



**DECISION NOTICE AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
 CALICO ROCK PROJECT
 U.S. FOREST SERVICE
 COMPARTMENTS 42, 47, 53, 54, 71 AND 72
 MT. MAGAZINE RANGER DISTRICT
 OZARK-ST. FRANCIS NATIONAL FORESTS
 LOGAN COUNTY, ARKANSAS**

DECISION

Based upon my review of the Calico Rock Environmental Assessment (EA), I have decided to implement Alternative 1. The activities associated with Alternative 1 are in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Alternative 1 Actions^[1]

SHORTLEAF PINE SHELTERWOOD HARVESTING	172 Acres <i>C-53/Stand 21</i> <i>C-54/Stand 15</i> <i>C-72/Stands 2 and 6</i>
SHORTLEAF PINE SITE PREPARATION Handtools/Chemical/Prescribed Burning	172 Acres <i>C-53/Stand 21</i> <i>C-54/Stand 15</i> <i>C-72/Stands 2 and 6</i>
SHORTLEAF PINE PLANTING Handtools	172 Acres <i>C-53/Stand 21</i> <i>C-54/Stand 15</i> <i>C-72/Stands 2 and 6</i>
SHORTLEAF PINE RELEASE Handtools/Chemical	284 Acres^[2] <i>C-53/Stands 18, 21</i> <i>C-54/Stands 3, 10, 15</i> <i>C-72/Stands 2, 6</i>

^[1] All acres and miles are approximations.

^[2] The 284 acres encompasses 172 acres of Shelterwood stands and 112 acres of existing shortleaf pine seedling/sapling stands.

^[3] Proposed for prescribed burning on a 3 to 7-year rotation in both dormant and growing seasons.

^[4] These stands might receive a site preparation burn after a Shelterwood harvest and would thus be included in subsequent burn rotations.

^[5] Proposed for two maintenance/restoration treatments on a 2-year interval.

^[6] Would remain open with erosion control measures in place.

Table 1. Summary of Alternative 1 Actions^[1]

<p>SHORTLEAF PINE SEED TREE REMOVAL</p>	<p>172 Acres <i>C-53/Stand 21</i> <i>C-54/Stand 15</i> <i>C-72/Stands 2, 6</i></p>
<p>SHORTLEAF PINE COMMERCIAL THINNING</p>	<p>2,114 Acres <u><i>Thin 1,427 acres to 50 BA</i></u> <i>C-53/Stands 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,15,19,22,26,27</i> <i>C-54/Stands 6,11,12,13,14</i></p> <p><u><i>Thin 687 acres to 60 BA</i></u> <i>C-42/Stands 5,7,9</i> <i>C-53/Stands 8,11,12,13,20</i> <i>C-54/Stands 12,14,16,24,32</i> <i>C-71/Stands 1,2,3,4</i></p>
<p>SHORTLEAF PINE AND HARDWOOD COMMERCIAL THINNING</p>	<p>1,349 Acres <u><i>Thin 273 acres to 50 BA</i></u> <i>C-47/Stands 14, 15, 16</i> <i>C-72/Stands 16, 17</i></p> <p><u><i>Thin 842 acres to 60 BA</i></u> <i>C-47/Stands 1,3,9,10,12,13,22,23,27</i> <i>C-72/Stands 1,3,4,5,7,10,12,13,14,15,17,23</i></p> <p><u><i>Thin 234 acres to 70 BA</i></u> <i>C-47/Stands 2,4,7,8,21,24</i> <i>C-72/Stand 9</i></p>
<p>PRE-COMMERCIAL THINNING (PCT) Existing shortleaf pine seedling/sapling and poletimber stands</p>	<p>192 Acres <i>C-47/Stands 5, 8, 24</i> <i>C-54/Stand 7</i> <i>C-72/Stand 23</i></p>
<p>CEDAR THINNING</p>	<p>7,484 Acres (Up to 450 acres per year) <i>Compartments 42, 47, 53, 54, 71, 72</i></p>
<p>SALVAGE/SANITATION THINNING</p>	<p>7,484 Acres <i>Compartments 42, 47, 53, 54, 71, 72</i></p>

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^[3] Proposed for prescribed burning on a 3 to 7-year rotation in both dormant and growing seasons.

