

## DECISION MEMO

Commercial Thinning of  
Compartment 5, Stand 15  
North Dick's Creek

USDA Forest Service  
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests  
Armuchee-Cohutta Ranger District  
Armuchee Unit  
Walker County, Georgia

**DECISION** - I have decided to commercially thin 42 acres of Compartment 5, Stand 15. A centrally located log landing along Dick's Creek Road will be used and no temporary roads will be constructed or reconstructed.

**PURPOSE** – The trees in this stand are at a point where their vigor and health are declining due to too many trees too close together. This creates a stress on the trees that make them susceptible to insect and disease attacks. The primary objectives set forth in the Forest Plan for the Chattahoochee National Forest that apply to this project are:

- Thin shortleaf and loblolly pine overstory trees (Objective 3.7)
- Reduce stem density in loblolly and shortleaf pine stands with priority for stands at high risk of insect or disease attack (Objective 40.1)

**CATEGORY** - This action falls within Category 12, "For harvesting individual or groups of trees from crowded stands to improve the health and vigor of the remaining trees.", as identified in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 31.2..

**FINDINGS** - A number of timber stands on the Armuchee Unit are beginning to decline in health do to the high number of stems per acre. This stand was harvested and planted to loblolly pine in 1977. It is in close proximity to recent southern pine beetle infestations meaning that this stand is at high risk. This stand has an approximate BA of 140 and an average DBH of 10 inches. Stand 15 is 42 acres in size. The stand is predominantly loblolly pine with scattered Virginia pine and very small hardwoods throughout. The hardwood trees on this site are not commercial quality and will not be harvested. The topography is gently sloped through the majority of the stand. There are no evident signs of erosion or erosion potential. There is an adequate existing temporary road system so no new roads are needed for timber removal. There is paved access to the stand using Dicks Creek Road which intersects Highway 136. The land along Dick's Creek Road is flat and is well suited to locate a log landing. One centrally located landing is adequate to remove the timber. The scenic quality of the stand should not be reduced since 60 to 70 BA of trees will remain in the stand. Additionally, this stand is outside of the Scenic Byway Corridor and will have no affect on the corridor.

A biological evaluation of this site concluded that no federally listed species or their habitats are present nor will this action result in moving sensitive species to be listed under the Endangered Species Act. A cultural resource survey concluded that no cultural resources would be affected by this project.

Soil and water resources will be protected by following Best Management Practices for any soil disturbance. Ditches will be kept free of debris and promptly returned to proper function. Any exposed soil from skid trails and landings will be ripped if needed, fertilized, seeded and mulched upon completion of the harvest.

This project falls within Management Prescription 9H which permits stands to be actively managed to reduce the risk of damage from native and non-native pests. It conforms to the applicable forestwide and management prescription standards, and thus, complies with the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests.

This action was screened for possible extraordinary circumstances as identified in FSH 1909.15 Section 30.3 - 2, and none were found.

On the basis of these findings, I have concluded that the proposed action is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement or an Environmental Assessment.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT** - Scoping for this project consisted of discussions with district and forest resource specialists and a scoping letter mailed to the District mailing list. Five written responses were received of which four were in favor of the project. Issues that were raised are leaving the yellow poplar on site, should not implement project until Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan is in place, how the roads/skid trails will be closed and restored. There were some comments that mistakenly located this stand in a different drainage. There was a comment on the creation of early successional habitat (ESH) but the thinning as proposed does not create ESH.

**IMPLEMENTATION AND APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES** – Implementation of this decision may begin immediately (36 CFR 215.10). This decision is not appealable (36 CFR 215.8). These actions are not subject to notice and comment (36 CFR 215.4).

**CONTACT PERSON** - For additional information concerning this decision, contact Michael Murphy, in the Chatsworth office at 706-695-6736(x104)

/s/ *Debra L. Whitman*

6/2005

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DEBRA L. WHITMAN  
District Ranger  
Armuchee-Cohutta Ranger District

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Date