United States
Department of
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Forest Service
Southern Region

# Summary
# Final Environmental Impact Statement and Revised Land and Resource Management Plan
## *National Forests in Alabama*

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# OVERVIEW

## What is the Forest Plan?

The National Forests in Alabama extend over 4 different eco-regions in the state of Alabama. The Bankhead National Forest (NF), in the Northwest portion of the state is part of the Cumberland Plateau eco-region; the Talladega Division of the Talladega NF falls within the Ridge and Valley eco-region in the eastern portion of the state; the Oakmulgee Division of the Talladega NF, and the Tuskegee NF are part of the Upper Coastal Plain eco-region in central Alabama; and the Conecuh NF lies within the Lower Coastal Plain eco-region in southern Alabama. The area includes approximately 666,000 National Forest acres

This new Forest Plan will guide the management of the National Forests in Alabama for the next decade or longer. To accomplish this, the Forest Plan does the following:

- Establishes the management direction and associated long-range goals and objectives for the National Forests in Alabama for the next 10-15 years.

- Establishes management areas, which differ geographically, and ecologically, and provide a way to show pertinent differences in goals, objectives, or desired future condition.

- Specifies the standards, which set the boundaries for achieving the goals, objectives and desired conditions.

- Identifies lands suitable for various multiple uses including timber production and establishes the Allowable Sale Quantity.

- Recommends to Congress new stand-alone wilderness study areas and additions to existing Wilderness Areas.

- Consents to leasing acres for federal oil and gas exploration and development of acres with a no-surface occupancy stipulation and acres with additional stipulations like controlled-surface use.

- Establishes the monitoring and evaluation requirements needed to ensure that the direction is carried out.

The Forest Plan represents the alternative selected for managing the land and resources of the National Forests in Alabama. It divides the Forest into geographic "Management Areas". They are the Bankhead NF, Talladega Division of the Talladega NF, Oakmulgee Division of the Talladega NF, Tuskegee NF, and the Conecuh NF. The map accompanying the Forest Plan displays the management areas and the management prescriptions to be used in each.

Forest Plans make broad-scale decisions, similar to city zoning allocations. They do not undertake site-specific projects; rather they establish overall goals, objectives, and desired future conditions that the Forest will strive to meet. The goals that are emphasized in the National Forests in Alabama Plan are to (1) ensure watershed health, (2) maintain viable populations of existing native and desirable non-native species in the planning area, (3) maintain and/or restore the health of Forest communities, (4) protect and enhance scenery, and (5) provide backcountry recreation experiences.

National Forest management is complex. The forests belong to all Americans and all have a stake in their management. Choosing the best course of action essentially involves trade-offs. As stewards of these important lands, we have a responsibility to be responsive to the whole collection of diverse interests that make up the American public, as well as provide what is best for the Forest, while meeting the laws of the land. Citizens have been instrumental in developing our new Forest Plan. Numerous public meetings, listening sessions, and workshops have been held at Ranger District locations, as well as the large cities in Alabama, over the past several years, and our mailing list has grown to well over 3,500 names.

Documentation of this Forest Plan's environmental impacts is contained in its accompanying Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The FEIS is required by the National Environmental Policy Act to disclose the potential effects of alternatives on significant resource-related issues associated with administering the National Forests in Alabama Plan. Seven alternatives were developed in detail in the Environmental Impact Statement. A brief description of each alternative follows. (For a detailed chart on the comparison of alternatives, refer to the comparison section later in this document).

Alternative I - **Selected Alternative**. This alternative emphasizes management of forest ecosystems through restoration and maintenance. This ensures healthy watersheds; provides for sustainable and diverse ecosystems that support viable plant, wildlife, and fish populations; and provides for high quality, nature-based recreation opportunities, especially in non-motorized settings with high quality landscapes. Habitats for those species needing large, contiguous forested landscapes would be maintained or increased. Management actions would be taken where needed to conserve and recover threatened, endangered, sensitive, and locally rare species.

Inventoried roadless and un-roaded areas would be managed to retain their un-roaded character. The inventoried roadless areas adjacent to the existing Cheaha Wilderness Area would be recommended for wilderness. A spectrum of high-quality, nature-based recreation settings would be provided, and there would be an emphasis on providing those recreation opportunities that are not widely available on non-Federal lands.

All existing inventoried old growth would be protected, and there would be an adequate representation of old-growth patches of those communities found on National Forest lands. The health of the forest vegetation would improve by replacing off-site species, thinning overstocked stands, and restoring fire-dependent and fire-associated communities. Some of the best silvicultural sites that are currently accessible could be managed to provide a supply of high-quality sawtimber. Other lands would provide a variety of products as a result of other management activities. The total ten-year allowable sale quantity of timber (ASQ) would be 85.3 million cubic feet. Generally, access will be limited to those areas that can be accessed by maintaining or reconstructing existing system roads, or through the construction of temporary roads.

This selected alternative represents the Forest's attempt to balance diverse public interests, diverse wildlife needs, and our stewardship responsibilities as we manage the National Forests in Alabama over the next decade or longer. This alternative is identified in the Final EIS as the alternative that provides the most acceptable resolution to the needed changes in management. It is the alternative that is carried forward to the Revised Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

The final decision is based on the analysis contained in the Final EIS, which considered public comments on the Draft EIS. The Record of Decision documents the final decision and supporting rationale. This will accompany the Final Forest Plan.

