



File Code: 1950-1

Date: May 15, 2007

Dear Interested Members of the Public:

The Grandfather Ranger District is proposing to harvest and regenerate trees in an area of the Pisgah National Forest in Caldwell County known as the Mulberry Project (see Figure 1, Vicinity Map). Approximately 12 harvest areas from six to 40 acres in size would be harvested using the two-age system, which leaves a portion of the overstory trees on the site and allows regrowth of the forest from naturally occurring new seedlings and any already present seedlings, saplings, and sprouts. Many of the trees to be harvested are white pine. Removing white pine would allow for more oaks and other hardwoods to develop. Animal den trees and mast producing hardwoods are selected as trees to leave if they are available. The Mulberry Project is located about 31 miles northeast of Marion, North Carolina; about seven miles northwest of Lenoir, North Carolina; and about nine miles southeast of Blowing Rock, North Carolina; it is also within the 8,625 acre Lower Mulberry Forest Plan Analysis Area and compartments 2-5, 7, 16-21, and 23 (project area).

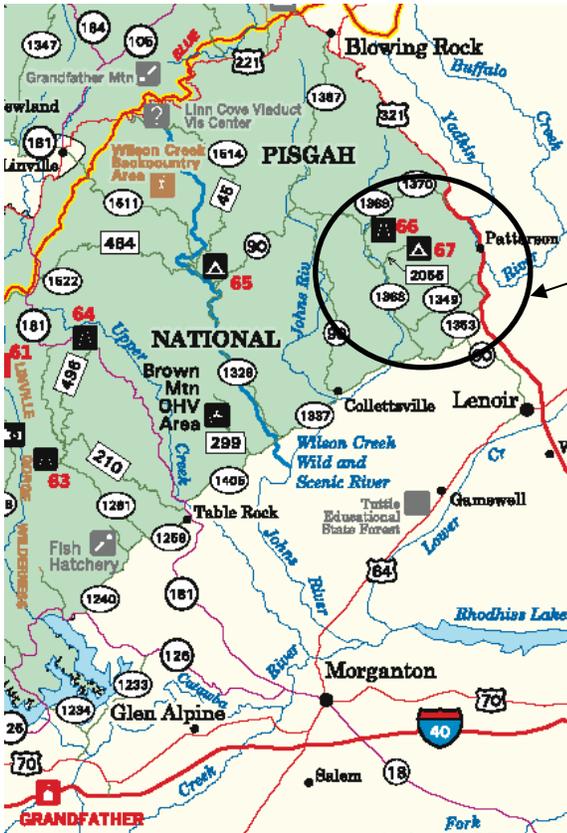


Figure 1: Vicinity Area of
Mulberry Project



Proposal

The Grandfather Ranger District, Pisgah National Forest proposes the following actions in Management Areas 2A and 3B, and Compartments 3, 18, 20, and 21 in the Mulberry Project Area (see also Figure 2):

Table 1: Mulberry Project Timber Harvest Proposal

Unit	Comp.-Stand #	Mgt. Area	Acres	Current Forest Type	CISC Age	Cutting Method	Residual BA ft ²	Yarding Method
1	03-47	3B	29	White Pine (WP) – Upland Hardwood (Up.Hwd)	80	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
2	03-01	3B	8	WP – Up.Hwd	80	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
3	03-01	3B	21	WP – Up.Hwd	80	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
	03-02	3B	19	WP – Up.Hwd	90	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
4	03-02	3B	27	WP – Up.Hwd	90	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
5	03-03	3B	19	WP	78	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
6	03-37	2A	6	WP – Up.Hwd	80	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
7	03-22	3B	28	WP	84	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
8	03-24	3B	14	Up.Hwd - WP	88	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
	18-12	3B	16	WP	98	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
9	20-06	3B	40	WP	105	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
10	21-11	3B	12	Up. Hwd – WP	76	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
	21-12	3B	12	Up. Hwd – WP	76	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
	21-13	3B	16	Up. Hwd – WP	76	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
11	21-06	3B	40	White Oak-Northern Red Oak-Hickory	78	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
12	18-09	3B	26	WP	92	Two-Age	15-20	Skidder
Total			333					

In addition, the Proposal would:

- Perform road maintenance on the existing roads that access the area.
- Utilize and reconstruct about 2.1 miles of existing unauthorized roads (old “woods” roads) and develop about 2.3 miles of new temporary roads to access harvest stands. Following harvest activities, the 2.1 miles of unauthorized roads would be placed on the Forest’s transportation system as authorized roads, stabilized (i.e., shaped, waterbarred, and seeded) and accessed for motorized administrative use only—they would be available for future access needs. The new temporary roads would be disked, seeded, and permanently closed for all access.
- Selectively apply herbicides to control/manage non-native invasive plant species along roads.
- Selectively apply herbicides and use hand tools to ensure successful regeneration of a variety of native tree species in harvested areas, especially oaks, by controlling competing vegetation.
- Designate at least 50 acres of small patch old growth communities within Compartments 3, 18, 20, and 21 (at least 200 acres total).
- Apply erosion control measures to protect water quality. These measures would be for all activities including roads and log landings.
- Perform stream rehabilitation on ½ mile of Boone Fork; along the drainage above and below the Boone Fork Reservoir; and at the crossing on Deep Cove and Forest Service Road 2055. Rehabilitation on Boone Fork would include placing about 16 rock and log vanes. Rehabilitation above and below the reservoir includes sloping back stream banks, planting trees/shrubs along stream banks, and placing rock below the culvert below the reservoir.

