



File Code: 1950

Date: November 27, 2007

Dear Interested Publics:

The Huron Shores Ranger Station is proposing resource management activities, to meet management objectives established in the Huron-Manistee National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (Forests' Plan), on National Forest lands within the perimeter of the Galion Road Fire. This wildfire occurred on July 29, 2007 burning approximately 557 acres of private and National Forest lands. This letter is to inform you of the Galion Road Fire Project and its intent. Enclosed is the Proposed Decision Memo for your review. We invite and encourage you to help us identify opportunities and concerns which relate specifically to the proposals in this project. The proposed activities include the creation of a fuel break, maintenance of existing fuel breaks, road system management, and vegetative monitoring.

Affected Area

This project is located in Wilber Township; T23N R7E, sections 29 & 32 of Iosco County, Michigan. Maps of the proposed project are enclosed (**Vicinity Map, Project Map**).

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Actions

The Galion Road Fire Project lies entirely within Management Area (MA) 4.2, Rooded Natural Sandy Plains and Hills, as designated by the Forests' Plan. General direction for this area is to enhance and increase the variety of wildlife habitats and to reduce life-threatening and property damaging wildfire potential. The primary purposes of the proposed activities are to reduce the risk of wildfire, to provide for diverse wildlife habitat, to monitor the site to ensure the MA returns to an acceptable stocking level, and to close non-Forest System roads.

This project is proposed to create a new fuel break and maintain existing fuel breaks within the perimeter of the Galion Road fire in order to reduce the amount of highly flammable fuels around areas of residences, to decrease the risk of catastrophic life-threatening and property damaging wildfires, to suppress the spread of non-native invasive species, to provide for diverse wildlife habitat, and to decrease unauthorized motorized use. Project proposals are designed to meet management objectives as described in the Forests' Plan by enhancing the present condition of the ecosystem and managing the project area toward the desired future condition.

Proposed Actions include:

- Create a fuel break along the east side of the private property, in the Northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 32, using mechanical treatment methods of roller chopping or hydro-axing. The treatment will be a 300 foot wide fuel break from the existing fuel break in stand 102 north roughly 2400 feet to the fire line for a total of approximately 17 acres of fuel break creation. Large diameter snags will be left, where available, to meet snag guidelines. (**Project Map-Item 1**)



- Promote firewood gathering in approximately 12 acres of stand 112 south of Williams Trail to reduce the amount of dead material in the stand. Individual fire killed trees that pose a safety hazard will be felled. All non hazardous live trees will be left and large diameter snags will be marked as leave trees to meet snag guidelines and provide for wildlife habitat. Monitoring of residual material left over from firewood gathering will take place to ensure the integrity of the fuel break and maintain its effectiveness. If needed, follow up treatments to the residual material using hand piling and/or prescribed burning, or other mechanical treatment methods will occur. **(Project Map-Item 2)**
- Treat approximately 10 acres of existing fuel break in stand 102 to reduce the dead vegetation and to assist in future maintenance. Treatments will consist of hand cutting and piling of dead materials and/or prescribed burning. Large diameter snags will be left, where available, to meet snag guidelines. **(Project Map-Item 3)**
- Leave burned area, except for fuels treatment areas outlined, to naturally regenerate, due to the low economic value of the stands. Firewood Gathering is allowed from public roads. Monitor regeneration progress to assure reforestation occurs. **(Project Map-Item 4)**
- Reduce road density and associated resource damage by obliterating approximately 2.25 miles of non-Forest System roads in the project area and restore them to native warm season grasses to suppress the spread of non-native invasive species, reduce the risk of human caused fires, and reduce unauthorized motorized use. **(Project Map-Non-System Road Closures)**
- Remove existing garbage/refuse in the project area.

Laws and Regulations

A proposed action may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and if:

- The proposed action is within one of the categories in the Department of Agriculture NEPA policies and procedures in Title 7, Code of Federal Regulations, part 1b (CFR part 1b, or if
- The proposed action is within a category listed in section 31.12 or 31.2 of the Forest Service Handbook (FSH)

This proposal is in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and CEQ regulations contained in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 31.2, Category 10. Category 10 allows hazardous fuels reduction activities using prescribed fire, not to exceed 4,500 acres, and mechanical methods for crushing, piling, thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, mulching, and mowing, not to exceed 1,000 acres. The proposed actions will not impact wetlands or floodplains, congressionally designated areas, Research Natural Areas, threatened or endangered species, designated critical habitat, or religious or cultural sites. This has been verified and documented through reviews from resource specialists. This project is similar to previous fuels reduction projects on the Huron-Manistee National Forests where no adverse direct, indirect, or cumulative effects are known to have occurred.



Comments on the Proposal

We would like to know your thoughts and ideas concerning the project and its proposals. Any suggestions you have regarding the site-specific proposal will be considered as we identify issues and further develop the proposal. Please submit your written or hand-delivered comments to District Ranger, USDA Forest Service, Huron Shores Ranger Station, 5761 N. Skeel Ave., Oscoda, MI 48750, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, or faxed to (989) 739-0347, or emailed to comments-eastern-huron-manistee-huron-shores@fs.fed.us (must be readable by Microsoft Office 2000 or Adobe Acrobat formats). Please include the following:

- 1) Name, address, telephone number, organization represented and title
- 2) title of the document on which the comments are being submitted (**Galion Road Fire Project**)
- 3) Specific facts and supporting reasons regarding your comments.

Comments received in response to the project will become a matter of public record¹. If you have questions or need additional information regarding the project, please contact Sam Barnes at (989) 739-0728, smbarnes@fs.fed.us, or write to USDA Forest Service, Huron Shores Ranger Station, 5761 N. Skeel Ave., Oscoda, MI 48750. Copies of the final decision will be mailed to people who have submitted comments on this proposal and to anyone who requests a copy of these documents.

This public scoping opportunity includes, and is concurrent with, a 30-day comment period to establish standing under a Forest Service administrative appeal regulation. The 30-day comment period provides the final pre-decisional opportunity for public review of the proposed action. The opportunity to comment ends 30 days following the date of publication of the legal notice in the Oscoda Press. Appeals may be filed by persons or non-Federal organizations or entities that provide comments or otherwise express interest in the proposed action. In order to have standing to appeal this decision under 36 CFR 215, you must have submitted comments prior to the close of the 30-day comment period for the legal notice, and sign the comments or be able to verify identity upon request. Comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, specific to the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider. Your comments will be considered by District Ranger, Charles J. Andrina in reaching a final decision.

Sincerely,

CHARLES J. ANDRINA
District Ranger

Enclosures
Proposed Decision Memo
Vicinity Map
Project Map



¹ Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit such comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27 (d), any person may request that a submission be withheld from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that confidentiality is granted in only very limited circumstances. The Forest Service will inform the requester of its decision regarding a request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the submission will be returned and the requester notified that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's target center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-w, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington DC 20250-9401 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD).

