

# Decision Memo For Ice Damaged Pine Salvage Sale

USDA, Forest Service  
Chattooga Ranger District  
Chattahoochee National Forest

Habersham and Stephens County, Georgia

## **DECISION and PURPOSE and NEED**

I have decided to have a Salvage Sale on the areas recently damaged by the ice storms in North Georgia.

These areas are located on Jim Dodd Rd. (C. 220) in Stephens Co., Georgia and the Lake Russell Wildlife Management Area (C. 209) located in Habersham Co., Georgia.

Due to the damages caused by the recent ice storm in North Georgia, the Chattooga Ranger District of the Chattahoochee National Forest will perform a salvage sale to remove damaged pine trees on approximately 80 acres in Stephens and Habersham Counties. These damaged stands were recently thinned to reduce the threat of Southern Pine Beetle attacks and were vulnerable to ice damage. As a result of the damage, these stands are again at risk of future insect and disease attack due to their weakened and stressed condition.

This action is in compliance with the Forest Plan, Forest Health goals and objectives, specifically Goal 41 (p# 2-40, CO LRMP) that states: To enhance forest health conditions in forest stands that are: (1) substantially damaged by fire, wind throw, or other catastrophes; or (2) in imminent danger from insect or disease attack.

These trees will be removed in order to reduce the potential for southern pine beetle attack later in the summer. Trees to be removed have broken tops, are severely twisted/bent, uprooted or have major limbs broken out of them. The damaged stems will be mechanically cut down and the materials removed. This proposal will occur at the following sites:

<i>Compartment</i>	<i>Stand</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>WMA Location/Quad</i>
209	20	41	Lake Russell WMA
220	27	36	Ayersville

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Beginning in February of 2006, a project identified as "Ice Damage Salvage Sale" was listed for the Chattooga Ranger District in the Schedule of Proposed Actions for the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests. The Schedule was made available to the public via the Forest Service website.



Scoping letters were sent out to the Chattooga Ranger District's persons, agencies and organizations known to be interested in projects of this type. No responses were received in return.

### **REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION**

Small-scale salvage thinning is an action that was determined by the Chief of the Forest Service to be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), unless extraordinary circumstances exist. A Decision Memo and Project File are required for this action, which is identified in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 "Environmental Policy and Procedures", Chapter 30, Section 31.2, Category # 13, as follows:

"Salvage of dead and/or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than ½ mile of temporary road construction. The purpose of this action may include incidental removal of live or dead trees for landings, skid trails, and road clearing. Examples include but are not limited to:

- a. Harvest of a portion of a stand damaged by wind or an ice event and construction of a short temporary road to access the damaged trees."

We have determined that no extraordinary circumstances exist that may cause the project to have significant effects. Specifically:

- ❑ Ground disturbing activities will not take place on steep slopes. The canopy will be retained in areas along these roads that are greater than 45% slope. Appropriate mitigation measures will be applied such as prompt revegetation of exposed soils and installation of erosion control structures. Similar past projects in this area were determined to have no significant soil-related impacts.
- ❑ No actions will take place in a floodplain, wetland, or municipal watershed.
- ❑ No congressionally designated area, such as Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, or National Recreation Areas will be affected by this project.
- ❑ This area is not within a current inventoried roadless area.
- ❑ The project is not within a research natural area.

The cumulative effects of this project combined with others in the foreseeable future will not be significant.

This project will not involve the use of herbicides and will not involve the construction of any temporary use or low standard roads.

## **FINDINGS OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS**

The determination that no significant impacts exist was based on the following (consideration included, but was not limited to, the extraordinary circumstances identified in FSH 1909.15, Section 30.3):

- This project will not adversely affect protected, endangered, threatened or sensitive (PETS) plant or animal species or any critical habitat. No ground disturbances will take place. A Biological Evaluation (BE) was prepared for this project by the Zone Wildlife Biologist. (See project file)
- All project areas occur on lands designated as within Management Prescription 9.H by the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests (Forest Plan).
- The project area does not contain any congressionally designated wilderness, wilderness study area or National Recreation Area. The project areas do not contain any Research Natural Area, inventoried roadless area or unallocated lands.
- This project will not impact historic or prehistoric resources. No known historic or prehistoric sites that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places will be affected by this project (see Cultural Resources Report in project file).
- Public health or safety will not be adversely affected.
- The project areas do not have any other circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly effect the environment.

## **FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS**

State-approved Best Management Practices (BMP's) will be met and this project will comply with the Clean Water Act.

The actions will not adversely affect any sites listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will they cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

Implementing this decision will not adversely affect federally listed threatened or endangered species or result in loss of any other's species viability, or create significant trends toward Federal listing of the species under the Endangered Species Act.

This project complies with the seven requirements of the National Forest Management Act related to vegetation manipulation (36 CFR 219.27(b)):

1. It is best suited to the multiple-use goals established for the area based on the Forest-wide direction. This suitability is based on the potential environmental, biological, cultural resource, aesthetic, engineering, and economic impacts.
2. This action has not been chosen primarily due to cost considerations, although this was taken into consideration.
3. The proposed actions will avoid permanent impairment of site productivity and ensure conservation of soil and water resources.
4. The action will provide the desired effects on water quantity and quality, wildlife and fish habitat, woody regeneration, forage production, recreation uses, aesthetic values, and resource yields.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Implementation of this decision may begin immediately.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8 (a)(4), this decision is not subject to appeal.

### **CONTACT PERSON**

For additional information concerning this decision, contact John D. Westbrook by phone at 706-754-6221. Ext. #150

### **SIGNATURE OF RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL**

\_\_\_\_\_/s/ David Scott Hill  
DAVID SCOTT HILL  
Deputy District Ranger  
Chattooga Ranger District  
Attachments – Project Area Maps

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March 3, 2006  
Date