW-066: In general, do not</p>	<p>FW-066: Burns are planned</p>	<p>This change deletes the clause</p>

Old (Deleted) Text from 1999 Forest Plan	Amended (New) Text in Forest Plan Amendment Proposed Action	Rationale for Change
<p>schedule understory burns during the nesting season, to avoid disrupting reproductive activities. Forest managers may, however, use burns to meet specific objectives — for example, protecting threatened and endangered species such as the red-cockaded woodpecker, reestablishing natural ecosystems, controlling brown-spot disease and promoting longleaf height growth, and site preparation. Plan and execute burns to avoid damage to habitat of any threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species, such as destruction of bald eagle nest trees. (VM-39) (GUIDELINE) (page 2-13)</p>	<p>and executed to achieve species and ecosystem restoration objectives identified in the burn plan, including control of brown-spot disease. Avoid damage to habitat of any threatened, endangered, proposed, or Regional Forester Sensitive Species. (KNF) (GUIDELINE)</p>	<p>about generally not scheduling understory burns during the nesting season, to avoid disrupting reproductive activities. This allows the Forest Service to use a combination of dormant and growing season burns, as well as implement a diversity of fire frequencies, to optimize wild turkey nesting cover in uplands, while maintaining open forest understories that provide spring and summer forage for wild turkeys. This considers current best available science (Kilburg et al. 2014¹⁸; Streich et al. 2015¹⁹; Wood et al. 2019²⁰) that has found that a combination of dormant and growing season burns, as well as implementing a diversity of fire frequencies, will optimize turkey nesting cover in uplands, while maintaining open forest understories that provide spring and summer forage for wild turkeys.</p>

Burn plans will include mitigations to protect vulnerable resources and

¹⁸ Kilburg, E. L., C. E. Moorman, C. S. Deperno, D. Cobb, and C. A. Harper. 2014. Wild turkey nest survival and nest-site selection in the presence of growing-season prescribed fire. *The Journal of Wildlife Management* 78(6):1033-1039.

¹⁹ Streich, M. M., A. R. Little, M. J. Chamberlain, L. M. Conner, and R. J. Warren. 2015. Habitat characteristics of eastern wild turkey nest and ground-roost sites in 2 longleaf pine forests. *Papers in Natural Resources* 729:164-170.

²⁰ Wood, J. D., B. S. Cohen, L. M. Conner, B. A. Collier, and M. J. Chamberlain. 2019. Nest and brood site selection of eastern wild turkeys. *The Journal of Wildlife Management* 83(1):192-204.

Old (Deleted) Text from 1999 Forest Plan	Amended (New) Text in Forest Plan Amendment Proposed Action	Rationale for Change
FW-076: Growing season underburns are not allowed on the same site more than twice in succession without an intervening dormant season burn. (VM-31) (GUIDELINE) (page 2-14)	<i>(Text stricken / deleted)</i>	sensitive features identified and agreed upon by resource specialists through the interdisciplinary process. See also FW-049, above.

* These changes are procedural and would not result in effects.

The following pages from the Kisatchie National Forest 1999 Forest Plan are modified by this amendment.

Replacement on Kisatchie National Forest 1999 Forest Plan page 1-10 – In the first paragraph, replace the second sentence with the following:

Fire frequency, season of use, and intensity will be used to shape landscape vegetation composition and patterns on up to 160,000 acres per year.

Replacement on Kisatchie National Forest 1999 Forest Plan page 1-13 – In the last paragraph of the first column, replace the first four sentences with the following:

Prescribed fire will be allowed on approximately 160,000 acres each year. Management-ignited fire will be conducted during dormant and growing seasons. The use of growing season burns will be used in fire-adapted ecosystems on the forest.

Replacement on Kisatchie National Forest 1999 Forest Plan page 2-6 – In the second column, replace the third paragraph with the following:

Objective 6-2: Utilize prescribed fire in fire-dependent ecosystems, including the Kisatchie Hills Wilderness, to maintain natural plant communities by varying the fire timing, frequency, and intensity. Apply prescribed fire on 80,000 to 160,000 acres annually.

Replacement on Kisatchie National Forest 1999 Forest Plan page 2-12 – In the first column, replace the fourth paragraph with the following:

FW-049: Prescribed fire planning utilizes a systematic interdisciplinary process. This includes use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts, as required by NEPA.

A written site-specific burn plan for all prescribed burns is prepared by a qualified burn boss with input from resource specialists and approved by the appropriate Forest Service line officer prior to project implementation. This burn plan includes:

- Description of the treatment area, restoration objectives, and site-specific burn objectives needed to achieve the objectives
- Weather factors and fuel moisture conditions
- Mitigations to protect vulnerable resources and sensitive features identified and agreed upon by resource specialists through the interdisciplinary process
- Additional coordination requirements, including:
 - Provisions for public safety, burn day notifications of appropriate agencies and persons
 - Smoke management to comply with air quality regulations and protect visibility in smoke-sensitive areas
 - Fireline placement, firing patterns, ignitions methods and timing, and mop-up and patrol procedures
 - Consideration of any established Forest design criteria for prescribed burns
- Post burn monitoring requirements include:
 - Following Region 8 prescribed fire monitoring requirements. A post-burn evaluation will be completed, as identified in each burn plan, to compare treatment results with plan objectives. (KNF) (GUIDELINE)

Replacement on Kisatchie National Forest 1999 Forest Plan page 2-12 – In the second column, replace the fourth paragraph with the following:

FW-056: Prescribed fires are conducted under the direct supervision of a burn boss qualified at the appropriate complexity level. All personnel must meet the requirements in Forest Service Manual 5140 and Forest Service Handbook 5109.17. (KNF) (STANDARD)

Replacement on Kisatchie National Forest 1999 Forest Plan page 2-12 – In the second column, replace the fifth paragraph with the following:

FW-057: Regional parameters are developed for several prescribed fire indices (e.g., drought index, days since rain, wind speeds, etc.). A burn plan amendment can occur in the form of a variance for particular parameters that exceed regional or forest parameters, per the Region 8 Forest Service Manual 5140. (KNF) (GUIDELINE)

Replacement on Kisatchie National Forest 1999 Forest Plan page 2-13 – In the first column, replace the sixth full paragraph with the following:

FW-066: Burns are planned and executed to achieve species and ecosystem restoration objectives identified in the burn plan, including control of brown-spot disease. Avoid damage to habitat of any threatened, endangered, proposed, or Regional Forester Sensitive Species. (KNF) (GUIDELINE)

Deletion on Kisatchie National Forest 1999 Forest Plan page 2-14 – In the first column, delete the third paragraph, FW-076, as follows:

FW-076: ~~Growing season underburns are not allowed on the same site more than twice in succession without an intervening dormant season burn. (VM 31) (GUIDELINE)~~