



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Mark Twain National Forest
Ava/Cassville/Willow Springs
Ranger District

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File Code: 1950

Date: November 18, 2014

Dear Neighbors and Interested Parties:

The Ava/Cassville/Willow Springs Ranger District is seeking your comments on proposed actions for the Butler Hollow Project. The purpose of this letter is to inform interested and affected parties of our proposed management activities and to solicit public comments on the proposal. The information package titled *Public Comment Package – Butler Hollow Project* is now available for review. The documents and associated maps also are available at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mtnf/projects>. The document describes potential alternatives identified by the project interdisciplinary team. If you would like to request a hard copy of the comment package, have questions about the proposal, or need additional information please come by the District office or contact Allen Weathersbee by telephone at (417) 683-4428 ext. 131 or email at aaweathersbee@fs.fed.us.

The Butler Hollow Project is located on approximately 18,181 acres of National Forest System lands on the Cassville Unit of the Mark Twain National Forest (MTNF). The legal description for the area is T21N, R26W, Sections 17-20, 29-30; T21N, R27W, Sections 1-5, 6-30; and T22N, R26W, Sections 18-20, 29-33 in Barry County, Missouri. It is located about six miles south of Cassville, Missouri. The project area is bounded on the northern edge by Roaring River State Park and State Highway 86. Highway 86 also forms the eastern project boundary until it intersects with the Sugar Camp National Scenic Byway near Eagle Rock, Missouri. The project boundary then extends south, following the White River upstream to the Missouri-Arkansas state line. The southern project boundary is the southern edge of the Cassville Unit along the Missouri-Arkansas state line. The western project boundary is the western edge of the Cassville Unit.

As District Ranger, I am proposing this action for the purposes of improving forest health conditions and enhancing native plant communities, while providing a variety of dispersed recreational uses and timber products. This project is needed to address declines in forest health and native plant communities, and deteriorating road conditions. The primary objective of the Butler Hollow Project is to improve forest health by removing dead and dying black, red, and scarlet oaks (red oak group) and managing vegetation to achieve the desired condition throughout the project area. Additional treatments to achieve desired conditions for this project area include restoration thinning, pre-commercial thinning, cut and leave, cedar removal, riparian plantings, and prescribed burning.

As the District Ranger for Ava/Cassville/Willow Springs District and the Responsible Official for this project, I am using the discretion given me by 36 CFR 218.24(a)(2) in determining that this is the most effective time to provide notice of the opportunity to comment under 36 CFR 218.22. I want your comments to be considered before an Environmental Assessment is completed and I make a final decision on the project alternatives. Because the nature of this project is low in complexity, is conducted routinely, and the environmental effects are highly predictable, the scoping and 30-day comment periods will run concurrently.



The Forest Service has revised regulations at 36 CFR 218 related to administrative reviews of projects documented in a Decision Notice or Record of Decision. This change updates how the agency addresses concerns of the public that remain unresolved after the analysis is completed. The new rule replaces the post-decisional appeal process with a pre-decisional objection process, which already exists for projects planned under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA). The final rule expands the agency's authority to use a pre-decisional objection process for non-HFRA projects, while continuing to be consistent with the notice and comment provisions of the Appeal Reform Act (Public Law 102-381). This project is a project or activity implementing a land management plan, and is not authorized under the HFRA; therefore, it is subject to subparts A and B of 36 CFR 218.

Comments on this proposal will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the Springfield News-Leader. If the 30th day falls on a weekend or federal holiday, the comment period ends the next business day. The publication date in this newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this analysis. Comments become part of the public record. Submit written comments to District Ranger, Ava/Cassville/Willow Springs Ranger District, Rt. 6, Box 614110, Ava, Missouri 65608. Fax comments to (417) 683-5722 or email to comments-eastern-mark-twain-ava@fs.fed.us (subject line: Butler Hollow Project Comments). Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Adobe (.pdf) or Word (.doc).

Only those who submit timely "specific written comments" during any designated opportunity for public participation, specifically this combined scoping period and 30-day comment period, will be eligible to file an objection based on the final analysis and a draft decision document. For the purposes of this rule, "specific written comments" 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 (36 CFR 218.2).

Other eligibility requirements are identified at 36 CFR 218.25(a)(3) and include name, postal address, title of the project, identity of the individual or entity who authored the comments, and signature or other verification of identity upon request. If you do not wish to provide comments at this time, but wish to receive notification when the draft Decision Notice is available, please let us know.

We appreciate your interest in the management of the Mark Twain National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Joseph Koloski
JOSEPH KOLOSKI
District Ranger

cc:

Laura Watts
Allen Weathersbee