



File Code: 1950
Date: November 5, 2019

Dear Interested Parties:

I am writing to inform you of the release of the Draft Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Houston South Vegetation Management and Restoration Project Environmental Assessment (EA). Based on my review of the EA and the project record, I plan to implement the Proposed Action. The Draft DN/FONSI explains my rationale for reaching this draft decision.

You are receiving this document because you provided comments either during scoping or the EA comment period. The EA, Draft DN/FONSI, and supporting documentation for the Houston South Vegetation Management and Restoration Project are available on-line at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55119>. Printed copies are available upon request at the Hoosier National Forest Supervisor's Office, 811 Constitution Avenue, Bedford, IN 47421. Responses to comments made during the 30-day Notice and Comment period can also be found on the project website.

The Houston South Vegetation Management and Restoration Draft EA was distributed for a 30-day comment period in July 2019. Based on comments we received, additional information was added to the EA:

- A clearer explanation to why the spatial boundary was used to evaluate indirect and cumulative impacts was chosen for Issues 2-4 (page 20)
- Additional information on soils and slopes were added from the project record (pages 21-23)
- Additional information for clarification was added throughout the document.

After the publishing of the draft EA, information became available that compelled the adjustment of burn areas resulting in a small increase (3%) of available prescribed fire acres. The acreage remains below 13,500 as scoped. Changes were made to increase safety and reduce risk by allowing for the placement of potential burn lines in areas of less slope and less problematic fuel types (timber litter vs. slash). Additionally, erosion potential and NNIS potential can be reduced through the use existing barriers (roads, streams, etc.). Overall, fireline length and type does not change due to the additional acres since areas that were once concave to larger burn area are now convex and vice versa.

As noted in the Draft DN/FONSI, page 8, this decision is subject to the objection process, pursuant to 36 CFR part 218, subparts A and B. Objections for this project, including any attachments or supporting documentation, will be accepted for 45 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice in *The Hoosier Times*, Bedford and Bloomington,



Indiana. Additional information about the objection process can be found in the "Administrative Review and Objections Process" section of the Draft DN.

Detailed records of the environmental analysis are available for public review at the Forest Supervisor's office. If you need any additional information, please contact Kevin Amick at 812-275-5987.

Your interest in the Hoosier National Forest is appreciated. Thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Michelle Paduani', with a stylized, flowing script.

MICHELLE PADUANI
District Ranger