



Dear Interested Citizen,

December 1, 2003

The Saco Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest is initiating an environmental analysis for a proposed timber and wildlife habitat management project. We are asking for public input for the proposed Chandler Round Project environmental analysis. The majority of the areas proposed for treatment are along existing forest roads and skid trails within lower elevation hardwood or mixedwood stands. The enclosed maps and attachments describe the proposed action.

I would like to hear your comments or concerns regarding the proposed action. You will find instructions for how to submit your comments at the end of this letter. Your comments will be considered as we evaluate the proposal and proceed with the environmental analysis. The environmental analysis will be done by a team of natural resource specialists. To maintain standing to appeal a later decision for this project, individuals must comment on the EA, which has its own comment period (see enclosure 7).

#### **Enclosures with this Letter**

- (1) Vicinity maps showing the location of the project within the White Mountain National Forest.
- (2) A project map showing the locations of proposed harvest units and transportation system.
- (3) Table 1: Chandler Round Project Proposed Action.
- (4) An overview of Existing Conditions in the analysis area.
- (5) Summary of Management Systems and Harvest Methods.
- (6) Mitigations Common to Action Alternatives for Vegetation Management.
- (7) An overview of the Environmental Analysis Process.

#### **Chandler Round Project Analysis Area**

The project is located in the Towns of Chatham and Jackson in Carroll County, New Hampshire. The project encompasses approximately 1,000 acres. The analysis area, Habitat Management Area (HMA) 505, is 8,246 acres and lies in the vicinity of Eastman, Chandler, Round and Sable Mountain, on the east and west sides of Slippery Brook, north of Mountain Pond.

Slippery Brook is the primary drainage for the project area; the unnamed tributaries in the analysis area enter Slippery Brook, except McDonough Brook, which is tributary to Cold River. Slippery Brook enters the East Branch of the Saco River below the analysis area.

Forest Plan Management Areas within the project analysis area and their approximate acreages are:

- (a) MA 3.1 - Multiple-Use Forest, Higher Intensity of Management, 5,691 acres;
- (b) MA 6.1 - Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Recreation, 1,765 acres;
- (c) MA 6.2 - Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Recreation, 790 acres;

The proposed action (treatment area) is entirely within Management Area 3.1. Applicable Forest Plan goals and objectives for MA 3.1 for this project are:



(a) Provide high quality hardwood sawtimber on a sustained yield basis and other timber products through intensive timber management practices; (b) Increase wildlife habitat diversity for the full range of wildlife species with emphasis on early successional species; and (c) Grow small diameter trees for fiber production.

## **Purpose and Need**

*Promote desired conditions outlined in the Forest Plan, including managing forest health*

The purpose of the proposed action is to analyze existing vegetation conditions as compared to the desired condition established in the Forest Plan, and to make progress in attaining wildlife habitat and timber goals for Management Area 3.1. An additional Forest Plan objective is to develop quality hardwoods for future management, and to harvest some of the areas where previous treatments prepared the stands (created quality hardwoods) that are ripe for removal.

The majority of the stands proposed for treatment have previously been treated with thinning or single tree selection treatments. Residual trees are quality hardwoods and softwoods intentionally left to increase in size, vigor, and value. Proposed units are designated in areas with mature and overmature hardwood trees which have deteriorated as a result of crown damage caused in the ice storm of 1998. Many of these damaged live trees are nearly dead, or are severely reduced in vigor, and therefore are susceptible to disease and further decay. Except in proposed clearcuts, treated areas would be comprised of stands containing healthier trees following treatment.

The purpose and need to treat these stands also includes the opportunity to harvest valuable mature and overmature trees before they lose value through decay and mortality, and at the same time meet wildlife habitat objectives (discussed below). The understory in these previously treated stands is responding to increased sunlight caused by the damaged crowns. Species composition in the new regeneration is often primarily beech, a highly competitive shade-loving species, with other valued species (maple, ash, birch and softwoods) struggling to compete for sunlight under the damaged but never-the-less present canopy.