Rehabilitation at the crossing on Deep Cove includes modifying the crossing to allow fish passage.

- “Daylight” along either side of a portion of Forest Service Road 189 (Spencer Branch Road), to allow more sunlight to reach the roadbed by harvesting trees within fifteen feet either side of the road (so the road would dry out more quickly, thus reducing rutting). The entire six mile length of the road would not be daylighted – only those portions where sunlight does not adequately reach the roadbed.
- Develop about a one acre wildlife field from a log landing in Unit 9 to native grasses and forbs to enhance wildlife food sources. Plant an old variety apple trees in log landings after harvest is completed to enhance wildlife food sources in the area. There may be opportunities to plant advanced oak seedlings in Units 5, 7, 8, 9, and 12.
- Prescribe burn up to about 250-500 acres in Compartments 20 and 21 for fuel reduction.

Purpose and Need for the Proposal

There is a need to develop between 4%-14% early-successional (0-10 year age class) wildlife habitat in the project area because there is currently one percent 0-10 year wildlife habitat. The purpose of the approximately 333 acres of harvesting is to develop additional early-successional wildlife habitat in the project area and increase the amount of hard mast producing tree species (oaks and hickories). The Mulberry area is the next area the Grandfather Ranger District has identified to ensure each compartment is scheduled for management analysis at a 10-year interval.

There is a need to control/manage populations of invasive-exotic plants such as princess tree, tree-of-heaven, Japanese plume grass, and others because they have been found in the project area. The purpose of the herbicide treatment of invasive/exotic plants is to reduce potential for spread of them in the project area.

There is a need to improve water quality and fish habitat along and within stream reaches because sedimentation and erosion have been found in the project area and a culvert restricts fish passage. The purpose of rehabilitating stream channels and providing fish passage is to improve water quality, stream bank stability, and fish habitat.

There is a need to designate small patch old growth communities in Compartments 3, 18, 20, and 21 because no small patch old growth communities are currently designated in them. The purpose of designating small patch communities in Compartments 3, 18, 20, and 21 prior to harvesting is to ensure there is a network of old growth communities across the Forest.

There is a need to develop an additional one acre of grass/forb wildlife habitat in the project area because there is currently 23 acres of grass/forb wildlife habitat. The purpose of the additional acre of wildlife field is to develop about 24 acres of grass/forb wildlife habitat in the project area, further moving the project area towards the desired condition of 43 acres.

There is a need to reduce fuels because excess fuel loads pose a threat to resources in the project area. The purpose of prescribe burning up to about 250-500 acres in Compartments 20 and 21 is to reduce fuel loads and reduce potential for future wildfires to burn with adverse impacts.

Forest Plan Direction

This proposal was developed to address management opportunities identified for timber, wildlife, and other forest resources within the project area. Management opportunities were identified through a comparison of existing conditions with desired current and future conditions defined by the General Direction and Standards for Management Areas (MA) 2A, 3B, and 18 in the Land and Resource Management Plan, Amendment 5, for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests (Forest

Plan, USDA March 1994). The general direction and goals for **MA 2A** is to provide **visually pleasing scenery for forest visitors. Roads are generally open with the adjacent forest land managed to provide that pleasing visual experience. Timber production is permitted, but modified to meet visual quality objectives;** and **MA 3B** is to **emphasize a sustainable supply of timber with few open roads** while **permitting** road construction for resource management and to **manage habitat of mixed ages of forests** primarily for wildlife species such as wild turkey, deer and other animals requiring similar environments (Forest Plan, pages III-63 and III-71). Embedded within MAs 2B and 3B is MA 18; which **consists of the aquatic ecosystem, riparian ecosystem, and closely associated plant and animal communities** and is **actively managed to protect and enhance, where possible, the distinctive resource values and characteristics dependent on or associated with these systems** (Forest Plan, page III-179). Forest Plan direction states to use prescribed fire (controlled fire) to **reduce fire hazards** (Forest Plan, page III-52).

Management Area 3B Forest Plan direction prescribes needed stand treatments to emphasize quality hardwood sawtimber as the primary product (Forest Plan, page III-75) and by applying appropriate timber harvest methods to produce a continuous (sustainable) supply of sawtimber and other wood products (Forest Plan, page III-71).

The Lower Mulberry watershed contains a portion of the designated old growth Large Patch 30 which satisfies the medium patch requirement for this watershed. Large Patch 30 is the only large patch within the analysis area of the project and has been evaluated and designated as an old growth large patch. There are no Inventoried Roadless Areas, North Carolina State proposed Natural Heritage Areas, wilderness areas, or wild and scenic river designations in the project area.

I recognize the many interests and concerns the public has regarding management on National Forest lands, and this is why I am requesting your comments concerning the Mulberry Project proposal. Your specific comments to the proposal will help me identify key issues and possible alternative ways of meeting the project's purpose and need. ***Please return your comments to me by June 15, 2007.*** Comments may be mailed to: Grandfather Ranger District, ATTN: District Ranger, 109 East Lawing Drive, Nebo, North Carolina, 28761, or emailed to: comments-southern-north-carolina-pisgah-grandfather@fs.fed.us. Please contact Greg Van Orsow, Project Leader, at (828) 652-2144; or Michael Hutchins, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, at (828) 682-6146, if you have questions or need additional information regarding this proposal. I appreciate your continued interest in the management of your National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Joy W. Malone

JOY W. MALONE
District Ranger

Enclosure

