



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Huron-Manistee National Forests
Mio Ranger District
107 McKinley Road
Mio, MI 48647

989-826-3252 (Voice)
989-826-6073 (Fax)
989-826-3592 (TTY)

File Code: 1950

Date: February 6, 2008

Dear Forest Neighbor,

The U.S. Forest Service is proposing to implement the *Hilltop Prescribed Burn Project* on the Mio Ranger District of the Huron-Manistee National Forests.

Hilltop Prescribed Burn Project

The project area is located in Oscoda County, Michigan approximately 1.5 miles east of Mio (Township 26 North, Range 3 East, Sections 5, 8, 9 and 17). Due to a recent ruling from the 9th District Court in *Sierra v. Bosworth* the Forest Service is not proceeding with actions authorized under Categorical Exclusion 31.2 (10). Portions of this project were originally authorized under that authority on 12/28/2005 and included the following treatments: mechanically treating approximately 138 acres, and prescribed burning approximately 119 acres, to reduce surface fuels, ladder fuels, and minimize crown contact between trees in order to reduce fire hazard near private property. Mechanical treatments include thinning four red pine plantations; removal of jack pine, thinning white and red pine and fir trees, and limbing mature pine and fir trees to a height of 8 feet within fuelbreaks; and mowing of fuelbreaks and existing openings within the area. The project also included improvement of existing facilities at Au Sable Loop Campground and Overlook, as well as repairs to Forest Roads 4366 and 4442.

Since the prescribed burning of approximately 119 acres that was authorized under the original decision can also be authorized under Category 31.2 (6) "Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction," District Ranger Steven Goldman is proposing to withdraw the portion of the original decision that included the prescribed burning, and issue a new decision for this activity under Category 31.2(6). The prescribed burning will reduce surface fuels near private property, reintroduce fire into a fire adapted ecosystem, and promote the restoration of old growth timber stand characteristics.

We are providing the opportunity for public comment on Categorical Exclusions (CEs) pursuant to the Appeals Reform Act. This 30-day comment period provides the final pre-decisional opportunity for public review of these proposed actions. Comments must be received or post marked within 30 days of the date that this notice is published in the Oscoda County Herald. If the comment period ends on a Saturday, Sunday or Federal holiday, the comment period shall be extended to the close of business of the next Federal working day. In order to have standing to appeal a decision under 36 CFR 215, you must submit comments or express interest during the 30-day comment period.

Comments will be considered by District Ranger, Steven A. Goldman in reaching a final decision. Mr. Goldman may be reached at the Mio Ranger Station, 107 McKinley Rd., Mio, MI 48647 (M-F, 8-4:30), or by phone at 989-826-3252, 989-826-3592 (TTY), or 989-826-6073 (fax). E-mail comments to: comments-eastern-huron-manistee-mio@fs.fed.us (Email attachments must be readable by MS Office 2000 or Adobe Acrobat 5.0). Include (1) name,



address, telephone number, name of organization represented and title, (2) title of document on which the comment is being submitted (Hilltop Fuels Reduction Project), and (3) specific facts and supporting reasons that you believe we should consider in reaching a final decision. In order to have standing to appeal this decision under 36 CFR 215, you must have submitted comments or otherwise expressed interest in this proposal prior to the close of the 30-day comment period.

If you have any questions, or need further information about this proposal, please contact Carrie Scott at the address or phone numbers above. Copies of the final decision (Decision Memo) will be mailed to people who submit comments, or who request a copy during or before the comment period. Comments received in response to this project will become a matter of public record¹.

Sincerely,

/s/ Steven A. Goldman

Steven A. Goldman
District Ranger

Enclosure

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.

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