Opening the stands to additional sunlight and scarification of soils during harvest would provide conditions that allow yellow birch, paper birch, sugar maple, ash and softwood to better compete with beech. Removal of the mature and overmature residual trees can be accomplished while the young regeneration is supple. The desired end result would be a greater diversity of species in the regenerating hardwood stands, increased softwood component in mixedwood stands, and marketing of quality hardwood which would result in jobs and government revenue.

*Creation of early successional habitat through clearcutting*

Examination of the vegetation database, aerial photography and field reconnaissance indicates a lack of early-successional northern hardwood stands (0-9 years of age). Early-successional habitat is important for a number of plant species including pin cherry, aspen and paper birch, and wildlife species including ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer and native and migrant songbirds. Forest Plan requirements for this HMU calls for 569 acres in 0-9 year age class. The HMU currently has 16 acres in this age class.

*Promote and perpetuate thermal cover, hiding cover, and forage in softwoods (e.g., spruce, fir, hemlock) and mixed wood stands*

Vegetative conditions within HMU 505 indicate approximately 450 acres in softwood condition. Forest Plan desired condition calls for approximately 950 acres in softwood condition within this HMU. Softwoods provide cover habitat and browse for snowshoe hare, white-tailed deer and other important habitat for many other species. The softwood component can be increased or perpetuated in softwood and mixedwood stands with single-tree selection and small group selection treatments.

#### *Improve biological diversity*

Opportunities to increase and promote growth of under-represented vegetative communities as part of a diverse ecosystem are being considered. This would be accomplished in mature softwood and mixedwood stands where softwoods can be perpetuated. Biological diversity would also be enhanced in hardwood areas proposed for clearcutting and group selection treatments to provide early successional conditions with regenerating aspen, yellow birch, paper birch and pin cherry.

### **The Proposed Action**

The following proposed action is designed to respond to the purpose of and need for action:

1. Promote desired vegetation and habitat conditions outlined in the Forest Plan, and produce forest products to benefit the local economy.

- Increase early successional habitat by creating up to 205 acres of hardwood regeneration habitat through clearcutting;
- Enhance softwood habitat through approximately 355 acres of single-tree selection harvests;
- Improve timber quality and improve species composition in hardwood and mixedwood stands through approximately 175 acres of commercial thinning and 265 acres of single-tree selection;

2. Provide suitable and safe access to the planning area and manage National Forest lands, resources and facilities in accordance with the White Mountain National Forest Plan

- Restore to their current design standard, the following existing Forest Roads: 17, - 2.5 miles; 17a, - 1.1 miles; 17b, - 2.2 miles; 17c, - 0.5 miles; and 17g, - 0.5 miles;
- Place a temporary bridge over Slippery Brook at the existing bridge crossing site near Mountain Pond to provide access to Forest Road 17a west of Slippery Brook;
- Place another temporary bridge at an unnamed brook on FR 17a, and remove both of these bridges and associated footings following closure of this project;
- Construct 0.3 miles of new road off of FR 17a, including one culvert and one temporary bridge, to access units 14-17, 22 and 25 (see Map).
- Place a temporary bridge at an existing crossing adjacent to unit 29 (unnamed existing road);
- Seed and close opened roads to vehicular traffic when the project is complete;
- Remove the existing (upper) bridge across Slippery Brook at the end of FR 17 near unit 9.
- Create up to ten acres in wildlife openings in three locations where landings exist, and will be used again for this project. These wildlife openings would occur in proposed clearcut unit 2,

adjacent to landings to be used for that unit. These openings will be maintained every three to five years with mowing and/or prescribed burning.

### **Connected Actions**

Associated area improvement projects may include up to 200 acres of timber stand improvement such as precommercial thinning, or regeneration release following establishment of regeneration in treated areas. These activities would be performed if needed to assure that regeneration objectives in single tree selection prescription units are met. Desirable regenerating species would be released from overtopping beech if needed to foster diversity of species in the new developing stand.

### **How You Can Help**

Please tell us your thoughts on this project. You can become involved by writing or calling us at the Saco Ranger District at the address and phone number on the letterhead. Your specific comments, questions and suggestions can help us make the best decision. Comments can be mailed to the address on the letterhead, via phone, or electronically to [TWMiller@fs.fed.us](mailto:TWMiller@fs.fed.us). Please consider the following specific questions and respond no later than January 15, 2004.