## Changes to Alternative I and EIS Between Draft and Final

Review of the released DEIS and Proposed Revised LRMP revealed editorial and other inconsistencies in the presentation of information. Comments on the DEIS and Proposed Revised LRMP also identified the need for several minor improvements to analysis and presentation. Specific changes to Alternative I and the environmental analysis, between Draft and Final, beyond editorial and inconsistency corrections are discussed below.

**Streamside management zone direction** - The proposed revised LRMP included references to SMZ direction, however the details including

standards were not included. This forest-wide direction has been added to chapter 2 of the Revised LRMP.

Management Prescription 9.G – Chapter 3 of the Proposed Revised LRMP detailed the management prescription allocations and direction. Management prescription 9.G is shown on the accompanying maps however it was not described in Chapter 3 of the Proposed Revised LRMP. The description including emphasis and desired conditions has been added.

Other minor changes – A few other changes were also made. In Chapter 2 of the Propose Revised LRMP a table displaying old growth was referred to and has now been added to the Revised LRMP. The Aquatic section of Chapter 3b, DEIS has been revised for clarity. In Chapter 3b, acreages were added to the tables in the Permanent Openings section. The Migratory Bird section was enhanced with additional narratives and a presentation of fragmentation analysis. The Terrestrial Viability Analysis was updated with minor narrative and new information. MIS information presented was supplemented, and a summary table of MIS objectives was added to Chapter 2 of the Plan. The Errata in the DEIS has been inserted into the proper place in Chapter 3B of the FEIS. Additional information became available for the Air Quality analysis in FEIS Chapter 3a and was incorporated into the analysis.

Alternative A - This alternative would emphasize production of goods and services beneficial to local economies and communities. Timber management would provide sustained yield of wood products with emphasis on the high-quality sawtimber. The ten-year total allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for timber for this alternative would be 136.9 million cubic feet. This alternative would also emphasize habitat for wildlife including game and other species. Public access would increase in high-use areas and/or would be improved to provide for more recreation opportunities.

Alternative B - This alternative would emphasize restoring ecosystems and natural processes and creating and maintaining wildlife habitats. When possible, natural processes would be mimicked in a natural landscape pattern. Wood products would be managed only in concert with restoring and maintaining ecosystems. The ten-year allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for timber would be 102.9 million cubic feet. The long-term goal would be to provide old-growth conditions by old-growth community types within the ecological province or section similar to that existing before pioneer settlement and land uses. Access would be reduced as needed to restore and protect aquatic systems, soils, and plant/animal communities.

Alternative C - This alternative, that was primarily a custodial (no active management) emphasis, was not developed in detail.

Alternative D - The emphasis of this alternative would be to reach and maintain a balanced age class of forest types found in Alabama. This "balance of age classes" would occur on lands identified as suitable for timber harvest. The ten-year total allowable sale quantity (ASQ) of timber would be 226.9 million cubic feet. Large- and medium-sized blocks of old growth would be provided only on unsuitable land. Potential for roaded natural experiences would increase as access roads for timber harvest are built or improved. Access would be developed, maintained, and used as needed to meet the goal of balanced age classes, wildlife habitats, and production of timber products.

Alternative E - Dispersed and developed recreation areas and opportunities would be increased in this alternative. This alternative would provide a natural setting and concentrated recreation facilities that could attract a variety of recreation users including off-highway vehicle users. Active resource management would be concentrated in certain locations and would support recreation use and visual quality. Large blocks of the forest would be maintained in a roadless condition to provide remote, backcountry recreation. Most inventoried roadless areas would be recommended for wilderness study. The ten-year allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for timber would be 147.8 million cubic feet.

Alternative F - This is the "No Action Alternative" (Current Management). Management direction would continue under the existing 1986 Forest Plan, as amended. Management activities are designed to improve the age class distribution in all forest types to address the "aging forest" condition and to provide a balanced market and non-market resource program. This alternative increases opportunities for developed and primitive recreation experiences as demand dictates. It provides for an optimum population of game and non-game species and protection of sensitive species. The current Plan's ten-year allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for timber is 185 million cubic feet (18.5 million cubic feet per year). However, the Forest is only implementing approximately 1.5 million cubic feet per year.

Alternative G - Semi-primitive, wildlife, and nature-oriented recreation opportunities would be emphasized. This alternative would emphasize linking together—through land allocations—wildlife movement corridors and large undisturbed areas, threatened and endangered species, species reintroduction, and watershed restoration. Backcountry, wildlife species using late-successional habitat, and nature-oriented non-motorized recreation opportunities would be emphasized. Most roadless areas would be recommended for wilderness study. Effects of native insects and diseases would be accepted. Road network mileage would be reduced through closure and obliteration of roads not needed for ecosystem stewardship or restoration. The total ten-year allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for timber would be 126.1 million cubic feet.

Alternative H - Alternative H would provide for active resource management to achieve multiple-use objectives with all lands classified as unsuitable for timber production. This alternative was not developed in detail.

# WHAT IS DIFFERENT IN THE REVISED FOREST PLAN FROM THE CURRENT PLAN?

## The Forest is zoned differently

The Current Plan (1986) has 18 management areas where, by the 1986 definition, each receives the same management direction and emphasis. The majority of the Forest was in Management Area 16, also called "General Forest". The primary forest plan emphases in "General Forest" were even aged timber management for high quality timber products, and dispersed recreation, primarily trails. Other management areas included Wilderness, Wilderness Study, Developed Recreation, Botanical Area, Research Natural Area, Wild & Scenic River, and Semi-Primitive.

