Proposal
Historically, gravel pit operations have occurred across the Vernon Unit of the Calcasieu Ranger District; some of these pits date back to the early 1940’s. Unauthorized off-highway vehicles (OHV) have created trails up and down the walls of two pits. These unauthorized trails have resulted in dangerous driving conditions for OHV riders and have resulted in significant erosion. To eliminate this safety hazard and erosion, I plan to reduce the walls of the two pits to a slope ratio of 4:1.

One pit is located in compartment 122 in Township 1 South, Range 7 West, Section 1 and is approximately 8 acres in size. The second pit is located in compartment 125 in T1N, R6W, Section 32 and is approximately 2 acres in size.

Pine trees have become established on and in the pits. These will need to be removed before the high walls can be re-contoured to the 4:1 slope. If possible, the trees will be sold; otherwise they will be cut and left on site. Machinery such as a dozer will be used to reduce the height of the walls. The exposed mineral soil surfaces will be seeded for soil stabilization with grasses and forbes, fertilized, and covered with straw or hay as needed. The following year, containerized longleaf pine seedlings will be planted. These seedlings will be released using hand tools if required.
The proposed actions are in accordance with the Kisatchie National Forest, Revised Land & Resource Management Plan for Management Area 6BL and Forest Wide Standards and Guidelines for Soil and Water Resource protection FW 342, FW-449 to FW-454 (Pages 2-33, 2-40).

**Categorical Exclusion & Extraordinary Circumstances**

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA) as it falls within the category identified by the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 36 CFR 220.6 (e) (20) - *Activities that restore, rehabilitate, or stabilize lands occupied by roads and trails, excluding National Forest System roads and National Forest System trails to a more natural condition that may include removing, replacing, or modifying drainage structures and ditches, reestablishing vegetation, reshaping natural contours and slopes, reestablish drainage-ways, or other activities that would restore site productivity and reduce environmental impacts.*

I have determined that this Project does not involve any extraordinary circumstances (36 CFR § 220.6) which would cause the Project to have significant effects. This determination is based on the following:

1. Past projects, which are similar to the proposed action, have had no significant effects, individually or cumulatively, and no extraordinary circumstances exist in this proposal that might cause the action to have significant effects upon the human environment;

2. This proposal is consistent with and similar to the categories of action which may be excluded from documentation in an EIS or an EA as described in 36 CFR 220.6 (e) (20);

3. There should be no adverse effect to federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat or Forest Service sensitive species from the proposed action based on the District Wildlife Biologists and District Botanist input;

4. There should be no adverse impact on flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds due to the proposed action;

5. There are no congressionally designated areas such as wilderness or wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas;

6. There are no inventoried Roadless areas or potential wilderness areas in the project areas;

7. There are no research natural areas in the project area;

8. In accordance with the Programmatic Agreement among the U.S.D.A Forest Service - Kisatchie National Forest, the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the ACHIP and Federally Recognized Tribes Concerning the Management of Historic Properties on the National Forest Lands in Louisiana, this area has been previously
surveyed with no historic properties recorded. The district archeologist recommended no additional archaeological investigations prior to implementing the project;

9. The effect of this project on climate change has been considered, as well as the effect of climate change on this project. Any resulting greenhouse gas emission would not be measurable on a global scale.

**Decision**
I have decided to reduce the walls of two gravel pits to a 4:1 slope ratio to remove the hazard to unauthorized persons riding UTVs up and down the slopes of the pits and to reduce the resulting erosion. The slopes will be contoured to the surrounding landscape as much as possible. Trees will have to be cut. They will be sold if possible else cut and left in place. The exposed soil will be seeded, fertilized, and planted with containerized longleaf pine seedlings. Once established, hand tool release of the young longleaf pine from competing vegetation will occur where needed. If riders continue to create unauthorized trails on the sites, the landscape will be re-contoured, and the exposed soil re-seeded and re-planted until the forest is re-established.

**Public Involvement**
This project was posted on the Kisatchie National Forest (KNF) website ([http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/kisatchie/landmanagement/projects](http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/kisatchie/landmanagement/projects)) and entered in the Schedule of Proposed Actions. A scoping letter outlining the project was mailed to the current list of potentially interested or affected parties on the Calcasieu Ranger District on April 13, 2015. No responses have been received. The following District Staff were also contacted: Steve Shively (District Wildlife Biologist), Sara Thames (District Botanist), Jonny Fryar (ORA), Kathy Duncan (Silviculturist), John Mayer (Zone Archeologist), Matthew Pardue (District Wildlife Biologist), Russ Marchion (District Fire Manager), and Doug Rhodes (District Deputy District Ranger).

**Findings Required by Other Laws**
In accordance with FSM 2672.41, a biological evaluation was written for this project. The following impacts to species that may be found in the project area or might be potentially affected by the action are summarized here. The proposed action is “not likely to adversely affect” the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. It would have “no effect” on the threatened Louisiana black bear. For sensitive species, the project would have “no effect” on the Louisiana pinesnake. It may “impact individuals but is not likely to cause a trend toward federal listing or loss of viability” for Bachman’s sparrow. It would have “no impact” on Rafinesque’s big-eared bat or on the southeastern myotis. The project would have “no impact” on four threatened plant species; Carolina fluffgrass, giant orchid, giant spiral orchid, and incised groovebur. The project “may impact individuals of these species, but are not likely to cause a trend toward federal listing or a loss of viability” for the scarlet catchfly or the slender gayfeather. Written concurrence was received from the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service on June 30, 2015.

This decision will fully comply with and is consistent with the management direction, including standards and guidelines, in the 1999 Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Kisatchie National Forest in Louisiana as required by the National Forest Management Act. It is consistent with other laws, regulations, and directions as documented.
in the project record. Specifically this project addresses Forestwide Standards and Guidelines FW-149, FW-327, FW-339, FW-345, FW-360 (Forest Plan pgs. 2-18, 2-32 thru 2-34).

This decision is based on a review of the record that shows a thorough analysis of relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgment of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk.

The following maps in Figures 3, 4 and 5 depict the location of the two gravel pits.

Figure 3. Vicinity Map of Quarry Pit Trail Rehabilitation.
Figure 4. Gravel Pit in Compartment 122.

Figure 5. Gravel Pit in Compartment 125.
Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities
This decision is not subject to administrative appeal.

Implementation
Implementation of this decision may begin on or after the date of the signature of the
Deciding Official below.

Contact Person
For further information concerning this decision, contact Deputy District Ranger Doug
Rhodes at the Calcasieu Ranger District, 9912 Hwy 28 West, Boyce, LA 71409 or phone
(318)793-9427.

Signature and Date


/JULY 2, 2015/
LISA W. LEWIS
District Ranger
Calcasieu Ranger District
Kisatchie National Forest

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