- (1) What features in the analysis area or the proposed action are important to you?
- (2) What alternative design to attain the purpose and need for this proposed action should the Forest Service consider?
- (3) Are there specific environmental effects within the scope of this proposed action that you feel should be addressed in the Environmental Analysis? If so, please specifically outline what these effects are and explain the reason you feel they should be analyzed (see attachment 7).

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Rick Alimi or Rod Wilson at (603) 447-5448, Extension 103, or extension 120, or write to the District Ranger at the address on the letterhead.

Thank you for your interest in the White Mountain National Forest. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Terry Miller  
District Ranger

Enclosures

Table 1: Chandler Round Project Proposed Action

Unit	Forest Type	Acre	Treatment Objective	Harvest Method	Operating Season
1	Mixedwood	32	Hardwood regeneration	STS with Groups	Summer/Fall/Winter
2	Hardwood	24	Hardwood regeneration	Clear Cut	Summer/Fall/Winter
3	Mixedwood	32	Softwood development	STS with Groups	Fall/Winter
4	Hardwood	24	Hardwood regeneration	STS with Groups	Fall/Winter
5	Hardwood	48	Hardwood regeneration	STS with Groups *	Fall/Winter
6	Mixedwood	47	Softwood development	STS with Groups *	Fall/Winter
7	Hardwood	30	Hardwood regeneration	Clear Cut	Summer/Fall/Winter
8	Mixedwood	25	Softwood development	STS with Groups *	Fall/Winter
9	Hardwood	28	Hardwood regeneration	Clear Cut	Summer/Fall/Winter
10	Mixedwood	26	Softwood development	Thin	Fall/Winter
11	Hardwood	23	Hardwood regeneration	STS with Groups	Summer/Fall/Winter
12	Hardwood	40	Quality hardwood	Thin	Fall/Winter
13	Hardwood	27	Hardwood regeneration	STS with Groups	Fall/Winter
14	Softwood	32	Softwood development	STS with Groups *	Fall/Winter
15	Hardwood	84	Quality hardwood	Thin	Fall/Winter
16	Hardwood	20	Quality hardwood	Thin	Winter
17	Mixedwood	85	Softwood development	STS with Groups *	Winter
18	Mixedwood	6	Softwood development	STS	Fall/Winter
19	Hardwood	48	Hardwood regeneration	STS with Groups	Fall/Winter
20	Hardwood	50	Hardwood regeneration	STS with Groups	Fall/Winter
21	Hardwood	7	Quality hardwood	Thin	Fall/Winter
22	Hardwood	24	Hardwood regeneration	Clear Cut	Summer/Fall/Winter
23	Hardwood	55	Hardwood regeneration	STS with Groups	Fall/Winter
24	Hardwood	35	Hardwood regeneration	STS with Groups	Fall/Winter
25	Hardwood	25	Hardwood regeneration	Clear Cut	Winter
26	Hardwood	27	Hardwood regeneration	Clear Cut	Summer/Fall/Winter
28	Hardwood	22	Hardwood regeneration	Clear Cut	Summer/Fall/Winter
29	Hardwood	19	Hardwood regeneration	STS with Groups	Fall/Winter
30	Hardwood	25	Hardwood regeneration	Clear Cut	Summer/Fall/Winter
31	Hardwood	30	Hardwood regeneration	STS with Groups	Fall/Winter
Sum		1000			

\* implies small groups of from 1/10<sup>th</sup> to 1/4<sup>th</sup> acres.

STS= Single Tree Selection, an uneven age management system (see attachment for descriptions)

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To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 202250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## **Existing Condition in the Chandler Round Analysis Area**

### ***Vegetation/Forest Stand Types***

The forest stands within the analysis area are predominantly made up of northern hardwoods, with a lesser amount of softwood species within them. The attached Table 1 shows the general forest types of the proposed harvest units as hardwood, softwood or mixedwood. Hardwood stands primarily contain sugar maple, beech, yellow birch, paper birch, white ash, hophornbeam, and red maple. Mixedwood stands contain hardwoods and softwoods such as eastern hemlock, red spruce, and white pine.