^[4] These stands might receive a site preparation burn after a Shelterwood harvest and would thus be included in subsequent burn rotations.

^[5] Proposed for two maintenance/restoration treatments on a 2-year interval.

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Table 1. Summary of Alternative 1 Actions, continued^[1]

<p>NON-NATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES TREATMENT Handtools/Chemical</p>	<p>Up to 700 Acres Per Year <i>Compartments 42, 47, 53, 54, 71, 72</i></p>
<p>WILDLIFE HABITAT IMPROVEMENT/ FUELS REDUCTION PRESCRIBED BURNING^[3]</p>	<p>7,484 Acres <i>C-42/Stand 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17</i> <i>C-47/Stand 2, 10, 11, 20</i> <i>C-53/Stand 2, 7, 9, 12, 13, 16, 19, 21^[4], 24, 25, 26</i> <i>C-54/Stand 3, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15^[4], 19, 27</i> <i>C-71/Stand 3, 4, 5, 6, 7</i> <i>C-72/Stand 2^[4], 6^[4], 8, 18, 24</i></p>
<p>NEW FIRELINE CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE</p>	<p>Up To 21.6 Miles <i>C-42/Stand 1, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16</i> <i>C-47/Stand 14, 15, 18, 19, 20</i> <i>C-53/Stand 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 25, 26</i> <i>C-54/Stand 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27</i> <i>C-71/Stand 1, 2, 5, 7</i> <i>C-72/Stand 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 22</i></p>
<p>EXISTING FIRELINE RECONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE</p>	<p>5.1 Miles <i>C-53/Stand 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 15, 18, 19, 21, 27</i> <i>C-54/Stand 6, 13</i></p>
<p>WILDLIFE STAND IMPROVEMENT/ RIPARIAN STAND IMPROVEMENT</p>	<p>148 Acres <i>C-53/Stand 6, 24, 25</i></p>
<p>LINEAR FOOD PLOTS</p>	<p>10 Acres <i>Closed section of FDR 96053B</i></p>
<p>WILDLIFE OPENING CONSTRUCTION</p>	<p>3 Openings <i>C-47/Stand 2</i> <i>C-53/Stand 25</i> <i>C-71/Stand 4</i></p>
<p>WILDLIFE OPENING MAINTENANCE/ RESTORATION</p>	<p>16 Openings <i>C-42/Stand 2, 5</i> <i>C-47/Stand 2, 4, 18, 22</i> <i>C-53/Stand 4, 8, 25</i> <i>C-54/Stand 5, 12</i> <i>C-71/Stand 4</i> <i>C-72/Stand 6, 13, 14</i></p>

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^[3] Proposed for prescribed burning on a 3 to 7-year rotation in both dormant and growing seasons.

^[4] These stands might receive a site preparation burn after a Shelterwood harvest and would thus be included in subsequent burn rotations.

^[5] Proposed for two maintenance/restoration treatments on a 2-year interval.

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Table 1. Summary of Alternative 1 Actions, continued^[1]

CONSTRUCT WILDLIFE POND	1 Pond – Up to 1 acre <i>C-53/Stand 7</i>
STREAM HABITAT IMPROVEMENT	16 Miles <i>C-42/Stand 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17</i> <i>C-47/Stand 2, 10, 11, 19, 20</i> <i>C-53/Stand 2, 7, 9, 12, 13, 16, 19, 24, 25, 26</i> <i>C-54/Stand 3, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 19, 27</i> <i>C-71/Stand 3, 4, 5, 6, 7</i> <i>C-72/Stand 2, 8, 18, 24</i>
AQUATIC ORGANISM PASSAGE CONSTRUCTION	8 Passages <i>C-42/Stand 3, 5, 7</i> <i>C-47/Stand 1</i> <i>C-54/Stand 3, 9, 19</i> <i>C-71/Stand 7</i>
TEMPORARY ROAD CONSTRUCTION	10.1 Miles
ROAD RECONSTRUCTION	8 Miles <i>Portions of FDR 1605, 1609, 1609B, 1676, 96053B</i>
ROAD DECOMMISSIONING	2 Miles <i>Portions of FDR 1609E, 1609F, 96053D, 96054C, 96072D, 96072E</i>
ROAD MAINTENANCE	As needed
OHV TRAIL ADDITION	3.6 Miles <i>FDR 1675 – 1.75 miles</i> <i>FDR 96053B - 0.65 miles</i> <i>FDR 1609B - 0.25 miles</i> <i>Old Road Template – 0.95 miles</i>
DEVELOP BORROW PIT	Up to 5 acres^[6]

