



File Code: 1950-1

Date: May 4, 2007

Conasauga District Pre-Commercial Thinning Project Scoping Notice

The Conasauga Ranger District is seeking comments on a proposal to pre-commercially thin an estimated 183 acres of young pine trees. The pre-commercial thinning is expected to take place in the fall of 2007.

I intend to categorically exclude this proposal from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment because it falls under the intent of FSH 1909.15, Category 6 of section 31.2, "Timber stand ... improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides and do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction".

PURPOSE AND NEED

These stands were previously harvested and then planted with shortleaf and/or longleaf pine and are now between 8-9 years old. These stands are now quite dense and crowded. These conditions mean that the trees are competing for sunlight, water, and nutrients. This competition stresses the trees which then become more susceptible to insect and disease infestation, particularly southern pine beetle.

The purpose and need for this project is to:

- reduce the amount of competition between trees for light and water resources in dense, over-crowded stands to decrease the risk of insect and disease infestation.

This project is consistent with the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) Objective 40.1 which provides direction to "Maintain forest-stocking levels at no more than "fully stocked" for species, age, and site quality with priority treatment given to those vegetation communities at highest risk of insect and disease attack" (Forest Plan, p. 2-39).

These stands fall within Forest Plan Management Prescription (MP) 9.H- Management, Maintenance, and Restoration of Plant Associations to their Ecological Potential. The project is consistent with the emphasis for management of lands on 9.H which provides guidance to actively manage stands to reduce the risk of damage from native and non-native pests (Forest Plan, p. 3-169).

PROPOSED ACTION

This project would be implemented by using chainsaw or brush saws to cut down trees, which would be left on site. An estimated 200 trees/acre is the target density for these stands. Shortleaf pine, longleaf pine, oak, and hickory would be the priority species to be left in the stands. The desired future of these stands would be primarily a pine forest with a component of hardwoods interspersed. The following table provides specific information for each stand proposed for treatment. A map has also been attached. Stand numbers in the table correspond to the map.



Pre-Commercial Thinning Proposed Action Table

Compartment	Stand	Acres	Forest Type	Age	Treatment
920	30	27	Shortleaf	8	Select an estimated 200 shortleaf, oak, or hickory trees per acre and remove surrounding adjacent trees. In the absence of shortleaf pine or hardwood species select loblolly pine.
922	10	30	Shortleaf	8	
922	29	40	Shortleaf	9	
946	4	40	Shortleaf	9	
946	15	39	Shortleaf	9	
920	35	7	Longleaf	8	Select an estimated 200 longleaf, oak, or hickory trees per acre and remove surrounding adjacent trees. In the absence of longleaf pine or hardwood species select shortleaf pine or loblolly pine.

HOW TO PROVIDE COMMENTS

This letter is requesting your comments on this proposal. We may use your comments to modify the specific methods described in this proposed action. Please be as specific as possible when responding. Comments received, including names, become part of the project record and are available for public review. We would appreciate receiving your comments on the projects by **June 4, 2007**. This will ensure a thorough and complete analysis of these proposals.

Send your written comments to:

Conasauga Ranger District
Attn: Pre-Commercial Thinning Project
3941 Highway 76
Chatsworth, GA 30705

You may also comment by phone at (706) 695-6736, by email to Mike Murphy (mwmurphy@fs.fed.us), or in person to our office in Chatsworth, Georgia within the normal weekday business hours of 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.

Thank you for your interest in the management of the Conasauga Ranger District.

Sincerely,

/S/ **MICHELE H. JONES**

MICHELE H. JONES
District Ranger