### ***Wildlife Habitat***

Each wildlife species requires a particular habitat in which to exist and reproduce. Some species are permanent residents of an area while others migrate to and from various places. Some species are generalists and utilize many types of habitat while others may require or remain in one specific habitat type. The Wildlife Strategy for the White Mountain National Forest states a diversity of habitats will be established to provide habitat for all native and desired non-native species. Since wildlife is directly related to the habitat it requires, wildlife management deals primarily with providing a diversity of habitat types to meet this objective.

The Chandler Round Analysis area contains approximately 8,246 acres of land, 5,691 acres of which are available for vegetation management. The existing habitat within Chandler Round Project is lacking in the following vegetation types: spruce/fir softwood stands, paper birch and aspen, and oak/pine stands.

Lands within Chandler Round Project on which no vegetative management activities are allowed (MA's 6.1, 6.2) provide approximately 2,555 acres of interior mature and overmature forest that are expected to attain old growth characteristics in time. However, only 16 acres of early successional community types (less than ten years old) are present. Spruce and fir stands are also lacking, with 450 acres existing where the Forest Plan calls for approximately 950 acres.

The planning area supports wildlife species that utilize primarily a northern hardwood/mixedwood community type. Deer, moose, bear, coyote, fisher, grouse, fox, red squirrel, and a large assortment of birds have been observed in the analysis area. Species dependent on various age classes and community types would benefit from increased diversity of the existing vegetative condition.

### ***Visual Resources***

Three locations from which the regeneration harvest units of the proposed action may be seen are known. These viewpoints are:

- South Baldface Mountain (two miles from the nearest unit)
- Kearsarge North (five miles south of the nearest unit)
- North Doublehead Mountain (1.75 miles west of the nearest unit)

Distances to the nearest clearcut units are over two miles from viewpoints on South Baldface and North Doublehead, and over five miles from Mount Kearsarge. Views from these viewpoints to potential openings will be background views. There are no views of treatment areas from Eastman mountain or from Mountain Pond.

### ***Soils***

The soils within the timber sale area are typical of the northern hardwood community type that occur in this part of the White Mountain National Forest. The amount of soil moisture, soil productivity, percent slope, susceptibility to compaction, and erosion potential were taken into consideration before developing the initial proposal. There are no extraordinary soil conditions and no evidence of slumps or landslide potential in or near areas to be treated. Harvest using similar harvest methods in most of the proposed treatment areas was successfully accomplished approximately twenty to thirty years ago.

### ***Fisheries and Watersheds***

Chandler Round Project area is primarily within the Slippery Brook watershed, which covers about 6,200 acres. Slippery Brook flows into the East Branch of the Saco River below the analysis area. A small peice of the eastern side of the analysis area flows into McDonough Brook and then into Little Cold River.

Tributary to Slippery Brook and McDonough Brook are numerous small perennial and intermittent streams, and a few beaver ponds. Design and implementation of the proposed action or any action alternative would be accomplished within the standards and guidelines of the Forest Plan. These standards are designed to protect water quality and fish habitat.

Brook trout inhabit Slippery Brook. New Hampshire Fish and Game has stocked brook trout in the East Branch of Saco River and in lower Slippery Brook, south of the analysis area.

### ***Recreation***

The proposed action occurs in Management Area (MA) 3.1 lands. Adjacent higher elevation lands are classified as MA 6.1 and 6.2. Mountain Pond and Mountain Pond Research Natural Area lie south of the proposed activity area. A detailed description of the Management Area strategies is found in the Forest Plan in Chapter III. Additional information regarding recreation management strategies is found in appendix VII H.

While some visitor use on trails and roads within the analysis area occurs throughout the year, visitor use is normally low. Some mountain biking and hiking occurs on the upper portion of FR 17 north of the summer road closure point. In winter, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling occurs on Forest Road 17 beyond the gate, where snowplowing normally terminates in the vicinity of Burnt Knowl Brook. This winter parking facility is approximately four miles from the proposed treatment areas.