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^[4] These stands might receive a site preparation burn after a Shelterwood harvest and would thus be included in subsequent burn rotations.

^[5] Proposed for two maintenance/restoration treatments on a 2-year interval.

^[6] Would remain open with erosion control measures in place.

DECISION RATIONALE

The purpose of this project is to bring the current conditions of compartments 42, 47, 53, 54, 71, and 72, known as Calico Rock, closer to desired future conditions in accordance with the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (RLRMP) for Ozark-St Francis National Forests. Forest health and ecosystem management, endangered species management, silvicultural treatments, road and trail management, and wildlife habitat management are being proposed. These management activities, designed to align current conditions with desired future conditions, are needed to: (1) manage for endangered species, (2) promote healthy forests, (3) improve wildlife habitat through establishment of early seral habitat, (4) balance age classes, (5) maintain and expand fire in the ecosystem, (6) provide quality wildlife habitat, (7) manage the transportation system while reducing wildlife impacts and erosion potential, (8) provide commodities, (9) control invasive species, (10) perform stream habitat improvement, (11) have the ability to salvage timber, and (12) manage the OHV trail system.

Alternative 1, with its mitigating measures, was selected because it best addresses the purpose and need in a balanced, cost effective way. Actions of Alternative 1 provide for a high level of resource outputs that can be maintained in perpetuity without harming land productivity. My conclusion is based on a review of the record that shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgment of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk. Analysis shows it:

1. Manages for endangered species (EA; p. 80)
2. Provides for healthy forests by thinning, burning, and controlling invasive species (EA; pp. 66-68).
3. Provides for early successional wildlife habitat (EA, pp. 65, 70, 73).
4. Begins to balance age classes (EA, p. 65).
5. Reduces amount of burnable fuels and increases forage production (EA, pp. 66, 71).
6. Provides enhanced wildlife habitat (EA, pp. 70-73).
7. Closes roads not needed for management in the near future (EA, pp. 59-60).
8. Provides commodities (EA, pp. 65-67, 86).
9. Provides for control of invasive species (EA, pp. 67, 73).
10. Provides woody material for identified streams (EA, p. 76).
11. Provides the ability to salvage timber (EA, p. 67)
12. Manages the OHV trails (EA, pp. 53, 60)

The other alternative that was developed and analyzed, Alternative 2 (the no-action alternative), did not meet the objectives of the purpose and need of the project.

The Calico Rock EA documents the environmental analysis and conclusions upon which this decision is based.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests Schedule of Proposed Actions in July of 2013 and updated periodically during the analysis. People were invited to review and comment on the proposal through scoping letters, legal notices, comment period letters, and by posting all documents on the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests projects website. The EA lists agencies and people consulted on pages 88-89.

The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) of resource specialists conducted scoping. Scoping is the process used to determine the issues and alternatives addressed in the EA, and to identify significant issues related to the proposed action. Scoping letters were mailed out on May 2, 2014 to 154 individuals, tribes, and organizations. On May 7, 2014, a legal notice was posted in the *Times Record*, Fort Smith, AR. Four responses to scoping were received, but only one issue was identified. The issue was incorporated into the proposed actions. In compliance with 36 CFR 218, a description of the proposed action was made available for a 30-day notice and comment period via a legal notice published in the *Times Record* on June 4, 2015 and through mailings of letters to 154 individuals, tribes, and organizations. The information was also made available through the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests projects website. No comments were received during the 30-day notice and comment period.

