

## Appendix J

# Public Comments and Responses from the Pre-Decisional Environmental Assessment



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The Pre-Decisional Environmental Assessment was sent to those individuals that responded to scoping for the project. The transmittal letter that accompanied the Pre-Decisional Environmental Assessment is included in this appendix.

No comments were received in the 30-day pre-decisional comment period for the Utility Corridor Maintenance Project.

Two individuals presented supportive comments in initial scoping. A third individual, Mr. Charles Chapman, voiced inquiries during the scoping period that were informational in nature. Mr. Chapman contacted the District during the comment period with additional questions concerning the project. The District responded to his inquiries and explained to Mr. Chapman the new regulations concerning comments that would require him to submit comments during the 30-day comment period in order to establish appeal rights. At this point, Mr. Chapman officially withdrew any interest in the project that might have been implied by his questions. Notes documenting this conversation are included in this appendix.

Prior to Decision on this project, the National Wild Turkey Federation and Entergy petitioned the Forest Service to include Escort (metsulfuron methyl) herbicide in the environmental analysis. The herbicide was included and analyzed in the "Proposed Action" of the final environmental assessment. No substantial direct, indirect, or cumulative effects were revealed by the analysis as a result of the inclusion of this herbicide in the project.

This project, therefore, is not subject to appeal, pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12, because no substantive comments expressing concerns or only supportive comments were received during the comment period for this project.

September 3, 2003

Utility Corridor Maintenance EA

Charles Chapman called related to this project. He indicated he had reviewed the EA and felt satisfied he had no interest in the project. He wanted to officially withdraw any interest that might have been implied by his initial questions.

In our conversation, he did ask about food plot locations because they weren't obvious on the map. I got my copy and we reviewed the maps. I pointed out the symbol we had used for the plots and noted we had limited plots to the pipelines and Entergy transmission lines because that was where we thought we could develop our initial partnerships. I noted we had visited the prospective sites and he was satisfied that we had site-specific locations.

He also asked about spraying the large trees along the roadside because of his interest in visuals. He preferred to see them cut. I told him that we would let the companies do this based upon a pesticide use proposal, which had to be submitted by project and approved at the SO. However, we would likely only approve krenite which was a bud inhibitor typically applied in the fall and kept the limbs from leafing out the next year. It was not particularly noticeable. Also, I noted that utility company had to submit a pesticide use proposal for approval. Like site prep, where we likely to require cut limbs near roads, but would certainly consider herbicides through the forest.

Based upon this discussion, Mr. Chapman does not intend to comment for record on the project. He was the only one to respond to scoping, and his scoping questions were not "cause and effect". Under the new regulations, comments would have to be submitted during the 30-day comment period to establish appeal rights. Unless we receive comments from the legal notice or SOPA, it does not appear that this project will be appeal able under 36CFR 215.

/s/ Charles S. Price



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Homochitto  
Ranger  
District

1200 Hwy 184 East  
Meadville, MS 39653  
601-384-5876

File Code: 1950  
Date: August 21, 2003

«Mr\_or\_Mrs» «FirstName» «LastName»  
«Company»  
«Address»  
«City» «State». «Zip»

Dear «Mr\_or\_Mrs» «LastName»

Thank you for participating in our scoping for the Utility Corridor Maintenance project. This project emphasizes wildlife habitat improvement through partnerships with the National Wild Turkey Federation and Entergy Corporation. It also offers opportunity for future habitat enhancement on all utility corridors on the District. Enclosed is a copy of our Environmental Assessment for this project, which analyzes the effects of proposed wildlife habitat management activities. In response to concerns related to document size, paper use, and over-all handling costs, we are providing electronic copies of our documents on Compact Disk in Adobe PDF format. To help assist navigation through our assessment, we have hyper-linked primary headings in the table of contents.

Although there was some interest expressed in the project, no issues were raised related to cause and effects relationships. Questions of interest are documented in Appendix G.

The Environmental Assessment for this project includes analysis of two alternatives (sets of actions) designed to meet the objectives, including a "No Action" alternative where there would be no change from current utility corridor maintenance activities. The District Ranger has identified the "Proposed Action" as the preferred alternative. This alternative proposes to permit herbicide use for vegetative maintenance on all power, oil, and gas utility corridors on the Homochitto National Forest, and to also permit wildlife habitat improvements (food plots) to be established in these areas.

This project would provide long-term wildlife habitat benefits through the following actions:

- Control of vegetation which interferes with wildlife use of utility corridors on the Homochitto Ranger District.
- Wildlife habitat enhancements in utility corridors on the Homochitto Ranger District.

We welcome your review of this proposal and encourage you to share any additional comments or information about this area during this final 30-day comment period. Comments received will be addressed in an appendix to the document, and will be considered in making the final decision. Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.5, comments must be postmarked or received within 30 days beginning the day following publication of the legal notice for this final comment period in the *Clarion Ledger* (paper of record).



In accordance with 36 CFR 215.6(a)(3), individuals or organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the following information:

- 1) Your name and address.
- 2) Title of the Proposed Action.
- 3) Specific substantive comments (215.2) on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision.
- 4) Your signature or other means of identification verification. For organizations, a signature or other means of identification verification must be provided for the individual authorized to represent your organization.

Please address your comments in one of the following ways: written comments should be sent to: District Ranger, Homochitto Ranger District, 1200 Hwy 184 East, Meadville, MS 39653. Phone comments or requests for additional information should be directed to April Hargis, project leader, or to the Planning Team Leader, Charles Price, at 601-384-5876. Oral or hand-delivered comments must be received within our normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Sincerely,

  
GARY W. BENNETT  
District Ranger  
Enclosures