Switchback Snowmobile Trail uses these four miles of Forest Road 17 before proceeding on to Forest Roads 17b, 17c and 17d, and then east toward Chatham. This snowmobile trail would potentially be impacted for two or three years to allow winter timber hauling on FR 17, FR 17b and FR 17c. These Forest roads are not wide enough to accommodate dual use in winter, where snow plowing would be necessary to allow vehicular traffic.

Slippery Brook hiking trail lies on FR 17, which would be used as a haul road for this project. The trail departs FR 17 adjacent to unit 9 and proceeds up Slippery Brook. Summer harvest activities would

impact this trail system in its current location, from the gate near Mountain Pond to a location adjacent to unit 9.

None of these trails are designated or groomed for cross country skiing.

### ***Roads and Landings***

Town Hall Road (Forest Road 17) provides the primary access into the analysis area. Other Forest Roads that would be used include spur roads 17a, 17b, 17c, and 17g, and an existing non-system road to an existing landing west of unit 11 (see Map). These Forest roads are closed to public vehicular traffic at a point near Mountain Pond, either by gate or by rock barriers. They were constructed in conjunction with past timber sales and have historically been used for timber hauling as well as for foot traffic, and occasionally for winter snowmobile route (FR 17b, 17c and 17d). These roads are in good shape, given the erosion control work performed following their last use, and would require only minor road work to be re-used. These roads would receive maintenance and restoration to return them to their former use level (construction standard). Road surfaces would be cleared of grass and smoothed, ditches cleaned and placed, and culverts placed to direct water off the road. Following this treatment, these roads would again be returned to their current closed status, with culverts pulled, ditches functioning, landings seeded, and barriers replaced.

New road construction is proposed for approximately three tenths of a mile to access units 14 - 17, 22 and 25 (see Map). The proposed new landing for this area is in the southwest portion of unit 17. The proposed road would include temporary crossings for each of two perennial brooks, one with a 36 inch culvert and one with a temporary log bridge. Providing a truck road to access these units would be less impacting to land and water resources than skidding logs repeatedly over these brooks and for the three tenths mile distance.

A long-span temporary bridge, one that can be removed and used elsewhere on the Forest following its use at this site, would be needed to cross Slippery Brook near Mountain Pond (see Map). A temporary bridge footing (sill) would be constructed along Slippery Brook for the approach to and placement of this temporary bridge. The bridge and footing would be removed following its use for this project.

A dozen landings are estimated to be needed to service the proposed action. Ten of the needed landings are existing, and one to three additional landings are expected to be needed.

No other permanent new road construction is proposed. Existing roads opened for this project would be returned to their closed status. An existing old bridge at the end of Forest Road 17 (adjacent to the northwest corner of unit 9) is determined to be unsafe and is proposed for removal with this project.

# Management Systems and Harvest Methods

## *Management Systems*

Vegetation management practices used on the White Mountain National Forest are discussed in detail in Appendix M of the Forest Plan. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 and the resulting Secretary's Regulations (36 CFR 219.15) require that vegetative management practices be chosen which are appropriate to meet the objectives and requirements of the land management plan for each Forest.

One of the principal objectives in harvesting timber is to regenerate a stand to meet a number of resource management objectives such as desired conditions for visual management, species composition, wildlife habitat, timber quality, and integrated pest management.

Vegetation management practices can be broken down into two management systems. Management systems are long-term strategies used to regulate inventories and harvests in forest stands. The two management systems are **even-aged** and **uneven-aged** management.

**Even-aged management** consists of growing stands of a single age class for a predetermined period known as a rotation. At the end of the rotation a new even-aged stand is initiated through a regeneration harvest such as seed tree, shelterwood or clearcut. Seed tree and shelterwood harvests involve leaving a scattered layer of mature trees to provide seed and shelter for a new crop of trees. Since seed is always abundant and full sunlight is not a limiting factor in obtaining the desired stocking of reproduction, clearcutting is a commonly practiced even-aged regeneration method. Full sunlight also fosters early successional species such as paper birch, yellow birch, pin cherry, aspen and other sun-loving species, giving them a competitive edge over beech and other shade tolerant species commonly regenerating under a canopy where no treatment or partial treatments have maintained a tree canopy.