On June 4, 2015 a legal notice was published in the newspaper of record, the *Times Record*, initiating the formal 30 day comment period for this project, identifying Alternative 1 as the preferred alternative, requesting comments on the project and disclosing the requirement to comment during the formal comment period to secure eligibility to object the subsequent decision for it. All who commented on the project prior to that date and who supplied contact information were notified via letter or e-mail that the draft Environmental Assessment was available on-line and that Alternative 1 was the preferred alternative; a paper copy of the draft Environmental Assessment was provided to those who requested it. The requirements for submitting a comment under 36 CFR 218 objection regulations were provided in the letters sent to those who commented during scoping, in the letter posted to the Forest website, and in the published legal notice. In addition, the draft Environmental Assessment was posted on the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests' website coincident with publication of the formal 30-day comment period legal notice. The general public was notified that a hard copy of the draft Environmental Assessment was available upon request in both the published legal notice and in the letter posted on the Forest website. No comments were received during the 30-day notice and comment period.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests Revised Land Management Resource Plan. The project was designed in conformance with the forest-wide standards and guidelines as well as the standard and guidelines for the following management areas: 1.G (Special Interest Areas), 1.H (Scenic Byway Corridors), 2.B (State Parks), 3.A (Pine Woodland), 3.C (Mixed Forest), and 3.I (Riparian Corridors).

A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and EA were considered. I determined these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

OBJECTION OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218 and must meet all of the requirements of 36 CFR 218.8. A written objection, including attachments, must be postmarked or received within 45 days after the date that notice of this draft decision is published in *Times Record* – Fort Smith, AR. Electronic objections in common formats (.doc, .rtf, .pdf, or .txt) may be submitted to: ozarkobjection@fs.fed.us with Subject: Calico Rock Project. Appeals may also be faxed to (479) 963-8055 to the attention of “OBJECTION: CALICO ROCK PROJECT,” sent by mail to the following address, or hand-delivered during normal business hours of 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays:

Forest Supervisor
ATTN: Objections
605 West Main
Russellville, AR 72801

If an objection is received, notice of an objection resolution meeting open to the public will be posted on the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests website.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

As per 36 CFR 218.12, if no objection is received within the legal objection period, this decision may be signed and implemented on, but not before, the fifth business day following the close of the objection-filing period. If an objection is filed, this decision cannot be signed or implemented until the reviewing officer has responded in writing to all pending objections.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The significance of environmental impacts must be considered in terms of context and intensity. This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human and national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. In the case of a site-specific action, significance usually depends upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Intensity refers to the severity or degree of impact. (40 CFR 1508.27)

CONTEXT

The area in which direct, indirect and cumulative effects will occur involves approximately 7,484 acres of National Forest System land on the Mt. Magazine Ranger District as shown in the enclosed map.

The significance of effects of my decision has been analyzed in several contexts. My decision is consistent with the requirements of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests Revised Land and Resource Management Plan and contributes to meeting the goals outlined therein. None of the effects disclosed in the Environmental Assessment are different from those anticipated in the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. The analysis considers cumulative effects on the project area and associated 6th level watersheds as well as Class 1 air-sheds and areas of non-attainment off-site. The Environmental Assessment estimates and discloses site-specific effects within the

project area. The contribution of this project to the effects described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, the possible cumulative effects, and the site-specific effects on the project area have all been considered in this determination.

The disclosure of the effects in the Environmental Assessment found the proposed actions to be limited in context. Mechanical, chemical and fire treatment acres are limited to approximately 0.6 percent of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests' area and will not exceed limits established by the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. Activities are limited in duration, occurring within approximately 12 years following the start of implementation. Effects are local in nature and are not likely to be measurable at regional or national scales.

