

Broadaxe Proposal

Revised Old Growth Report

Direction in the Forest Plan (page II-5) states that "Approximately 10 percent of the Forest will be maintained in old growth as needed to provide for viable populations of old growth dependent and management indicator species. To obtain the desired distribution, the IPNF will be managed to maintain approximately 5 percent of each old-growth unit as old growth where it exists." As part of a Forest-wide process the District(s) identified stands meeting old growth criteria. Stands were then allocated to old growth management to comply with Forest Plan standards.

The Forest Plan standards related to old growth are found in the Forest Plan (page II-29). Forest Plan standard *10a* incorporates the definitions of old growth developed by the Regional Old Growth Task Force, documented in *Old-Growth Forest Types of the Northern Region* (Green et al, 2005). In compliance with Forest Plan old growth standard *10a*, the validation process for the Broadaxe project used the definitions as outlined in this Regional old growth guide (project file, OG-1). Compliance with standards *10b-i* is discussed later in this report.

Analysis Methods

The Broadaxe project is entirely within a larger analysis area identified as the Quartz Gold project. As a result, the old growth analysis for this project was completed and/or initiated during the analysis process for the Quartz Gold project.

Analysis of old growth is done on the total Old Growth Management Units (OGMU) that are totally or partially within a project area. The old growth analysis area for the Broadaxe project is OGMU #28 (Avery, 02). This is appropriate for this project because the project area is entirely within this OGMU, and all activities associated with this project would be confined within this old growth management unit.

The old growth validation process for the Quartz Gold analysis, which includes the Broadaxe project, is documented in the project file (project file, OG-2). This validation process used the minimum criteria for each old growth type, by appropriate habitat type group, as displayed in the Regional old growth guide (project file, OG-1) to validate whether stands meet old growth criteria. The three stand characteristics used in the Regional old growth guide used to display the minimum criteria are; (1) Minimum age of large trees, (2) Number of trees per acre equal to or greater than a given DBH level and age, and (3) Minimum basal area of trees ≥ 5 inches DBH.

Using the Timber Stand Management Reporting System (TSMRS) database, stands currently classified as old growth were identified within OGMU #28 (Avery, 02). The TSMRS database was reviewed on September 09, 2005. This September 09, 2005, version of the database was used for the current status of OGMU #28 (Avery, 02) in this revised Old Growth Report. A copy of the TSMRS data utilized in this report is included

in the project file (project file, OG-14). All acres should be considered approximate due to such factors as rounding, scale of analysis, delineation and procedural variance between resources evaluating old growth. These differences are insignificant related to evaluating the current status of old growth in this proposal.

Stand information for stands identified as old growth was extracted from the R-1 EDIT and FSVEG data bases and reviewed for their compliance with the Regional old growth guide and documented on old growth validation sheets (project file, OG-3). During this data review process for OGMU #28 (Avery, 02), a need for new stand exams was identified for some stands. Reasons for taking the new field data included: age of current exams over 20 years, known re-delineation of stands previously reviewed for old growth criteria, obvious changes in stand conditions since the last exam, and if the stand was at a high risk for insect or disease agents. New stand exams were performed during the fall of 2004 to respond to this need. In stands where new data was gathered, the new data was used to determine current old growth status. As a result of the validation process, using both existing and new stand data, several stands were identified which were allocated to old growth that no longer meet the criteria as described in the Regional old growth guide. Those stands which no longer meet the old growth criteria were removed from the allocation. Additionally, stands were identified which have had a change in their old growth classification; changing from code 9 (old growth) to code 11 (future old growth), and from code 11 to code 9. This validation process also identified additional stands which currently meet the old growth criteria given in the Regional old growth guide. None of these identified stands meeting the minimum criteria for old growth are proposed for treatment in the Broadaxe project. These stands have not been allocated as old growth, but will be considered for allocation at a future date. Copies of the old growth validation sheets (project file, OG-3) and the field examination sheets (project file, OG-4) for the Broadaxe project are found in the project file. A consolidated summary spreadsheet of this validation process is also included in the project file (project file, OG-5).

Affected Environment

The proposed Broadaxe project is located entirely within OGMU #28 (Avery, 02). This old growth management unit (OGMU) is 15,224 acres in size. The current old growth allocation within this OGMU is 2,195 acres, or 14.4%. See Old Growth Management Unit 28 Map displaying the old growth allocation within this OGMU.

Validation and monitoring of old growth is an ongoing process. This review of OGMU #28 (Avery, 02) identified additional acres that meet the criteria as described in *Old-Growth Forest Types of the Northern Region* (Green et al, 2005), and other acres that were previously allocated but no longer meet the minimum criteria. Changes that were made in the TSMRS database are documented in the project file (project file, OG-8). Some stands that currently meet minimum criteria are not allocated as old growth, but will be considered for allocation at a future date. No treatment is proposed in stands that are known to meet the minimum criteria for Old Growth.

Environmental Consequences

NO ACTION

Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects

There would be no direct/indirect and cumulative effects resulting from the No-Action Alternative on either existing allocated old growth or additional stands meeting old criteria. Forest Plan standards for old growth retention would continue to be met.

