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Date: February 21, 2008

Dear Interested Reader:

The National Forests in North Carolina is conducting the environmental analysis of a proposal to use herbicides in "oak demonstration plots" to release immature oak trees from competing vegetation. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of our proposed activities and to solicit comments from you concerning the proposal.

Twelve oak demonstration plots averaging three acres in size, and totaling approximately 35 acres, were established on the Pisgah and Nantahala Forests from 1995 to 2004 to evaluate the survival of planted oak seedlings, the development of acorns in planted seedlings, and to demonstrate the role artificial regeneration of oaks can play in restoring this species where it has been difficult to establish through natural regeneration. Northern red oak, white oak and black oak seedlings were grown in tree nurseries and then outplanted in these "demo" plots that had been previously cleared of vegetation. Ranger Districts with demo plots are the Grandfather (4 plots) and Pisgah (2 plots) Districts on the Pisgah National Forest, and the Cheoah (2 plots), Nantahala (3 plots) and Tusquitee (1 plot) Districts on the Nantahala National Forest (refer to enclosed maps). Intense natural sprouting and growth of other tree and shrub species within the demo plots has created the need to control these other species which compete with the planted oaks for space, sunlight and nutrients. Treatment with herbicides is the most effective means of controlling competing vegetation.

District	Site Name	Year Planted	Species Planted	Compartment/ Stand	MA	Acres
Grandfather	Witness Rock Univ. Study	2002	NRO	261/16	3B	4
Grandfather	NRO Research Plot	1990	NRO	246/07	3B	3
Grandfather	Witness Rock Demo	2001	WO,NRO	262/18	3B	2
Grandfather	Jonas Ridge Demo	1995	NRO	106/4,19	4D	3
Pisgah	Long Branch Demo	2002	WO,NRO,BO	96/28	4A	3.5
Pisgah	North Mills University Study	2002	NRO	44/05	4D	5
Cheoah	Bert Creek Demo	1995	NRO	118/09	3B	2
Cheoah	Poison Cove Demo	2003	NRO	121/19	3B	2
Tusquitee	Bates Creek Demo	2000	NRO	37/10	3B	2
Nantahala	Jones Creek Demo	1995	NRO	126/28	4D	2
Nantahala	Highlands Office Demo	2004	NRO	18/36	4A	3.5
Nantahala	Lloyd Cove Demo	2004	NRO	78/37	4D	3

NRO - Northern red oak, WO - White oak, BO - Black oak, MA - Management Area



Proposed Activities

35 acres on 12 sites would be treated with herbicides on an as-needed basis to remove trees and shrubs that are competing with the planted oak trees for space, sunlight and nutrients. Two types of herbicides and several application methods would be used. Glyphosate (trade names such as Forester, Accord or Rodeo, and the same active ingredient that is found in the commonly used Roundup Brand), and Triclopyr (trade names such as Garlon 3A, Garlon 4, Tahoe 3A and Tahoe 4E) would be used. Each of these herbicides is unique in the species of plants it effectively treats, in the method it is applied, and the time of year it is applied. They are designed to interfere with the normal growth process and viability of treated trees and shrubs.

Application methods will include:

- Direct application to the foliage of unwanted vegetation using a backpack carried spray applicator (Glyphosate or Triclopyr). This treatment method is commonly used to suppress or kill up to shoulder high brush. A citrus oil called Cide-kick may be added to the herbicide formulation to allow better penetration and uptake of the herbicide;
- A streamline application, in which the herbicide is carried in a backpack, is sprayed directly onto the bark of the lower 2-3 feet of the stem of a tree (Triclopyr). Cide-kick and/or a mineral or natural vegetable oil additive are used in the formulation to allow the herbicide to spread around the stem and penetrate the bark. This method is used on small trees less than 3 inches in diameter (dbh);
- A cut surface treatment referred to as “hack and squirt” in which the bark of a standing tree is cut with a hatchet and the herbicide is applied with a squirt bottle (Glyphosate or Triclopyr). This treatment method is used to suppress or kill trees larger than 2 inches in diameter;
- A cut surface treatment referred to as “slashdown and stump spray” in which the competing tree is cut with a chain saw and herbicide is applied to the cut surface of the stump with a squirt bottle (Glyphosate or Triclopyr). This treatment method is used to suppress or kill trees larger than 2” dbh.

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Activities

Treatment is needed to control competing vegetation in order for the planted oak seedlings to survive and grow. Proposed treatments would achieve the goals, objectives, and desired future conditions identified in the Forest Plan. The activities would contribute in bringing the best science to bear on management of the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forest, integrating research and management to continually improve the scientific basis of ecosystem management (Forest Plan, p.III-2).

Public Involvement

I recognize that you may have interest and concerns with this proposal and so am inviting you to comment on the project. To be most helpful, please make your comments as specific to the proposal as possible, and contain the following: Your name, address and telephone number (if available); Title of the project (Oak Demonstration Release); and specific facts or comments, along with supporting reasons that you believe I should consider in evaluating the proposal.

Your specific comments will help me identify key issues and possible alternative ways of meeting the projects purpose and need.

To give us ample opportunity to analyze your comments, please provide them by March 21, 2008, by mailing them to Attn: Rick Semingson, Tusquitee Ranger District, 123 Woodland Drive, Murphy, NC 28906, or you may call at our office in Murphy at (828) 837-5152. Comments may be sent via email to rsemingson@fs.fed.us. For additional information, please contact Rick Semingson (Project Coordinator) at our Murphy office.

Thank you for your time and interest in management activities on the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Marisue Hilliard
MARISUE HILLIARD
Forest Supervisor