

Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement **Lower Williams Vegetation** Monongahela National Forest

January 2008

Webster County, West Virginia

Lead Agency: USDA Forest Service
Monongahela National Forest

Responsible Official: James L. Lowe, District Ranger
Gauley Ranger District
932 N. Fork Cherry Rd.
Richwood, WV 26261
(304) 846-2695

For Further Information: O'Dell Tucker, Project Team Leader
Marlinton Ranger District
PO Box 210
Marlinton, WV 24954
(304) 799-4334, ext 19

ABSTRACT: The Lower Williams project area (LWPA) falls within the confines of Three Forks of the Williams River, Bishop Knob, Donaldson, and Turkey Ridge, with the lower portion of the Williams River traversing through the middle. This Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) was prepared to document the analysis of six alternatives developed to manage multiple resources within the LWPA under the Forest Plan guidance. The Deciding Official for this project will be James L. Lowe, District Ranger.

The following three issues were identified before and after scoping: (1) erosion and sedimentation, acid sensitive soils, and early successional habitat and openings. The six alternatives considered in detail are Alternative 1 is the No Action and four Action Alternatives. Alternative 2 is the proposed action presented to the public during scoping. Alternative 3 was developed as a modified version of the proposed action to address the issues identified before and after scoping. Alternatives 4 and 5 responds to the effects of the four issues by proposing less conventional logging, more helicopter logging, dropping units, and no new road construction. Alternative 6 is the Preferred Alternative. Alternative 6 would effectively address the issues and concerns raised by the public and the interdisciplinary team.

COMMENTING INFORMATION: The comment period on the SDEIS will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the Federal Register.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of SDEIS's must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. City of Angoon v. Hodel, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 45-day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the SDEIS should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the SDEIS or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1- Purpose and Need for Action.....	3
Introduction.....	3
Project Area Description.....	3
The Proposed Action.....	3
Forest Plan Direction.....	4
Purpose and Need for Action.....	4
Chapter 2 – Alternatives Considered.....	7
Introduction.....	7
Public Scoping.....	7
Issues Used to Formulate Alternatives.....	7
Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study.....	9
Alternatives Given Detailed Study	10
Consistency of Proposed Activities in All Action Alternatives	10
Alternative 1 – No Action.....	11
Alternative 2 – Proposed Action	12
Alternative 3 – Proposed Action Modified After Scopin.....	12
Alternative 4 – No New Road Construction, ½ Mile Maximum Skid Trail.....	13
Alternative 5 – No New Road Construction, No Conventional Logging.....	13
Alternative 6 – Modified Alternative 3	14
Comparison of Alternatives	16
Mitigation Measures	18
Chapter 3 – Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences.....	20
Introduction	21
Cumulative Effects Consideration Actions.....	23
Biological Environment	24
Vegetation	24
Wildlife	39
Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Plants	88
Physical Environment	108
Soil	108
Aquatics	134
Social Environment	161
Heritage	161
Recreation	164
Scenery/Visuals	167
Economic	175
Safety	182
Herbicides	184
Environmental Justice	188
Other Required Disclosures	189
Chapter 4 – List of Preparers	192
Chapter 5 – Consultation and Coordination	195
Appendix A – References	197
Appendix B – Acid Deposition and Air Quality	216
Appendix C – Project Maps	248

**Appendix D - Forest Standards and Guidelines/Design Criteria/Mitigation
Measures249**
Appendix E – Project Description282