



Forest Service

Ozark-St. Francis National Forest

605 West Main Street  
Russellville, AR 72801  
479-964-7200  
Fax: 479-964-7255

---

**File Code:** 1950; 1920

**Date:** August 1, 2019

**Subject:** Wildcat Restoration and Vegetation Management Project and Plan Amendment

Dear Reader:

The Ozark-St. Francis National Forests, Boston Mountain Ranger District has prepared an environmental assessment for the Wildcat Restoration and Vegetation Management Project which is proposing timber harvest, silvicultural, and wildlife habitat management treatments on National Forest System (NFS) lands in Washington and Benton Counties, Arkansas. This project is located in multiple sections in Townships 17N 31W and T17N 32W and covers approximately 940 acres of federal property.

This area has suffered for years from multiple stressors. The purpose for this proposal is to implement the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as there is a need to improve timber stand conditions. A plan amendment of our Forest Plan (available at [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fsm8\\_042809.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fsm8_042809.pdf)) is also being considered in proposing this project.

Currently, most of the project area is allocated to either Management Area 2.E. Wedington Unit Urban Recreation Area or 3.J. Pastures or Large Wildlife Openings. The desired future conditions for the Wedington Unit Urban Recreation Area are that the landscape character is a natural appearing landscape emphasizing open forest settings, highlighting large diameter trees, and featuring special attractions like rock outcroppings. Management activities maintain a healthy mid-successional forest of mixed hardwoods and pines managed under an oak or pine - woodland vegetative prescription. The forest is dominated by grass and herbaceous understories with widely spaced large oaks and pines. The open park-like woodlands result in open forest conditions suitable for trail use and wildlife viewing. (p. 2-54, Forest Plan). The desired future condition for Pastures or Large Wildlife Openings is to provide optimal forage and cover for livestock and wildlife species. Pastures should be in a grass/forb condition with little woody encroachment. These lands are classified as unsuitable for timber production. (p. 2-76, Forest Plan).

At the time of the Forest Plan revision in 2005, large sections of the project area were placed in the Pastures or Large Wildlife Openings designation (3.J.) even though they were not actually in a grassland/forb condition as described in the Forest Plan. To correct this error, I anticipate the need for a project-specific Forest Plan amendment in order to place these areas in the management areas they are more suited for (Wedington Unit Recreation Area – 2.E.). Therefore, timber suitability is the substantive requirement of the 2012 planning rule at 36 CFR 219 that we expect to apply to this proposal.



## WHERE TO FIND THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The EA is available on-line at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54302>. The EA and supporting documentation is also available for review at the Boston Mountain Ranger Station. I invite your comments on the proposed action, environmental assessment and plan amendment. The Interdisciplinary Team will use your comments as they identify issues and develop alternatives to the proposal for my consideration. Future environmental documents will be mailed to those who have commented on this proposal and to those who request a copy.

## HOW TO COMMENT

The analysis within the Wildcat Restoration and Vegetation Management EA and the associated programmatic plan amendment will result in two separate decisions, which consequently requires two separate but concurrent public comment periods. The EA is subject to administrative review under the 36 CFR 218 Project-Level Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process, Parts A and C. The proposed Forest Plan Amendment is subject to administrative review under 36 CFR 219, Parts A and B.

The opportunity to comment on this EA and plan amendment ends 30 days following the date of publication of the legal notice in the *Courier* of Russellville, Arkansas. Specific written comments (defined by 36 CFR 218.2 and 36 CFR 219.62) should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider. It is the responsibility of all individuals and organizations to ensure that their comments are received in a timely manner. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, we will not be able to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents. Only those who submit timely and specific written comments during this comment period established by the responsible official are eligible to file an objection (36 CFR 218.24 (b)(6)).

An objection period, if required, will follow the regulations found in 36 CFR 218.7 and 36 CFR 219, Subpart B. Issues to be raised in objections must be based on previously submitted specific written comments regarding the proposed project and attributed to the objector, unless the issue is based on new information that arose after a designated opportunity to comment (36 CFR 218.8(c)). For objection eligibility, each individual or representative from each entity submitting timely and specific written comments regarding the proposed project must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request in accordance with 36 CFR 218.24(b)(8).

Comments on this EA and plan amendment can be submitted in four different ways.

1. Online: The project website contains a link to an electronic comment form to submit comments. Visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54302> and click on the link on the right hand side of the page, "Comment/Object on Project".
2. By Email: Email your comments to: [comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-bostonmtn@usda.gov](mailto:comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-bostonmtn@usda.gov). Please state "Wildcat Restoration and Vegetation Management

Project” in the subject line when providing comments by email. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc, .docx).

3. By Mail: Our mailing address is: U.S. Forest Service, 1803 N 18th Street, Ozark, AR 72949. Please state “Wildcat Restoration and Vegetation Management Project” on the envelope when commenting by mail.
4. Call or In Person: Business hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday (excluding federal holidays). You may also comment in person at the public open house meeting being planned for this project.

A public open house meeting will be held on Friday, August 16, 2019 to provide information about the proposed action, alternatives, and the Draft EA analysis and plan amendment. The open house will be held at the Tontitown City Administration Building and City Hall at 235 E. Henri de Tonti Blvd, Springdale, AR 72762. The open house will start at 3:00pm and end at 6:00pm, and will be an information-sharing format with poster stations and subject matter experts to discuss the project. Please join us to learn more.

If you have questions on this project or the EA analysis, please call Jobi Brown at 479-667-2191, extension 2175 or reach her by email at [jobi.brown@usda.gov](mailto:jobi.brown@usda.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Craig McBroom". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and "B".

CRAIG MCBROOME  
Acting Forest Supervisor