INTENSITY

The intensity of effects was considered in terms of the following:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that, on balance, the effect will be beneficial.** Consideration of the intensity of environmental effects is not biased by beneficial effects of the action.
2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.** There will be no significant effects on public health and safety because the project design incorporates established measures to reduce the potential risks associated with proposed activities and the effects analysis shows the risk to human safety is not significant. All burning will be conducted in accord with the State Smoke Management Program and will be coordinated through the state of Arkansas. Herbicide treatments will comply with label directions and in accordance with the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. (See EA pages 81-85)
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area, because there are no wild and scenic rivers, ecologically critical areas, or prime farmlands within the project area. Standards and guidelines within the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests Revised Land and Resource Management Plan along with any other mitigation measures identified in the EA will protect the Mt. Magazine State Park to the south of the project area and any historic or cultural resources within the project area. (See EA pages 53-55 and 57)
4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. There is no known credible scientific controversy over the impacts of the proposed action. The environmental effects of planned activities are known and there is little controversy over the actual effects. Effects are clearly described in the Environmental Consequences portion of the Environmental Assessment. (See EA pages 35-38; 40-44; 47-50; 51; 53-55; 57; 58; 59-60; 65-68; 70-73; 75-77; 78-80; and 81-85)

5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The Agency has considerable experience with actions like the one proposed. The analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk. (See EA pages 35-38; 40-44; 47-50; 51; 53-55; 57; 58; 59-60; 65-68; 70-73; 75-77; 78-80; and 81-85)
6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, because none of the selected actions are a major departure from types of activities now common to the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests and implementing the selected activities within this project area would not commit the Forest Service to actions on other lands either within or outside the project area. (See EA pages 10-28)
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The cumulative impacts are not significant. The analysis considers and discloses the effects of similar and connected actions related to this proposal. These include commercial timber harvests, prescribed burning operations, timber stand improvement and site preparation activities, wildlife stand improvements, reforestation, treatment of non-native invasive plants and improvements to access areas for timber harvest. The Environmental Assessment also analyzes and discloses cumulative effects, including past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions on both private and public lands. (See EA pages 35-38; 40-44; 47-50; 51; 53-55; 57; 58; 59-60; 65-68; 70-73; 75-77; 78-80; and 81-85)
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will they cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources because Alternative 1 was designed so that all known historic properties that are or may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or are of undetermined eligibility will remain outside any ground disturbing activity unit. Sites containing elements that may be damaged by fire will be protected through avoidance during prescribed burning operations. Should any additional sites be found during project implementation, work will stop in the area of discovery and the appropriate authorities will be notified. (See EA page 57)
9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, because the proposed actions were designed to totally incorporate all Forest-wide standards and direction provided by the USFWS related to the conservation of threatened and endangered species that may be in the project area. The determination of effect for the Ozark big-eared bat, gray bat, Indiana bat, and American burying beetle related to this proposed project is: “may affect – not likely to adversely affect.” The U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with these determinations on August 28, 2014 and March 18, 2015. (See EA pages 78-80)

After the Draft EA was sent out for the 30-day Comment Period, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the northern long-eared bat as a threatened species. On July 24, 2015 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finalized biological opinion for the long-eared bat. The effects of the project's proposed actions were analyzed for the northern long-eared bat utilizing the information from the biological opinion. The determination of effect for the Northern long-eared bat related to this proposed project is: "may affect – is likely to adversely affect." The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred that this project "is likely to adversely affect NLEB, but complies with reasonable and prudent measure (RPM) 2 in the NLEB PBO and therefore does not require project-level terms and conditions" on September 10, 2015. (See EA pages 78-80)

10. **Whether the action threatens to violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA. State of Arkansas Best Management Practices will be applied consistent with requirements of the Clean Water Act. Prescribed burning will be done in compliance with the State Smoke Management Program and will be addressed in more detail in the individual burn plans that will be developed for each burn operation. The action is consistent with the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. (See EA pages 35-38, 40-44, 47-50, 57, and 78-80)

After considering the effects of the actions analyzed, in terms of context and intensity, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Amanda Bataineh, NEPA Coordinator, Mt. Magazine Ranger District, P.O. Box 511, Paris, AR 72855, (479) 963-3054.



ROB KOPACK

Deputy District Ranger

11-30-2015

Date

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