The revised Plan defines, geographically, 5 Management Areas, which are the major divisions of land, which are the main body National Forests; Bankhead NF, Conecuh NF, Tuskegee NF, and the Oakmulgee and Talladega Divisions of the Talladega NF. Within these major divisions of land are land allocations of management emphasis called management prescriptions. Each prescription defines an emphasis of management, a desired future condition of the land and resources, and standards for resource protection.

## Timber Harvest Level will drop

The 1986 Forest Plan had an allowable yearly cut of 18.5 Million Cubic Feet per year. In the revised Forest Plan the allowable cut will be 8.5 Million Cubic Feet per year. The decrease in allowable timber harvest in the revised Plan is the result of a change in emphasis from balanced-age-class timber management emphasis to a focus on the health of the forest stands that are present now, and restoring forest ecosystems as a priority where the need exists; i.e., timber harvesting is a tool that will help achieve restoration, and volume cut is incidental to the objective of restoration and forest health. An example of restoration for Alabama is the need to restore the longleaf pine ecosystem where now exists off-site loblolly pine stands.

## Other Questions

- Why did the Forests drop Alternatives C & H from detailed study?

Alternative C -- The management prescriptions applicable to this alternative were allocated and mapped, and some preliminary estimates of the impacts of this alternative were made. After considering this preliminary information, it was

determined that Alternative C did not need to be further evaluated in detail in this EIS. The reasons are: 1) From further analyses it was determined that this alternative, as originally envisioned, would not meet all the legal requirements of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (MUSYA) and the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA); 2) Alternative C only addresses some, but not all, of the forest planning issues that have been identified by the public; 3) Other alternatives considered in detail provide for relatively low levels of management activities; and 4) Alternative C is similar to the "Minimum Level Benchmark" discussed in Appendix B.

Alternative H – When the management prescriptions applicable to this alternative were allocated and mapped, there ended up being virtually no difference between this alternative and Alternative G. The allocations were essentially the same, and the only significant difference between Alternative G and Alternative H was that in Alternative G, the majority of those acres being managed through silvicultural harvesting methods were classified as acres "suitable for timber production", while in Alternative H, those same acres and same management activities would be classified as "unsuited for timber production". Since there would be no differences in the overall outputs and environmental effects, it was decided that this alternative did not need to be considered further in detail in this EIS.

## ISSUES COMMON TO NATIONAL FORESTS IN THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS

Terrestrial Plants and Animals and Their Associated Habitats How should national forest retain or restore a diverse mix of terrestrial plant and animal habitat conditions, while meeting public demands for a variety of wildlife values and uses?

T&E and Sensitive/Locally Rare Species What levels of management are needed to protect and recover the populations of federally listed Threatened, Endangered and Proposed species? What level of management is needed for Forest Service sensitive and locally rare species?

Old Growth The issue surrounding old growth has several facets including: How much old growth is desired? Where should old growth occur? How should old growth be managed?

Riparian Area Management, Water Quality and Aquatic Habitats What are the desired riparian ecosystem conditions within national forests, and how will they be delineated, maintained and/or restored? What management direction is needed to help ensure that the hydrologic conditions are attained that are needed for the beneficial uses of water yielded by and flowing through National Forest System lands? What management is needed for the maintenance, enhancement, or restoration of aquatic habitats?

Wood Products The issue surrounding the sustained yield production of wood products from national forests has several facets, including (1) What are the appropriate objectives for wood product management; (2) Where should removal of wood products occur, given that this production is part of a set of multiple use objectives, and considering cost effectiveness; (3) What should be the level of outputs of wood products; and (4) What management activities associated with the production of wood products are appropriate?

Aesthetics/Scenery Management What scenic integrity should the national forests have in the future, and what scenic opportunities should they provide?

Recreation Opportunities/Experiences How should the increasing demand for recreational opportunities and experiences be addressed on the national forests while protecting forest resources? This includes considering a full range of opportunities for developed and dispersed recreation activities (including such things as nature study, hunting and fishing activities, and trail uses).

Roadless Areas/Wilderness Management What National Forest System lands should be recommended for wilderness designation? How should any roadless areas not

recommended for wilderness be managed? How should areas recommended for wilderness designation be managed? How should the patterns and intensity of use, fire, and insects and disease be managed in the existing wilderness areas?

Forest Health What conditions are needed to maintain forest capacity to persist and perform as expected or desired? Of particular concern are the impacts of exotic or non-native species; and the presence of ecological conditions with a higher level of insect and disease susceptibility.

Special Areas and Rare Communities What special areas should be designated, and how should they be managed? How should rare communities, such as those identified in the Southern Appalachian Assessment, be managed?

Wild and Scenic Rivers Which rivers are suitable for designation into the National Wild and Scenic River System and how should rivers that are eligible, but not suitable, be managed?

Access/Road Management How do we balance the rights of citizens to access their national forests with our responsibilities to protect and manage the soil and water resources, wildlife populations and habitat, aesthetics, forest health, and desired vegetative conditions?

## ISSUES UNIQUE TO THE NATIONAL FORESTS IN ALABAMA

Role of Fire/Air Quality. How will air quality be sustained while carrying out needed management activities such as prescribed fire, and what role will fire play n the ecosystems on each major division of land?

Fixed Communication Sites. What should be the location and size of fixed communication sites necessary to provide adequate protection and service delivery of communities of interest, resources, and facilities?

Tuskegee National Forest as a Demonstration Forest. Should the Tuskegee National Forest be designated as a Demonstration Forest, and what ecosystem management principles and/or research should be emphasized here?

