

Decision Summary – Vegetation CE

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| Project Name | | ANF Forest-wide Plantation Thinning Project (https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=59199) | |
| Forest | National Forests in Florida, Apalachicola N.F. | Region | 8 |
| Choose Type of Activity (Wilderness, Roadless, Energy infrastructure, Minerals, Vegetation CE, Land Management Plan) and level of Decision (No DM, DM, DN/FONSI, ROD) | | | |
| Vegetation CE: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(6) - Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction. | | | |
| Decision Level - DM | | | |
| Planned Decision Date | | 3/01/2021 | |

Summary Description

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| Purpose/Need |
| The Forest has over 100,000 acres of pine plantations, many of which are overstocked and not contributing to goals, objectives and desired conditions of the forest plan. The purpose of this project is to authorize thinning of suitable stands to improve wildlife habitat and reduce potentially hazardous fuels as part of the effort to restore longleaf pine across the Forest. |
| Intended Selected Action |
| Selectively thin up to 150,000 acres of slash, loblolly and longleaf plantations to 50 square feet of basal area per acre. Trees to be designated for retention would include the best growing plantation trees as well as longleaf pines in slash pine and loblolly plantations. Mechanical groundcover restoration treatments (chopping, mowing) would be implemented in all stands that are designated for thinning and need treatment and would be followed by already approved prescribed fire. |
| Potentially Significant Effects or Extraordinary Circumstances (if any) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archeological clearance for individual treatment stands will follow established protocol and will occur prior to implementation. The Forest is consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and will implement appropriate coordination measures associated with ESA-listed species. Overall, thinning overstocked stands should improve forest habitat conditions for listed species across the Forest. |
| Public Involvement (include State, local governments and Tribal consultation) |
| Public involvement was initiated with a scoping letter sent to the Forest mailing list on December 29, 2020. We received one comment that recommended more prescribed fire and requested more information related to the stand conditions that would warrant thinning and to the rare plants known to be in the potential stands. Tribal reviews will occur as smaller, more focused project areas are determined. |
| Timeline Considerations (statutory, court-related, administrative) and Objections Status |
| Decision is not subject to objections, but implementation will be phased as stand data are collected and heritage reviews and consultation are completed. |