



File Code: 1950

Date: January 19, 2007

Dear Forest Neighbor:

The Wayah Ranger District is conducting a multi-resource analysis of a proposed project, called the "Fatback Project", in the southwestern part of Macon County, North Carolina. This project focuses on vegetative management activities designed to restore and maintain a healthy forest ecosystem. The project may include tree harvesting through commercial timber sale, road reconstruction, site preparation for forest regeneration, timber stand improvement, prescribed burning, and wildlife habitat improvement activities. The purpose of this letter is to invite you to comment on this proposed project and help identify issues, concerns, or opportunities associated with the project. Your comments could result in the development of new or modified alternatives, the identification of potential effects from a proposed action, or mitigation measures.

**The Fatback Project Scoping Record, associated maps, and a list of proposed actions can be accessed at the following internet address: <http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc>.** If you wish to receive a hard copy (paper) version of these materials or if you have any questions regarding the project, please contact Joan Brown, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, at the Wayah Ranger District, 90 Sloan Road, Franklin, NC 28734 (Telephone: 828-524-6441).

We ask that you provide comments on the proposed actions by February 23, 2007 to Joan Brown at the above address or via email (comments-southern-north-carolina-nantahala-wayah@fs.fed.us). All responses received (including names and addresses) will become part of the public file. This information will be made available to the public upon request.

Sincerely,

/s/ Michael L. Wilkins  
MICHAEL L. WILKINS  
District Ranger



FATBACK PROJECT SCOPING RECORD  
JANUARY 2007

The Wayah Ranger District is conducting an interdisciplinary analysis of a proposed project, called the "Fatback Project", in the southwestern part of Macon County.

INTRODUCTION:

The project may include tree harvesting through commercial timber sale, road reconstruction, site preparation for forest regeneration, timber stand improvements, prescribed burning, and wildlife habitat improvement activities in Compartments 102, 110, 111, 121 and 124. This project is planned for implementation sometime between 2009 and 2011.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION:

The proposal is designed to improve or maintain the health of the forest ecosystem through a variety of vegetative management activities. The project would implement direction set forth in the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) 1986-2000 for the Nantahala/Pisgah National Forests (USDA, March 1987) as amended in 1994, in a manner which moves the existing natural resources toward desired future conditions.

EXISTING CONDITION:

Forest types in the compartments are predominantly upland and cove hardwoods, with some northern hardwoods, mixed hardwood-yellow pine stands, and mixed white pine-upland hardwood stands.

Management Areas (MAs) in the compartments include MAs 1B, 3B, 4A, 4C, 4D, 13, and 14. Embedded within these is management area 18 (riparian areas around perennial water bodies).

The most recent past harvest entries into the compartments include the Poplar Cove, Ash Flats, and Flatwoods timber sales, with closing dates ranging from 1993-1998. All regenerated stands have been certified as successfully reforested. Currently there are 5 acres of early successional habitat (stands aged 0-10 years) in the compartments. Access is provided by several state and Forest Service (FS) roads.

DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:

Complete descriptions of desired conditions for each management area are contained in the LRMP. A brief summary of desired conditions for the management areas contained in the compartments is as follows:

MA 1B: Emphasize a sustainable supply of timber and provide motorized access into the forest for forest uses such as hunting and gathering, firewood cutting, hiking, fishing, and camping. Wildlife compatible with or that benefit from these conditions (presence of some early

successional habitat and open roads), such as grouse, deer, and songbirds are likely to be present.

MA 3B: A regulated forest which provides for a sustainable supply of timber and for the habitat needs of wildlife species (particularly wild turkey) which benefit from a managed forest with limited motorized access (closed roads).

MA 4A: Limited motorized access (closed roads), with an emphasis on visually pleasing scenery and wildlife habitat with older vegetation and limited disturbance. This land is classified as suitable for timber management during the current LRMP planning period.

MA 4C: Limited motorized access (closed roads), with an emphasis on visually pleasing scenery and habitats for wildlife requiring older forests. This land is not classified as suitable for timber management during the current LRMP planning period.

MA 4D: Limited motorized access (closed roads), with an emphasis on visually pleasing scenery and habitats for wildlife requiring older forests, particularly for black bear. This land is classified as suitable for timber management during the current planning period; early successional habitat is provided for wildlife species that require it.

MA 13: Special interest areas that are managed to protect, and where appropriate, foster public use and enjoyment of unique scenic, geological, botanical, or zoological attributes. This land is not classified as suitable for timber management during the current LRMP planning period.

MA 14: Appalachian National Scenic Trail and its foreground zone, as mapped through the Visual Management System, characterized by a predominantly natural-appearing environment. This land is not classified as suitable for timber management during the current LRMP planning period.

MA 18: Predominantly undisturbed riparian areas (adjacent to streams) with conditions strongly influenced by the accumulation of woody materials from mature trees, but with a diverse assemblage of species and stand structures.

#### PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project will be designed to accomplish the following objectives:

- 1) Provide for a range of early successional habitat through timber regeneration harvesting and wildlife brushy openings, while producing a minimum of 1 million board feet (MMBF) of sawtimber for the local economy;
- 2) Maintain and/or enhance biological diversity by protecting population viability of rare species which occur in the compartments, by reproducing existing forest species, especially oaks for hard mast production, and yellow pines to perpetuate mixed hardwood-pine communities;

3) Create new grass/forb openings and create/enhance additional wildlife habitat where practical;

4) Improve habitat for the golden winged warbler where possible.

The project activities would occur in MAs 3B and 4D. Road reconstruction, if necessary, may need to cross through other management areas, such as at stream crossings (MA 18).

#### PROPOSED ACTION:

This scoping record includes maps and a spreadsheet of the proposed actions for this project. This "Proposed Action" and alternatives analyses will be documented in the project Environmental Assessment (EA), to be developed later in 2007.

#### ISSUES:

The proposed action and alternatives will be analyzed for effects on the following issues and/or resources:

- 1) Soil and water quality
- 2) Air quality
- 3) Aquatic resources
- 4) Botanical resources
- 5) Wildlife resources
- 6) Silvicultural systems and vegetation management
- 7) Heritage resources
- 8) Recreation resources
- 9) Scenery
- 10) Road management
- 11) Social and economic considerations

#### PLANNING TEAM DESIGNATION:

District Ranger Michael Wilkins is the responsible official who will decide on a course of action based on the alternatives and analyses presented by the interdisciplinary planning team. The team will consist of:

Joan Brown, Wayah RD Silviculturist (Team leader)  
Doreen Miller, Nantahala NF Wildlife Biologist  
Tim Southard, Wayah RD Timber Management Assistant  
Jason Farmer, Nantahala NF Fisheries Biologist  
Duke Rankin, Nantahala NF Botanist  
Mike Bell, Wayah RD Forestry Technician

Specialist input will be obtained from Erik Crews - NFsNC Landscape Architect, and others as needed.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION:

The scoping record is posted on the NFsNC web page, and a notice of this scoping record will be sent to interested parties, planning team members/consultants, and Forest Supervisor's Office staff. Their comments will be used to identify other issues and further shape the environmental analyses to be conducted. Planning information on this project will be reported in NFsNC Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA, distributed by the Forest Supervisor's Office, Asheville, NC).

The scoping record with accompanying maps and spreadsheet is posted at **<http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc>**. If you would like hard copies, please notify Joan Brown at the Wayah Ranger District office, 828-524-6441. Please provide your comments by the close of business on February 23, 2007.

**Fatback Project Scoping  
List of Proposed Actions**

<u>Comp-Stand</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Treatment</u>
102-22	2	rehab grass/forb opening - create 100 ft brushy buffer
110-37	2	rehab grass/forb opening - create 100 ft brushy buffer
110-36	16	pre-harvest vine mgmt / 2-age harvest (ground)
111-41	56	commercial thinning
111-30	13	pre-harvest vine mgmt / 2-age harvest (skyline)
111-33	16	commercial thinning
111-36	6	commercial thinning
111-19	10	commercial thinning
111-20	19	pre-harvest vine mgmt / 2-age harvest (ground)
111-37	2	rehab grass/forb opening - create 100 ft brushy buffer
111-38	2	rehab grass/forb opening - create 100 ft brushy buffer
111-39	2	rehab grass/forb opening - create 100 ft brushy buffer
111-40	2	rehab grass/forb opening - create 100 ft brushy buffer
121-30	27	pre-harvest vine mgmt / 2-age harvest (ground)
121-26	13	commercial thinning
121-27	32	commercial thinning
121-21	52	commercial thinning
121-28	2	rehab grass/forb opening - create 100 ft brushy buffer
121-29	2	rehab grass/forb opening - create 100 ft brushy buffer
124-21	31	pre-harvest vine mgmt / 2-age harvest (skyline)
124-42	16	pre-harvest vine mgmt / 2-age harvest (skyline)
124-43	5	commercial thinning
124-44	4	commercial thinning
124-13	70	commercial thinning
124-45	37	2-age harvest (ground)
124-46	2	rehab grass/forb opening - create 100 ft brushy buffer
124-47	2	rehab grass/forb opening - create 100 ft brushy buffer
124-48	2	rehab grass/forb opening - create 100 ft brushy buffer
124-49	2	rehab grass/forb opening - create 100 ft brushy buffer
124-50	2	rehab grass/forb opening - create 100 ft brushy buffer
<b>Total</b>	<b>449</b>	

**Additional Treatments**

- Construct 15 bat ponds on existing or new log landings, old roadbeds, and existing wildlife openings
- Roadside spraying for exotic invasives
- Herbicide sapling control on cutting unit skid trails 3-5 years post-harvest
- 312 acres of timber stand improvement practices in previously harvested stands