Bankhead NF as a National Recreation Area. Should the Bankhead National Forest be recommended as a National Recreation Area?

Red-cockaded Woodpecker. What is the appropriate size and location for habitat management areas (HMA) for the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) on each major division of land?

Land Exchange and Land Acquisition. Under what conditions should land exchange and land acquisition programs be conducted on each division of land?

Minerals. How will the mineral resources of the National Forests be managed considering public demand for a wide variety of minerals? What areas will be made available for the exploration and development of federal leasable minerals and mineral materials?

# COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES BY ISSUE

## Issue 1 - Terrestrial Plants and Animals and Their Associated Habitats

In addressing this issue, management activities would strive to accomplish:

- Provide habitats to support desirable levels of selected species (e.g., species with special habitat needs such as large, contiguous forested landscapes; species commonly trapped/hunted; or species of special interest).

- Provide habitat conditions necessary to maintain viable populations of existing native, and desirable non-native species to the planning area.

Table 1 shows the comparison of Issue 1 by alternative. This table shows differences in early/late successional habitats by alternative, and trends of MIS species.

**Table 1. Issue 1 - Terrestrial Plants and Animals and Their Associated Habitats**

| Alternative/Units of Comparison | A | B | D | E | F | G | I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Successional Forest Habitats** | **Percent of Forested Acres** | | | | | | |
| Early Successional Habitat – 1st Decade | 9 | 8 | 14 | 10 | 13 | 10 | 8 |
| Early Successional Habitat – 5th Decade | 7 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 6 |
| Mid- to Late-Successional Habitat –1st Decade | 74 | 76 | 70 | 73 | 70 | 73 | 75 |
| Mid- to Late-Successional Habitat –5th Decade | 79 | 81 | 76 | 79 | 76 | 81 | 83 |
| Late Successional Habitat – 1st Decade | 51 | 53 | 47 | 50 | 48 | 51 | 52 |
| Late Successional Habitat – 5th Decade | 61 | 65 | 52 | 59 | 53 | 63 | 67 |
| **MIS – Community Indicators** | **Trends** | | | | | | |
| Hooded Warbler | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | = | + | + | + | + | = | + |
| +50 years | – | = | – | - | – | = | = |
| Acadian Flycatcher | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | = | = | = | = | = | = | = |
| +50 years | - | = | - | - | – | + | = |
| Swainson's Warbler | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | - | = | + | - | + | – | ++ |
| +50 years | + | - | + | + | – | – | + |
| Scarlet Tanager | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | - | = | – | - | – | = | - |
| +50 years | + | + | - | + | + | + | + |
| Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Pine & Pine-Oak) | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | - | ++ | – | - | – | + | ++ |
| +50 years | – | ++ | - | - | + | - | ++ |

| Table 1. Issue 1 - Terrestrial Plants and Animals and Their Associated Habitats | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Alternative/Units of Comparison** | **A** | **B** | **D** | **E** | **F** | **G** | **I** |
| Brown-headed nuthatch (Pine & Pine-Oak) | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | - | ++ | – | - | – | + | ++ |
| +50 years | – | ++ | - | - | + | - | ++ |
| Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Upland Longleaf) | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | - | + | - | - | - | + | = |
| +50 years | - | + | - | -- | - | + | + |
| Brown-headed nuthatch (Upland Longleaf) | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | + | = | - | - | = | = | = |
| +50 years | - | ++ | - | - | - | ++ | ++ |
| Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Mountain Longleaf) | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | - | + | - | - | - | + | = |
| +50 years | - | + | - | -- | - | + | + |
| Prairie Warbler | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | + | + | ++ | + | ++ | = | = |
| +50 years | = | - | + | = | + | -- | = |
| Pileated Woodpecker | | | | | | | |
| +10 YEARS | - | - | – | - | – | - | - |
| +50 YEARS | + | ++ | + | + | + | ++ | ++ |
| Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Woodlands) | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | - | ++ | - | + | - | = | ++ |
| +50 years | - | ++ | - | - | – | + | + |
| Northern Bobwhite Quail (Woodlands) | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | - | ++ | - | + | - | = | ++ |
| +50 years | - | ++ | - | - | – | + | + |
| White-tailed deer (Demand) | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | + | + | = | + | = | - | + |
| +50 years | + | + | + | + | + | - | + |
| Eastern wild turkey (Demand) | | | | | | | |
| +10 YEARS | + | + | - | + | - | + | + |
| +50 YEARS | + | + | = | + | = | = | + |
| Northern bobwhite quail (Demand) | | | | | | | |
| +10 YEARS | + | + | + | + | = | - | + |
| +50 YEARS | + | + | - | + | = | - | + |
| Wood Thrush | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | - | = | - | = | = | = | + |
| +50 years | - | = | - | = | = | + | = |

1 Population trend expressed as change from current levels: "++" = relatively large increase, "+" = increase, "=" = little to no change, "-" = decrease, "—" relatively large decrease.

## Issue 2 - Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive/Locally Rare Species

In addressing this issue, management activities would strive to:

- Conserve and recover threatened, endangered, and sensitive species and their habitats.

Table 2 shows the comparison of Issue 2 by alternatives. This table describes the differences in the levels of potential risk for loss of population viability of threatened, endangered, sensitive, and locally rare species.

