

**SCOPING & COMMENT PERIOD
PERFECTO CREEK TIMBER SALE – FOREST PLAN
AMENDMENT**

**Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests
Saguache County, Colorado
May 2007**

INTRODUCTION

The Forest Service is proposing to amend the Forest Plan (the Plan) for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG), to allow the full implementation of the proposed management alternative (Alternative 2) as analyzed in the Perfecto Creek Timber Sale EA.

The Forest Supervisor, headquartered in Delta, Colorado, will be the responsible official for this amendment.

The Forest Plan which is to be amended was first published in 1983, and then significantly amended in 1991 and 1993. The proposed change to the Plan will not constitute a significant amendment.

THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

The proposal is to amend the Forest Plan to allow habitat capability index levels (HABCAP model) to fall below Plan standards for the Three Toed Woodpecker and the Brown Creeper for Alternative 2 of the Perfecto Creek Timber Sale project. This change would only apply for this harvest entry of the Perfecto Creek Timber Sale.

THE PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE AMENDMENT

Analysis of the management alternatives proposed for the Perfecto Creek Timber Sale revealed that the full implementation of the proposed action (Alternative 2) would result in habitat capability values below 40% of the habitat potential for the Brown Creeper and the Three Toed Woodpecker (38% and 39% respectively). In accordance with the National Forest Management Act, all projects must be consistent with the Forest Plan on a given National Forest. Therefore, Alternative 2 of the Perfecto Creek Timber Sale cannot be implemented unless the Plan is amended to accommodate this variance from the standard.

The full implementation of Alternative 2 is the preferred alternative for management within the Perfecto Creek Timber Sale area and will yield many benefits. It is our intention to capture the full benefit of this project and therefore we need to amend the Plan as described above.

Benefits of the full implementation of Alternative 2 include:

1. Treatment, planning and economic efficiency will all be maximized.
2. The full area will be treated, thereby eliminating the need for an intermediate re-entry into the area that would result in increased disturbance.
3. Provide an additional 2,050 CCF of timber to local dependent markets.
4. Maintain the population viability for the Brown Creeper and the Three Toed Woodpecker.

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Direction for determining the significance of a plan amendment is found in FSM 1926.51. According to this direction, there are four conditions that allow for a Forest Plan to be amended which are considered to be non-significant. The following is a list of the four conditions:

1. Actions that do not significantly alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management.
2. Adjustments of management area boundaries or management prescriptions resulting from further on-site analysis when the adjustments do not cause significant changes in the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management.
3. Minor changes in standards and guidelines.
4. Opportunities for additional projects or activities that will contribute to achievement of the management prescription.

Of these four conditions, three apply to the proposed Perfecto Creek Timber Sale Plan Amendment – conditions 1, 3 and 4. The proposed amendment would not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the area, it will make a minor change to standards and guidelines (2 percentage points), and it provides the opportunity to more fully achieve the benefits of the management prescription as outlined in the purpose and need for the project.

NEPA DOCUMENTATION

At this time, we believe that the analysis and documentation presented in the Perfecto Creek Timber Sale Environmental Assessment (EA) adequately addresses the potential environmental consequences of this proposed amendment. The impacts to the Three Toed Woodpecker and the Brown Creeper are analyzed for all possible management alternatives. This analysis concluded that the viability of these species is not at risk as a result of implementing Alternative 2 (Perfecto Creek Timber Sale EA pages 76 and 85). Since the proposed amendment would not apply outside of the Perfecto Creek Timber

Sale area and is limited to this harvest entry only, there would be no other impacts associated with the decision to amend the Plan.

Although we are not proposing to issue a supplemental environmental analysis document, we will be issuing another decision notice that will be subject to appeal.

COMMENT PERIOD

The opportunity to comment for this scoping period will extend for 30 days after the publication of the legal notice in the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel. While we will accept and consider comments at any time during this analysis process, to be most helpful and to be fully considered in the analysis and decision process comments should be received by that date.

CONTACT PERSON AND COMMENT ADDRESS

The Forest Supervisor, in Delta, Colorado, will be the responsible official for this amendment. Please provide written comments either by mail or personal delivery to:

USDA Forest Service, GMUG N.F.
Attn: "Perfecto Creek Timber Sale – Forest Plan Amendment"
2250 Highway 50
Delta, Colorado 81416
Office hours 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM (Monday through Friday)

Electronic comments may be submitted in, PDF, Microsoft Word or ASCII text format to metzenhouser@fs.fed.us; Facsimile comments should be sent to: (970) 874-6698.

For additional information concerning this proposal contact Robert Vermillion, 970-874-6600 or visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/gmug/policy/> (see the Vegetation Management Activities section).

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