<p>Thank you for your interest in the Forest Service planning processes. Please PRINT your name, address, telephone number, and email address clearly, and write any comments specific to the enclosed proposal in the spaces provided below. Attach additional comments to this form, if needed. Please indicate if you would like to remain on the mailing list for this project.</p>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I wish to remain on the mailing list for this project.</th>
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</table>

Name and Address:  
Affiliation:  
Telephone Number:  
Email address:  
COMMENTS:  

YOUR NAME WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE MAILING LIST FOR THIS PROJECT IF WE DO NOT RECEIVE A REPLY. PLEASE MAIL YOUR COMMENTS TO:  
Coconino National Forest  
Mogollon Rim Ranger District  
8738 Ranger Road  
Happy Jack, AZ  86024  
Attn: Polly Haessig, Project Leader, Long Valley Experimental Forest Restoration Project  

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Dear Friend of the Coconino National Forest:  

This letter initiates public scoping of the environmental analysis for the Long Valley Experimental Forest Restoration Project. The purpose of the Long Valley Experimental Forest Restoration Project is to: 1) Conduct an experimental study that will further the knowledge and practice of ecological restoration treatments in southwestern ponderosa pine ecosystems; 2) Reduce hazardous fuels through forest restoration, thereby providing fire protection to private lands within and adjacent to the experimental forest; and 3) Create a demonstration area that showcases desired conditions for ponderosa pine in the southwest through cooperation with the Rocky Mountain Research Station and the Southwestern Region.  

We are informing you about this action, because of your past interest in forest management on the Coconino National Forest, or because you are a neighbor or user of the Long Valley Experimental Forest.  

At this time, our desire is to receive comments on the merits of the Proposed Action. Your comments should be within the scope of the proposal that have a direct relationship to the proposal, and that include supporting reasons for the deciding official's consideration. Accompanying this letter is a brief description of the Proposed Action, project maps, and a Public Comment Form. Information about the project can be found on the Coconino Forest internet site at: http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino/nepa/index.shtml. Search the index for “Long Valley Experimental Forest Restoration Project”. Paper copies are available on request.  

Written or oral comments may be submitted via mail, fax, telephone, or in person (Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., excluding holidays) to: Polly Haessig, Project Leader, Mogollon Rim Ranger District, 8738 Ranger Road, Happy Jack, AZ 86024; TEL: 928-477-2255; FAX 928-527-8282. Comments may also be sent by e-mail to: comments-southwestern-coconino@mogollonfs.fed.us. The name and address of the person submitting electronic comments must be included. Only those persons who submit comments during this public scoping period will remain on the mailing list for future information regarding the project. Individuals who do not have comments to submit but who wish to remain on this mailing list should check that box on the comment form attached. Please submit your comments by 30 days from the date of this letter.  

If you provide comments to this Proposed Action, you will receive a copy of the Environmental Assessment (EA) and Decision Notice which is anticipated to be completed in the winter of 2011. Public comments are encouraged at any time during the planning process. As Experimental Forests do not implement forest plans, they are not subject to appeal regulations for the Forest Service under 36 CFR 215 (see sections 215.1 and 215.3).  

Comments received in response to this scoping notice, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this project and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality.  

We appreciate your interest and continuing cooperation with our forest management programs. Should you have any questions, or need additional information about this project, please contact Polly Haessig, Mogollon Rim Ranger District at (928) 477-2255 or by e-mail at phaessig@fs.fed.us  

/s/ Alison Hill (for)  
G. SAM FOSTER  
Station Director  
Rocky Mountain Research Station  
970-498-1354  

/s/ M. Earl Stewart  
M. EARL STEWART  
Forest Supervisor  
Coconino National Forest  
928-527-3600
**PROPOSED ACTION FOR THE LONG VALLEY EXPERIMENTAL FOREST RESTORATION PROJECT**  
*July 16, 2010*

**Description and Location**  
The Forest Service is proposing to analyze the effects of implementing a functional forest restoration project referred to as the Long Valley Experimental Forest Restoration Project.

The Long Valley Experimental Forest Restoration Project (LVEFRP) is located on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District, but is administered by Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS). The project is near the junction of State Hwy 87 and Forest Highway 3, about 50 miles southeast of Flagstaff. The project area encompasses about 1,280 acres on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District (Figures 1 & 2).