**Table 2. Issue 2 – Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive/Locally Rare Species**

| Alternative/Units of Comparison | A | B | D | E | F | G | I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total Terrestrial Species Status Categories** | **Number of Species/Habitat Relationships** | | | | | | |
| Species/Habitat Relationships Rated as Very High Risk | 236 | 175 | 261 | 176 | 267 | 155 | 172 |
| Species/Habitat Relationships Rated as High Risk | 339 | 319 | 330 | 388 | 320 | 384 | 382 |
| Species/Habitat Relationships Rated as Moderately High Risk | 315 | 364 | 299 | 317 | 306 | 319 | 325 |
| Total | 890 | 858 | 890 | 881 | 893 | 884 | 879 |
| **Aquatic Species Viability** | **Number of Aquatic Species** | | | | | | |
| Low Risk | = | + | = | = | 59 | + | + |
| Moderate Risk, FS May Positively Influence | = | - | = | = | 11 | - | - |
| Mod Risk, Little Opportunity for FS Influence | = | = | = | = | 22 | = | = |
| High Risk, FS May Positively Influence | = | - | = | = | 7 | - | - |
| High Risk, Little Opportunity for FS Influence | = | = | = | = | 32 | = | = |
| **MIS – TES Species** | **Trends** | | | | | | |
| Red Cockaded Woodpecker (Pine & Pine Oak) | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | - | ++ | – | - | – | + | ++ |
| +50 years | – | ++ | - | - | + | - | ++ |
| Red Cockaded Woodpecker (Upland Longleaf) | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | - | + | - | - | - | + | = |
| +50 years | - | + | - | -- | - | + | + |
| Red Cockaded Woodpecker (Mountain Longleaf) | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | - | + | - | - | - | + | = |
| +50 years | - | + | - | -- | - | + | + |
| Red Cockaded Woodpecker (Woodlands) | | | | | | | |
| +10 years | - | ++ | - | + | - | = | ++ |
| +50 years | - | ++ | - | - | – | + | + |

1 Trend expressed as change from current levels: "++" = relatively large increase, "+" = increase, "=" = little to no change, "-" = decrease, "—" relatively large decrease.

## Issue 3 - Old Growth

In addressing this issue, management activities would strive to accomplish:

- A variety of large, medium, and small old growth patches will be managed (through restoration, protection, or maintenance activities) to meet biological and social needs. These patches could include stands of either "existing old growth" or "future old growth".

Table 3 shows the comparison of Issue 3 by alternative. This table shows the percent of each community that would be greater than 100 years old under the management of each alternative in 50 years.

**Table 3 Issue 3 – Old Growth: Percent of Community greater than 100 years old in period 5 by alternative**

| Alternative/Units of Comparison | A | B | D | E | F | G | I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Community Type** | Percent of Community | | | | | | |
| Cedar Woodland | 63 | 89 | 89 | 89 | 89 | 89 | 89 |
| Conifer Northern Hardwood | 85 | 88 | 88 | 85 | 88 | 88 | 78 |
| Coastal Plain Upland Hardwoods | 10 | 11 | 8 | 3 | 8 | 11 | 35 |
| Cypress Tupelo | 72 | 72 | 71 | 72 | 71 | 72 | 72 |
| Dry and Mesic Oak | 63 | 59 | 56 | 33 | 67 | 56 | 54 |
| Dry and Dry Mesic Oak-Pine | 9 | 17 | 8 | 21 | 6 | 20 | 18 |
| Mixed Mesophytic | 57 | 63 | 36 | 56 | 45 | 62 | 69 |
| Mountain Longleaf | 40 | 40 | 42 | 41 | 40 | 39 | 42 |
| River Floodplain | 60 | 65 | 40 | 61 | 39 | 61 | 59 |
| Upland Longleaf Pine | 18 | 31 | 14 | 24 | 33 | 29 | 35 |
| Wet Pine | 18 | 31 | 14 | 24 | 33 | 29 | 35 |
| Xeric Pine / Pine Oak | 42 | 34 | 33 | 31 | 14 | 33 | 40 |

*The percentages in the table are of those acres that were separated by community type for spectrum analysis and include both suitable and some unsuitable acres. However, some unsuitable areas, such as wilderness, were not separated by community type and are not included in these numbers.

Large patches of possible old growth are represented by those areas currently unsuitable due to the management prescription they are in, and will likely become old growth when the stands/communities attain the defined age for that community.

## Issue 4 - Riparian Area Management, Water Quality, and Aquatic Habitats

In addressing this issue, management activities would strive to accomplish:

- Management of watersheds are managed (and where necessary restoration) to provide resilient and stable conditions to ensure the quality and quantity of water necessary to protect ecological functions and support intended beneficial water uses.

- Management of riparian ecosystems, wetlands and aquatic systems are managed (and where necessary restoration) to protect and maintain their soil, water, vegetation, fish and wildlife associated resources.

Table 4 shows the comparison of Issue 4 by alternative. This table shows percentage increase in sediment yield due to Forest Service activities, compared to existing (base) levels of sediment yield. Also, trends for aquatic species by risk category, by alternative.

**Table 4. Issue 4 – Riparian Area Management, Water Quality, and Aquatic Habitats**

| Alternative/Units of Comparison | A | B | D | E | F | G | I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Soil and Water** | **Percent Increase** | | | | | | |
| Average Percent Increase in Sediment Yields from FS Activities over Existing Levels Across 56 5th level Watersheds | 0.67 | 0.71 | 0.79 | 0.70 | 0.76 | 0.71 | 0.64 |
| | | | | | | | |
| **Aquatic Habitat conditions** | **Number of watersheds in aquatic species risk categories or trend** | | | | | | |
| Low risk | = | + | = | = | 23 | + | + |
| Moderate risk, FS may positively influence | = | - | = | = | 0 | - | - |
| Mod risk, little opportunity for FS influence | = | = | = | = | 4 | = | = |
| High risk, FS may positively influence | = | - | = | = | 2 | - | - |
| High risk, little opportunity for FS influence | = | = | = | = | 16 | = | = |

**Trend expressed as change from current levels: "++" = relatively large increase, "+" = increase, "=" = little to no change, "-" = decrease, "—" relatively large decrease.**

## Issue 5 – Wood Products

In addressing this issue, management activities would strive to accomplish:

- Where forest management activities are needed and appropriate to achieve the desired composition, structure, and function of forest ecosystems; a result of such activities will also be to provide a sustainable supply of wood products for local needs.