**Uneven-aged management** allows for several age classes within a stand at any point in time over the long term. The stand development process is continuous so there is no conversion to a single age class. This continuous process of tree growth and stand development occurs through periodic harvesting designed to maintain multiple ages. Stand prescriptions using single-tree selection or group selection harvest methods are the silvicultural treatments designed to maintain this uneven aged condition.

## *Harvest Methods*

Harvest method determines the timing of reproduction and results in the species composition, age and structure of the stand. Harvest methods are used to carry out even-aged or uneven-aged management. Each harvest method is distinct in its approach to reproduction and in its appearance after harvesting. Harvest methods proposed for Chandler Round Vegetation Management Project are described below.

**Clearcutting** – Clearcutting is the harvesting in one cut of all merchantable trees in an area with the exception of reserved trees and reserve patches left for wildlife, water, or visual purposes. The Forest Plan Amendment for Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species (2001) places additional requirements on maintaining reserve trees within clearcuts. The amendment requires scattered reserve trees throughout the clearcut area, and one quarter to one half acre reserve patches in clearcuts over ten acres in size are left. For every ten acres clearcut, one quarter to one half acre are set aside as refugia.

A clearcut results in a single-aged generation of trees that regenerates the site under full sunlight. The new generation of trees can originate from any combination of wind-borne seed (for most species except

oak and beech), animal deposited seed (e.g., oaks and beech), seed accumulations in the soil (e.g., pin cherry), sprouting from stumps (e.g. many hardwood species, not local conifers) and from existing regeneration in the stand such as conifer species and shade-tolerant hardwoods. The new generation of trees usually forms a dense seedling layer in 2-5 years, including many short lives species such as ribes (raspberry) that also benefit wildlife. Clearcutting is often used in mature and overmature stands, where disease or natural disturbance has resulted in consistent or severe stand damage, and where a particular type of regeneration is desired for wildlife habitat diversity. Clearcutting is the primary method for producing early successional wildlife habitat.

**Thinning** – Thinning is even-aged management often applied in younger, pole sized stands where the density of trees is greater than needed to fully occupy the site. Individual trees are harvested in a regular pattern throughout the stand. Trees selected for harvest are either surplus to stocking needs or undesirable from the standpoint of species or individual tree condition and growth potential. The residual stand is moderately stocked and consists of individual trees with an above-average capacity for growth. Growing space and site resources (light, water and nutrients) that once supported the surplus stock become available to the residual trees. Relief from crowding improves individual tree vigor and improves the quality and value of a stand. Preferred species are identified using several considerations, including wildlife needs, site and soil conditions, natural propensity of a species to occupy and thrive on a given site, and diversity of a species within a given Habitat Management Unit (HMU).

**Single-Tree Selection** – This treatment removes individual trees in a regular pattern throughout the stand; but unlike thinning, some trees are removed from each merchantable size class, from each age class, and from each level of the stand canopy. The selection harvests may be repeated at intervals of ten to twenty or more years. Tree removals create gaps throughout the stand canopy. Larger canopy gaps made by the removal of one-to-several dominant and codominant trees allow light to reach the forest floor and provide growing space for new reproduction, mostly from seed. Gaps made by removals of individual upper and mid-canopy trees make growing space for neighboring trees. Regeneration is a continuous process, with new generations of trees initiated in a regular pattern throughout the stand with each treatment.

**Group Selection** – Groups of trees up are removed in patches of from 1/10<sup>th</sup> to two acres in size. These groups are placed in areas where specific regeneration needs, and where specific stand objectives can be accomplished. A stand or treatment unit may be treated with a single tree selection prescription and receive group openings simultaneously. The groups would occupy no more than twenty percent of the treatment area. This prescription is proposed for many units in this project due to large areas and small pockets within stands that were severely damaged during the ice storm of 1998. These areas are in poor condition and can be improved with this treatment, adding habitat diversity to the HMU. This treatment can be used in conjunction with single tree selection treatments. This prescription retains the stand in uneven aged management.