There would be no direct or indirect effects from current and reasonably foreseeable activities including weed control, road and trail maintenance, and public recreation (i.e. berry picking, hiking, hunting, wood gathering and similar activities). Only very small incremental cumulative effects, if any, on allocated old growth is expected as a result of these other activities.

PROPOSED ACTION

Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects

There is no road construction, timber harvest or other activities proposed within allocated old growth. There is no road construction, timber harvest or other activities proposed within the additional stands meeting old growth criteria. There would be no direct/indirect or cumulative effects resulting from the Proposed Action Alternative on either existing allocated old growth or additional stands meeting old growth criteria. Forest Plan standards for old growth retention would continue to be met.

There would be no direct or indirect effects from current and reasonably foreseeable activities including weed control, road and trail maintenance, and public recreation (i.e. berry picking, hiking, hunting, wood gathering and similar activities). No cumulative effects on allocated old growth are expected as a result of these other activities.

Consistency with Forest Plan and Laws

Old growth standard *10a* in the Forest Plan states: “A definition for old growth is being developed by the Regional Task Force and will be used by the Forest when completed.” In compliance with Forest Plan old growth standard *10a*, the definitions of old growth developed by the Regional Old Growth Task Force, documented in *Old-Growth Forest Types of the Northern Region* (Green et al, 2005) have been incorporated into Forest Plan standard *10a* and were used in the validation and analysis process of old growth in this project.

Old growth standard *10b* in the Forest Plan directs that we “Maintain at least 10 percent of the forested portion of the IPNF as old growth.” The Idaho Panhandle National Forest is meeting Forest Plan standards for old growth with 12.1% of forested acres to be retained as old growth, as disclosed on page 6 in the DRAFT Old Growth chapter for the 2004 IPNF Forest Plan Monitoring Report (project file, OG-13).

Old growth standard *10c* in the Forest Plan states: “Select and maintain at least five percent of the forested portion of those old-growth units that have five percent or more existing old growth.” The proposed Broadaxe project is located entirely within OGMU #28 (Avery, 02). This old growth management unit (OGMU) is 15,224 acres in size. The current old growth allocation within this OGMU is 2,195 acres, or 14.4%. OGMU #28 (Avery, 02) meets this Forest Plan standard.

Old growth standard *10d* states: “Existing old-growth stands may be harvested when there is more than 5 percent in an old-growth unit, and the Forest total is more than 10 percent.” Timber harvest is not proposed in either allocated old growth or in additional stands identified as meeting old growth criteria. This proposal is in compliance with old growth standard *10d*.

Old growth standard *10e* states: “Old growth stands should reflect approximately the same habitat type series distribution as found on the IPNF.” Compliance with this Forest Plan standard is disclosed on pages 7-8 in the DRAFT Old Growth chapter for the 2004 IPNF Forest Plan Monitoring Report (project file, OG-13).

Old growth standard *10f* describes desirable patch size stating: “One or more old-growth stands per old-growth unit should be 300 acres or larger.....The remaining old-growth management stands should be at least 25 acres in size. Preferred size is 80 plus acres.” In OGMU #28 (Avery, 02), the allocated old growth occurs in 21 patches distributed throughout the project area. These patches range in size from 28 to 663 acres, and average approximately 131 acres. Within this OGMU there are 21 patches greater than 25 acres, with eleven of those being greater than 80 acres in size. Of the patches greater than 80 acres, there are two patches greater than 300 acres, including one patch of approximately 663 acres in size. OGMU #28 (Avery, 02) is in compliance with old growth standard *10f* as discussed above. A map identifying old growth patches and their respective areas is included in the project file (project file, OG-7).

Old growth standard *10g* states: “Roads should be planned to avoid old-growth management stands to maintain unit size criteria.” No system road construction is proposed with this proposal. Two short temporary road segments are proposed, with the anticipated location entirely within proposed units. Neither would impact allocated old growth, or additional stands identified as meeting old growth criteria. This proposal is in compliance with old growth standard *10g*.

Old growth standard *10h* states: “Existing grazing allotments will be honored;New allotments in old-growth will not be issued.” There are no grazing allotments within this project area, or within OGMU #28 (Avery, 02), and no new allotments are proposed. This proposal is in compliance with old growth standard *10h*.

Old growth standard *10i* states: “goals for lands to be managed as old-growth within those lands suitable for timber production are identified in the management area prescriptions.” Old growth standard *10e* says: “Old growth stands should reflect approximately the same habitat type series distribution as found on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests.” The Idaho Panhandle National Forest is meeting Forest Plan old growth standards for management area designation and habitat type distribution, as disclosed on page 7 in the DRAFT Old Growth chapter for the 2004 IPNF Forest Plan Monitoring Report (project file, OG-13).

Specific goals, objectives and standards for old growth management as described in the Forest Plan on pages II-5 and II-29 are met with the proposed action. The Proposed Action Alternative is consistent with the Forest Plan for the management of old growth.

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