- Provide supplies of those wood products where the Forest Service is in a unique position to make an impact on meeting the demand for those products.

Table 5 shows the comparison of Issue 5 by alternative. This table shows differences, by alternative, in suitable acres, ASQ, and volume differences in timber sale quantity by alternative, and in time.

**Table 5. Issue 5 – Wood Products**

| Alternative/Units of Comparison | A | B | D | E | F | G | I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Timber Management | Acres in Thousands | | | | | | |
| Land Classified as Suitable for Timber Production | 402.071 | 398.812 | 465.523 | 392.414 | 459.152 | 406.883 | 389.480 |
| | MMCF | | | | | | |
| Allowable Sale Quantity (First Decade) | 136.9 | 102.9 | 226.9 | 147.8 | 222.0 | 126.1 | 85.3 |
| Timber Sale Program Quantity (Total First Decade | 136.9 | 102.9 | 226.9 | 147.8 | 222.0 | 126.1 | 91.2 |
| Timber Sale Program Quantity (Total Fifth Decade) | 203.2 | 176.7 | 226.9 | 181.0 | 222.0 | 128.2 | 172.1 |

## Issue 6 - Aesthetics/Scenery Management

In addressing this issue, management activities would strive to accomplish:

- Protect and enhance the scenic and aesthetic values of the National Forest lands in the Southern Appalachians.

- The National Forests will be managed to provide a variety of Landscape Character Themes with the predominant themes being Natural Appearing, Natural Evolving, and variations of these themes.

Table 6 shows the comparison of Issue 6 by alternative. This table shows differences, by alternative, in land allocated by Scenic Integrity Objective.

| Table 6. Issue 6 – Aesthetics/Scenery Management | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Alternative/Units of Comparison** | **A** | **B** | **D** | **E** | **F** | **G** | **I** |
| **Scenic Integrity Objectives** | **Percent of Total Forest Acres** | | | | | | |
| Very High | 8 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 8 |
| High | 9 | 10 | 8 | 11 | 8 | 11 | 11 |
| Moderate | 19 | 14 | 13 | 31 | 11 | 21 | 27 |
| Low | 63 | 69 | 72 | 50 | 72 | 59 | 54 |
| Very Low | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

## Issue 7 - Recreation Opportunities/Experiences

In addressing this issue, management activities would strive to accomplish:

Provide a spectrum of high quality, nature-based recreation settings and opportunities that are not widely available on non-Federal lands.

Strive to meet the following recreation needs within the capabilities of the land:

- Hiking, biking, and equestrian trail systems, especially in non-motorized settings with high quality landscapes. Provide separate-use trails where necessary to reduce user conflicts or to improve the quality of recreation experiences.
- Designated OHV routes (which will occur primarily in RN1 settings).
- The high priority improvements, expansions, or additions of facilities providing developed recreation opportunities.
- Hunting, fishing, and non-consumptive wildlife opportunities.
- Improved interpretive opportunities or other special recreation needs locally identified.
- The National Forests will manage areas to provide for the "backcountry" (semi-primitive/remote) recreation experiences that are not available on other land ownerships.

Although the opportunities for outdoor recreation are extensive and the public demand for these opportunities is seemingly endless, the Forest's capability to meet these demands is neither static nor endless. Visitor preferences can shift over time, and both changing financial limitations and environmental impacts must be considered. In order to maximize value to the public with the limited resources available, the Forest will focus on providing those recreation opportunities that are

unique or of exceptional long-term value in a manner that focuses on maximizing visitor satisfaction within financial and environmental limitations.

A goal is to provide a spectrum of high quality nature-based recreation settings and opportunities that reflect the unique or exceptional resources of the Forest and the interests of the recreating public on an environmentally sound and financially sustainable basis. Adapt management of recreation facilities and opportunities as needed to shift limited resources to those opportunities.

Table 7 shows the comparison of Issue 7 by alternative. This table shows differences, by alternative, in recreation prescription land allocations, and ROS offerings by alternative. Increases/decreases in developed recreation facilities, including trails are not projected by this plan, but rather will be based, site specifically, on demand, and separate environmental analysis.

