

APPENDIX E

GUIDELINES FOR LAND OWNERSHIP ADJUSTMENT

The land ownership adjustment program involves the acquisition or disposal of interests in land which optimizes the public benefits and administrative effectiveness of the National Forests in Mississippi. Some acquisitions are prompted by Congressional direction and others by criteria established to help direct the program. The means of making adjustments include purchase, exchange, donations, and interchanges of lands with military agencies.

Several major objectives of the program include making resource development and use more effective in protecting and improving land and resource quality and productivity; acquiring lands and rights-of-way needed for administrative improvements and protection of improvements; settling land claims, trespasses, and other administrative problems; meeting needs of other Federal agencies and of State and local governments; and efficiency of administration.

Federal tracts which are being made available for exchange include isolated tracts, scattered land, and projecting parcels on the margin of the Forests.

Exchange proposals must be considered on an individual basis. The private land should be characteristic of the National Forest and the government land more suitable for private use. The proposals will be judged against several factors which have a bearing on the optimum ownership pattern of the National Forests in Mississippi.

--It would complement some of the legislation which Congress has enacted in recent years creating special areas. Congress usually restricts the kind and amount of land which can be acquired for wilderness areas, National Recreation Areas, wild and scenic rivers, and national trails to a definite boundary. In many cases, these special areas would be enhanced if lands within or adjacent could be acquired as sites for constructing base public facilities or to prevent nonconforming use from adjoining private lands.

--It would be a means to help other Federal, State, and local agencies meet some of their legitimate land base needs. This is a way to dispose of isolated National Forest System tracts in areas where further consolidation is not possible, or entire poorly consolidated units which could be better administered by some other governmental agency.

--It would be responsive to wants and needs determined through public involvement. From public involvement, it is known that the public often has difficulty locating and getting access to National Forest System lands. The public wants something done to minimize the problem of public trespass on intermingled private lands.

--It would protect resources already existing on National Forest System lands. This differs from protecting special areas set aside by Congress. Instead, it deals with the basic reasons for acquiring land. In the case of the National Forests, this is to protect the flow of streams used for navigation or for irrigation, and to promote a future timber supply. No one knows exactly how much water and wood this country will need in the future, but it is generally agreed that the National Forest System will have to produce more, both in quality and quantity.

--It would be a means to settle many claims, occupancy trespasses, and other administrative problems permanently.

--It would allow the National Forest System lands to be managed more efficiently. Efficiency usually translates into economy, particularly with regard to: (a) reducing the number of Forest Service property lines and corners to establish and/or maintain; and (b) consolidating timber sales, reforestation, TSI, insect and disease control, prescribed burning and road construction, thereby avoiding the inefficiencies of managing timber on scattered tracts of land.

Particular emphasis will be placed on consolidation through acquisition of interior tracts. Priority will be given to exchanges which will help consolidate large blocks of National Forest land.

Maps showing National Forest tracts which are available for exchange can be obtained for review in the offices of the Forest Supervisor, the District Rangers, and the Regional Forester. Although these maps indicate our best effort at identifying disposable National Forest lands, it is apparent that land uses and land ownership change, and periodic updating will be necessary during the plan period to keep these Land Ownership Adjustment Maps current. It is quite possible that relatively small tracts which are not now identified for disposal will become viable exchange candidates when compared to the offered private tracts in an exchange proposal.

To enhance the threatened and endangered species, specific tracts will be identified in accordance with the Interagency Agreement between the USDI, Fish & Wildlife Service and USDA, Forest Service in their coordinated land purchases.