



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Apalachicola Ranger District  
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Bristol, FL 32321  
850/643-2282

Wakulla Ranger District  
57 Taff Drive  
Crawfordville, FL 32327  
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File Code: 1950

Date: March 03, 2014

Dear Concerned Citizen:

The Apalachicola National Forest, Apalachicola Ranger District, is announcing the availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Beasley Pond Analysis Area. The project area is located in compartments 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29 of the forest, Township 3 South Range 8 West and Township 4 South and Range 8 West in Liberty County, Florida. Proposed activities in Beasley Pond include savannah restoration, first and intermediate thinning of slash pine plantations and mature stands, uneven-aged management cuts, borrow pit excavation, and removal of cattle guards, fences, and stays associated with a closed cattle allotment. The primary purpose of this project is to maintain, improve, and restore a healthy forest ecosystem. Secondary benefits include maintaining a stable red-cockaded woodpecker habitat and improving the current transportation system. The proposed project is not a Healthy Forest Restoration Act activity and is subject to the pre-decisional objection process at 36 CFR 218 subparts A and B.

For more detailed location information about this project please visit the project website at:  
<http://goo.gl/GZ3NXm>

### Proposed Action

- First or intermediate thinning of approximately 2086 acres of slash and longleaf pine stands. Stands range in age from 25 to 141 years old. Younger slash and longleaf pine plantations have a basal area (BA) ranging from 70 to 173 square-feet per acre. Thinning these stands would reduce the BA to an average of 50 square feet per acre thus opening the stands for sunlight penetration needed for continued growth and groundcover establishment.
- Conduct uneven-aged management cuts on 833 acres of mature longleaf pine. Openings ranging from ¼ -2 acres (average size of ½ acre) in size will be created around existing longleaf seedlings or in areas of the stand that would be suitable for longleaf natural regeneration. The number of openings would be limited to 10% of the stand size.
- Wet savanna restoration treatments on approximately 811 acres of savanna sites. Girdling will be used in stands that cannot be accessed for traditional logging operations (stands 19 and 41 in compartment 26 and stand 37 in compartment 27). All of these sites have either been planted over with slash pine or have been encroached upon by woody brush species and hardwood tree species. To restore these wet savanna sites a variable residual BA strategy will be implemented with groundcover condition serving as the trigger point for thinning intensity. In portions of the stand where herbaceous groundcover is deemed sufficient the Forest Service proposes to thin to a residual BA of 10-30 square feet per acre of standing live timber. Sufficient groundcover is needed when thinning to a lower BA in order to continue the use of prescribed fire as a means of maintaining the open park-like structure associated



with wet savannas. When groundcover conditions are deemed less than adequate to carry fire the Forest Service proposes to leave a residual BA of 40 in order to allow needle cast to serve as primary carrier of fire across the stand.

- Spot foliar application of the herbicide triclopyr (if needed) on 811 acres of savannah restoration sites for site hardwood control. This is not a broadcast application of herbicide. Treatment would occur only where there is a presence of woody vegetation that threatens the re-establishment of savannah plant species. If the savannah restoration areas do not show evidence of woody encroachment after harvest it will not receive herbicide treatment.
- Clearcut 16 acres of slash pine plantation for borrow pit excavation to provide surface material for future road work.
- Remove six cattle guards from a closed range allotment (two on highway 379, two on FSR 113, and one on FSRs 174 and 109).

Connected actions necessary to facilitate the proposed action include maintenance of 7.5 miles of landlines, reconstruction of approximately 12.83 miles of system roads, temporary improvement and use of approximately 4 miles of non-system which provide access to pine plantations, and the maintenance of approximately 14.73 miles of system roads used to haul timber products from the analysis area.

In addition to the Proposed Action, the Forest Service also evaluated the following alternatives:

- Alternative A – No Action
- Alternative C – Reduced direct impacts on threatened and endangered species
- Alternative D – No Herbicide

Pursuant to 36 CFR 218 subparts A and B, the District Ranger, Marcus Beard, is seeking comments on this EIS. Comments must be postmarked or received within 45 days beginning the day following publication of the **Notice of Availability (NOA)** in the **Federal Register** <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/>. Publication of the NOA will occur on **March 6, 2015**. Your comments need to be as specific as possible and contain the following:

- (1) Name, address, and (if possible) telephone number;
- (2) Title of the proposal on which comment is being submitted; and
- (3) Specific facts or comments along with supporting reasons that you believe the Responsible Official should consider in reaching the decision.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Only those who submit timely and specific written comments §218.2 regarding the proposed project are eligible to file an objection §218.24(b)(6). 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. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect

trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within (10) days.

Written comments on this proposal should be sent to: District Ranger, 57 Taff Drive, Crawfordville, Florida 32327; telephone (850) 926-3561; fax (850) 926-1904. Oral or hand-delivered comments must be received within our normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Thursday and 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Friday, closed on federal holidays.

Comments may also be mailed electronically in a common digital format to our office at [comments-southern-florida-apalachicola@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-southern-florida-apalachicola@fs.fed.us)

Sincerely,



MARCUS A. BEARD  
District Ranger

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