**Table 7. Issue 7 – Recreation Opportunities/Experiences**

| Issue/Units of Comparison | A | B | D | E | F | G | I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Recreation Opportunity Spectrum** | **Acres in Thousands** | | | | | | |
| Primitive (Rx's 1A, 1B, & 2A1) | 54.0 | 48.3 | 43.9 | 54.9 | 42.9 | 56.5 | 43.5 |
| Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.8 | 16.6 | 0 | 4.8 |
| Semi-Primitive Motorized | 19.8 | 19.8 | 19.8 | 30.4 | 18.9 | 19.8 | 36.9 |
| Roaded Natural 1 | 584.7 | 591.0 | 595.5 | 569.1 | 580.8 | 582.9 | 572.4 |
| Rural/Urban | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 7.5 |
| **Recreation Management Allocations** | **Acres in Thousands** | | | | | | |
| Acres with a Recreation Emphasis (Rx 7's) | 79.963 | 30.404 | 16.885 | 181.892 | 13.725 | 32.158 | 150.676 |
| Acres with a Backcountry Recreation Emphasis (Rx 12"s) | 7.328 | 7.328 | 0.513 | 20.283 | 16.632 | 0.513 | 20.666 |
| **Developed/Dispersed Recreation** | **Percent Increase (Range)** | | | | | | |
| **Estimated Increase in Capacity of Developed Recreation Areas** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Estimated Increase in Non-Motorized Trails** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Off-Highway Vehicle Roads and Trails** | **Acres in Thousands** | | | | | | |
| **Acres of Off-Highway Vehicle Use Areas (Rx 7C)** | 4.685 | 4.685 | 4.685 | 4.685 | 4.121 | 4.685 | 4.685 |
| | **Percent Increase (Range)** | | | | | | |
| Estimated Change in Motorized Roads and Trails | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **MIS – Demand Species** | **Trends** | | | | | | |
| White–tailed Deer – 1st 10 years | + | + | = | + | = | - | + |
| Eastern Wild Turkey -1st 10 years | + | + | - | + | - | + | + |
| Northern Bobwhite Quail - 1st 10 years | + | + | + | + | = | - | + |

Population trend expressed as change from current levels: "++" = relatively large increase, "+" = increase, "=" = little to no change, "-" = decrease, "—" relatively large decrease.

## Issue 8 - Roadless Areas and Wilderness Management

In addressing this issue, management activities would strive to accomplish:

- Wilderness, roadless and other un-roaded areas are managed to provide their full range of social and ecological benefits.

Tables 8.1 and 8.2 show the comparison of Issue 8 by alternative. These tables show differences, by alternative, in acres recommended for wilderness designation.

**Table 8.1 - Issue 8 – Roadless Areas and Wilderness Management**

| Alternative/Units of Comparison | A | B | D | E | F | G | I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wilderness/Roadless | Acres in Thousands | | | | | | |
| Acres of Existing Wilderness | 42.211 | 42.211 | 42.211 | 42.211 | 42.211 | 42.211 | 42.211 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Recommended for Designation as WSAs | 11.519 | 5.398 | 0.954 | 11.918 | 0 | 13.542 | 0.540 |
| Roadless Character Maintained (percent) | 100% | 100% | 13% | 100% | 43% | 100% | 100% |

**Table 8.2 - Issue 8 – Roadless Areas Recommended for WSAs**

| Alt. | Roadless Areas Recommended for Designation as Wilderness Study Areas |
|---|---|
| A | Oakey Mountain, Blue Mountain, Cheaha A, Cheaha B |
| B | Blue Mountain, Cheaha A, Cheaha B |
| D | Cheaha A, Cheaha B |
| E | Cheaha A, Cheaha B |
| F | None |
| G | Oakey Mountain, Blue Mountain, Cheaha A, Cheaha B |
| I | Cheaha A, and 42% of Cheaha B |

## Issue 9 - Forest Health

In addressing this issue, management activities would strive to accomplish:

- Forest ecosystems are managed, either through restoration or maintenance, to provide the desired composition (species mix), structure (age class distribution), function (resulting benefits), and productivity over time.
- Management activities will reduce the impacts from exotic or non-native invasive species.

Table 9 shows the comparison of Issue 9 by alternative. This table shows differences, by alternative, between pertinent forest health concerns, application of prescribed fire, and where restoration is emphasized.

**Table 9. Issue 9 – Forest Health**

| Issue/Units of Comparison | A | B | D | E | F | G | I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Forest Health Concerns 1.** | **Risk Level Projection** | | | | | | |
| Gypsy Moth | = | = | = | + | + | + | = |
| Southern Pine Beetle | - | - | - | + | - | = | - |
| Oak Decline | - | + | - | + | + | + | + |
| Non-native Invasive Plants | - | - | - | + | + | = | = |
| Dogwood Anthracnose | = | = | = | = | = | = | = |
| **Prescribed Fire** | **Acres in Thousands** | | | | | | |
| Estimated Acres Prescribed Burned (Total) | 64.8 | 90.0 | 64.8 | 86.8 | 64.8 | 86.8 | 90.0 |
| **Restoration** | **Acres in Thousands** | | | | | | |
| Acres with a Restoration Emphasis (Rx's 9C, 9D, 9E, 9G, 9H) | 29.554 | 382.676 | 2.918 | 51.539 | N/A | 6.270 | 103.519 |
| | | | | | | | |

**1 Trend expressed as change from current levels,"+" = increase, "=" = little to no change, "-" = decrease.**

## Issue 10 - Special Areas and Rare Communities

In addressing this issue, management activities would strive to accomplish:

- Protect or restore the rare communities found on National Forest lands.
- Those areas with special geological, paleontological, botanical, zoological, cultural, or heritage characteristics will be managed (or where feasible restored) to protect those characteristics.