**FIGURE 1**

**Why Here, Why Now**  
The Rocky Mountain Research Station has multiple research objectives to evaluate the benefits and consequences of treatments aimed at restoring desired forest conditions. The Southwestern Region of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service has an objective to create a demonstration area that will illustrate desired conditions for restored ponderosa pine habitat.

The Forest Service is currently in the process of analyzing the Clints Well Forest Restoration Project, which consists of 16,800 acres surrounding LVEFRP. The Experimental Forest was originally included under the Clints Well analysis, but administrative issues and differing management direction required that they be analyzed separately.

**Purpose and Need for Action**  
**Purpose**  
The purpose of the Long Valley Experimental Forest Restoration Project is to:

- Conduct an experimental study that will further the knowledge and practice of ecological restoration treatments in southwestern ponderosa pine ecosystems.
- Reduce hazardous fuels through forest restoration, thereby reducing the threat of high intensity fire reaching private lands within and adjacent to the experimental forest.
- Create a demonstration area that showcases desired conditions for ponderosa pine in the southwest through cooperation with the Rocky Mountain Research Station and the Southwestern Region.

**Need for Action**  
Research is needed to validate and refine the effects of ecological restoration treatments. The Long Valley Experimental Forest is overstocked in younger age classes of trees, yet is mostly intact with mature trees. These conditions provide a unique opportunity to further our knowledge of the effects of restoring ecosystems to desired conditions, in this case within the historical range of variability.

The Secretary of Agriculture has directed the Forest Service to focus on landscape-scale restoration projects that promote total ecosystem health and resilience. He specifically directed National Forest System units to work with Forest Service Research Stations in addressing landscape restoration issues. The Southwest Region has developed desired conditions to use as a target for achieving these restoration goals. There is a need to understand whether or not treatments that result in these desired conditions restore the structure and function of southwestern ponderosa pine ecosystems. Monitoring of treatments is needed to evaluate their effectiveness over time.

**Potential Outcomes**  
The composition and structure of current forest conditions on the Long Valley Experimental Forest are greatly departed from historical fire regime conditions. The current conditions result in increased fire risk (uncharacteristic severity and extent), insect outbreaks, disease, and loss of structural and plant and animal diversity in the forest over story and understory. Because of the current conditions, there is a greater risk for crown fire events which could threaten people and private lands both within and adjacent to the LVEF.

There is also a need to create an area that land managers across the region and interested publics can visit that demonstrates desired conditions. The experimental forest represents one of the last remaining tracts of timber that has been little affected by past management. Due to the lack of tree harvests and the presence of the full range of tree age classes, a showcase of the desired conditions in ponderosa pine can be emulated with one mechanical treatment that will remove the majority of the younger trees established since the last large scale fire (1898).

**Proposed Action**  

**Vegetation Treatments and Burning**  

**Experimental Blocks**  
Restoring the natural fire regime and forest structure in the LVEF will require selective cutting and burning treatments. Therefore, thinning and burning will be the focus of a quasi-experimental design in the form of a before-after-control-impact (BACI) study. Controls or no-treatment areas are imperative because forest processes such as tree mortality and invasion of exotics can be caused by a number of natural factors such as drought, insects, or wind. Thus including controls will allow us to compare non-treated and treated areas to be able to clearly distinguish treatment impact from environmental variation. Moreover, to properly estimate variance, each treatment will have to be replicated four times.

Refer to the attached map (Figure 2) of LVEFRP for the location of experimental treatment, control plots and non-experimental treatments.

We will use experimental BACI design consisting of two treatments and a control, each replicated four times. The treatments will include:

1. **THIN and BURN:** Selective cutting and broadcast burning on about 271 acres
2. **THIN ONLY:** Selective cutting only (with a possibility of future broadcast burning) on about 247 acres
3. **CONTROL:** (untreated with the possibility of future restoration treatments) about 212 acres

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1 Quasi-experimental design involves selecting groups, upon which a variable is tested, without any random pre-selection processes.
**Non-Experimental Restoration**

To respond to the need for action to reduce crown fire potential and to protect private lands, vegetation treatments are proposed in the remainder of the LVEF (outside of the experiment blocks, control blocks and no action areas).

(5) **NON-EXPERIMENTAL RESTORATION TREATMENT:** Selective cutting and broadcast burning on about 436 acres.