**Pre-commercial Thin** - Associated stand improvement projects (on up to 200 acres) following establishment of regeneration in treated areas where regenerating areas may be treated to influence the species composition of the new stand. These activities are performed if needed to assure that regeneration objectives are met. In this project area, desirable regenerating species would be released from overtopping beech if needed to foster diversity of species in the new developing stand.

## **Mitigations Common to Action Alternatives for Vegetation Management**

In addition to the applicable Forest-wide and Management Area standards and guidelines listed in the Forest Plan (pages III-5 through III-29; III-36 through III-41 and Appendix VIIB; 18-22); the following mitigations may be applied to the Proposed Action or to other action alternatives that may be developed.

### ***Roads and visuals***

- A 50 foot logging slash disposal zone where slash is removed to minimize adverse visual effects would be established along Slippery Brook Trail where applicable for each alternative.
- Road restoration of Forest Road 17 and its spur roads used in the selected alternative would be to standards for dry surface and frozen ground conditions. Road restoration would include grading, drainage and brushing, and four temporary bridges. Subsequent hauling on these roads would be dry surface or winter only. Following harvest activities, culverts and bridges would be removed and these roads waterbarred, seeded and closed.
- Safety signs would be placed along all Forest Roads and trails where activities are occurring to caution people about harvest activities. Signs warning hikers would be placed at Trailheads and parking lots to remind visitors of logging operations.

### ***Water Quality and Sedimentation***

- Stream protection measures would be used wherever skid trails cross wet areas or streams (Forest Plan pages III-21, 22). Skidding patterns would minimize the number of stream crossings. Where appropriate, previously used stream crossings would be used again.
- All work at existing bridge locations, and one new bridge site (FR 17a) would be done in accordance with current temporary bridge standards and with any required wetland permits.
- Skidding patterns would be laid out to minimize the number of stream crossings. Where appropriate, existing stream crossings would be used to minimize effects to water quality.
- Temporary culverts and temporary bridges would be installed where skid trails and haul routes cross flowing water. Temporary crossing structures would be removed and channel banks stabilized as needed following logging activities. The intent is to keep machinery out of wet areas and streambeds to minimize direct effects to water quality and stream bank stability.

### ***Wildlife and Botanical***

- Management prescriptions would encourage recruitment and retention of wildlife trees at least 18 inches DBH (diameter at breast height) as per Forest Plan standards on page III-15d.
- Within clearcut units, reserve patches and reserve trees would be identified and protected to meet the terms and conditions of the Biological Opinion for the Indiana Bat (Environmental Assessment and Biological Evaluation) Forest Plan Amendment.

## **The Environmental Analysis Process**

This letter initiates the public involvement specifically for this project. It is being sent to those on our mailing list who have expressed an interest in these types of projects, and others who we feel may have an interest in this project. This initial comment period will end 30 days from the date a notification of the Proposed Action is published in the newspaper of record, the Union Leader, Manchester, NH. Two local papers in the Conway area area also asked to post a public notice.

Following this initial "scoping" period the interdisciplinary team for the Chandler Round Project will review public suggestions and concerns about this Proposed Action, and will develop alternatives and/or additional mitigations to address these concerns if appropriate. The interdisciplinary team will then complete an analysis of the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action and Alternatives. The results of that analysis are disclosed in an Environmental Assessment (EA).

An EA describes the issues, alternatives, mitigations and the anticipated environmental effects of the project. Once completed, a comment period for the EA will occur for a period of 30 days. The EA comment period is the second formal public comment period. EAs are automatically sent to those who have written or commented during the initial scoping period, or to those requesting a copy of the EA. In order to have standing to appeal a decision on this project, individuals must submit substantive comments during the official 30-day comment period for the EA. Substantive comments are defined as "comments that are within the scope of the proposed action, are specific to the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider", or "provide meaningful and useful information about project concerns and issues that can be used to enhance project analysis and project planning".

The responsible official for this proposed action will review the EA, project file, scoping comments and public responses to the EA, and then determine if a FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact) is applicable to this project. If the responsible official determines a FONSI is appropriate for this project, then the responsible official will also issue a Decision Notice identifying the alternative that will be implemented. The Decision Notice is subject to an administrative appeal period of 45 days after legal notice of the decision is published in the newspaper of record.