Table 10 shows the comparison of Issue 10 by alternative. This table shows differences, by alternative, in land allocations of the Special Area Management Prescription.

| Table 10. Issue 10 – Special Areas and Rare Communities | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Issue/Units of Comparison** | **A** | **B** | **D** | **E** | **F** | **G** | **I** |
| **Special Areas** | **Acres in Thousands** | | | | | | |
| Acres Allocated to Special Areas (RX 4's) | 30.866 | 20.348 | 20.348 | 20.348 | 20.348 | 20.348 | 26.180 |
| **Rare Communities** | | | | | | | |
| Rare Communities Managed According to the Rare Community Mgt. Pres. (9F) | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes |
| | | | | | | | |

## Issue 11 - Wild and Scenic Rivers

In addressing this issue, management activities would strive to accomplish:

- Wild, Scenic and Recreation Rivers which are designated by Congress, recommended for designation, or are eligible for designation, will be managed to protect their outstandingly remarkable values.

Table 11 shows the comparison of Issue 11 by alternative. This table shows existing Wild and Scenic River acres, and acres allocated to Eligible Rivers, by alternative.

| Table 11. Issue 11 – Wild and Scenic Rivers | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Alternatives/Units of Comparison** | **A** | **B** | **D** | **E** | **F** | **G** | **I** |
| **Wild and Scenic Rivers** | **Acres** | | | | | | |
| Acres of River Corridors Currently Designated | 8513 | 8513 | 8513 | 8513 | 8513 | 8513 | 8513 |
| Acres of Rivers Eligible | 931 | 931 | 931 | 931 | 0 | 931 | 931 |
| Acres of River Corridors Managed to Protect their Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORVs) | 9444 | 9444 | 9444 | 9444 | 8513 | 9444 | 9444 |
| Acres of River Corridors Recommended for W&SR Designation | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

## Issue 12 - Access and Road (Travelway) Management

In addressing this issue, management activities would strive to accomplish:

- Provide a transportation system that supplies and improves access for all forest road users within the capabilities of the land.
- Accelerate the pace of decommissioning unneeded roads (classified and unclassified).

- Provide better quality access by upgrading highly used forest roads; and any roads that are needed but are adversely affecting surrounding resource values and conditions.

Table 12 shows the comparison of Issue 12 by alternative. This table shows miles of current road system, maintenance levels 1 through 5, and that road/trail construction, re-construction, and decommissioning will occur on a site specific, project level analysis, not at this plan level.

**Table 12 Issue 12 – Access and Road Management**

| Alternative/Units of Comparison | A | B | D | E | F | G | I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transportation System | Miles | | | | | | |
| Maintenance level 1 roads | 304 | 304 | 304 | 304 | 304 | 304 | 304 |
| Maintenance level 2 roads | 868 | 868 | 868 | 868 | 868 | 868 | 868 |
| Maintenance level 3 roads | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 |
| Maintenance level 4 roads | 107 | 107 | 107 | 107 | 107 | 107 | 107 |
| Maintenance level 5 roads | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Road decisions at project level | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Issues 13 through 19 were issues unique to the National Forests in Alabama, and were developed during the issue development process, early in the revision process.

Table 13 shows the comparison of these Issues, by alternative. This table shows differences in alternatives pertinent to the issue(s), as determined by the Interdisciplinary Team for Alabama.

**Table13 – Comparison of Local Issues by Alternative, National Forests in Alabama**

| Issue/Units of Comparison | A | B | D | E | F | G | I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **13. Role of Fire and Air Quality:** | | | | | | | |
| Acres of Prescribed Burning | 64,800 | 90,000 | 64,800 | 86,800 | 64,800 | 86,800 | 90,000 |
| Differences in Air Quality | | | | | | | |
| **14. Fixed Communication Sites:** | | | | | | | |
| Allocations to Rx 5B – Acres | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | N/A | 5 | 5 |
| Additional Allocations Done Site Specifically | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **15. Tuskegee as a Demonstration Forest:** | | | | | | | |
| Yes/No | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No |

| Table13 – Comparison of Local Issues by Alternative, National Forests in Alabama | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Issue/Units of Comparison** | **A** | **B** | **D** | **E** | **F** | **G** | **I** |
| **16. Bankhead as a National Recreation Area:** | | | | | | | |
| Yes/No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| **17. RCW Management:** | | | | | | | |
| Acres Actively Managed (Rx 8.D.1) | 196,391 | 145,487 | 175,368 | 127,162 | 0 | 302,393 | 225,372 |
| **18. Land Exchange/Acquisition:** | | | | | | | |
| Emphasis for Acquisitions | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **19. Minerals:** | | | | | | | |
| % Acres Available for Leasing | 92.2 | 92.2 | 92.2 | 92.2 | 92.2 | 92.2 | 92.2 |
| % Acres with Restrictions/Special Stipulations | 32.2 | 32.1 | 28.3 | 35.1 | 9.4 | 30.8 | 34.4 |

## MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS EMPHASIS

Management Prescriptions are assigned numbers. Please refer to the Management Area Maps in the Forest Plan to see how the prescriptions will be applied on the ground. Different colored areas on the maps display the management prescriptions assigned to certain land areas or management areas. Similar to a medical prescription, the management prescriptions represent a range of management actions (i.e., treatments) designed to meet the Forest's goals and objectives.

## MANAGEMENT AREA MAP

### CDROM

Included with this Summary document is a CD ROM containing electronic files of the Revised Plan Document, the Final EIS, and color maps of each of the Management Areas by Alternative. If you or your local Public Library have a personal computer (PC) that has a CD ROM drive on it, you should be able to view these documents and maps that way. The maps are image files in a jpeg format which can be viewed with most web browsers, or with Microsoft Paint, available as part of the basic Windows packages since Windows 95. The Revised Plan and EIS documents are in a pdf (portable document file), which can be viewed with the free software, Adobe Acrobat. A copy of Adobe Acrobat can be downloaded via the web at *http://www.adobe.com/*.