Restoration Treatment areas will be selectively cut to restore tree groups and establish an uneven-aged trajectory. Activity slash will be treated by the methods outlined below. These areas have been previously logged in the 1960s or are in the basaltic soil type that is not desired for the experimental study.

**Treatment Units and Acres Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Unit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thin and Burn</td>
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<td>69</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12*</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private</td>
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<td>1262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fire Interval Study

About 953 acres are proposed for treatment. Total acres are approximate GIS acres and may not add up to 1260 acres due to rounding.

**Slash Treatment**

Treatment of activity slash (limbs, tops, non-commercial parts of trees etc.) may consist of: lopping and scattering slash; piling and burning in units; and piling and burning along roads and on landings. Activity slash may also be removed from the project area. Trees may be whole tree yarded out to landings. Activity slash will also be treated in the “thin only” treatments. The main difference between these treatments is that the “thin and burn” areas would be broadcast burned following the pile-burning. The same methods to harvest trees and treat slash will be done on all experimental treatment units in order to maintain the integrity of the experiment.

These proposed actions in the LVEF are meant to be implemented within an adaptive management framework so that over the long term more than 900 acres may be restored. That is, in the future “thin only” areas could also be broadcast burned based on a positive response by the larger trees and native understory to the “thin and burn” treatments. Similarly, if larger trees and native understory respond well to thinning treatments, then the control areas could be restored in the future using a combination of thinning and burning. In this adaptive management framework, future management actions are based on the response of the ecosystem to each of the treatments. Therefore, monitoring is a critical component which will provide important feedback information that dictates future management.

**Road Use and Maintenance**

Roads used for project implementation would receive routine minor reconstruction or maintenance including grading, out sloping and drainage improvements (Main Roads, Figure 2). RMRS and the Core IDT will evaluate the present road system in the project area to determine roads needed to implement the project. If new temporary roads are needed, they will be analyzed in the Environmental Assessment. Closed roads that are only needed for project implementation would be reopened as temporary roads and then decommissioned after use. Existing roads that are not needed for project implementation or future use will be proposed for decommissioning and analyzed in the Environmental Assessment. Existing rock pits located on the Coconino National Forest will be specified for use for pit run or crushed aggregate material for spot rocking and other road maintenance needs during project implementation. A Travel Analysis Plan will be completed as part of the project Environmental Assessment.

**Resource Protection Measures**

Design features would be incorporated into the project to protect forest resources of soil, water, wildlife and aquatic habitat, rare plants and scenery. Mitigation measures and best management practices would be implemented during the project to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive plants, to reduce impacts to wildlife, to protect heritage resources, and to protect public health and safety.

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**Management Direction**

Management direction for activities within experimental forests is found in FSM 4000, Chapter 4060 – Research Facilities and Areas. Timber Sales on Experimental Areas on National Forest System Lands is covered under FSM 2403 and FSM 2463.

Management decisions for the experimental forests are not made under the authority of the Coconino National Forest Plan (Errata #1 – 1/2008, Replacement Page 1935). Experimental Forests are not delineated as management areas (Coconino Forest Plan, Errata #1 – 1/2008, Replacement Page 234).

The original Establishment Report (1935) describes administration of the Long Valley Experimental Forest as follows, “The experimental forest will in all matters affecting research be under the immediate jurisdiction of the Southwestern Forest and Range Experiment Station (currently the Rocky Mountain Research Station). It will, however, continue to be recognized as part of the Coconino National Forest. Administratively matters, as far as they may affect the Coconino shall be handled in cooperation with the (Forest) Supervisor.

**Decision to be Made**

The Rocky Mountain Research Station Director and the Coconino Forest Supervisor are the Responsible Officials for this project. The decision to be made is whether or not to approve the Proposed Action, another alternative, or develop an alternative design that meets the purpose and need and moves the area towards the desired condition, or to not implement a project at this time.

As Experimental Forests do not implement forest plans, they are not subject to appeal regulations for the Forest Service under 36 CFR 215 (see sections 215.1 and 215.3).

**Contact Person**

Project Leader: Polly Haessig, Mogollon Rim Ranger District (928-477-2255) or email: phaessig@fs.fed.us

**For More Information**

Information about the project can be found at the Coconino National Forest web site:


Search the index for “Long Valley Experimental Forest Restoration Project”.

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