



File Code: 2400  
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Subject: National Forests in Florida Section 602 Insect and Disease Designation Request  
To: Deputy Chief, National Forest System

Per section 8204 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (i.e., 2014 Farm Bill), I am requesting the designation of approximately 557,364 acres of the Apalachicola and 231,084 acres of the Osceola National Forests as Section 602 landscape areas. The designation would encompass approximately seventy hydrological unit codes (see enclosure 1).

In 2014, only two landscape areas (approximately 198,000 acres) of the Ocala National Forest were designated under Section 602. This original designation does not respond to changing forest conditions, and the emerging forest health issues on the Apalachicola and Osceola National Forests. In addition, the current designation does not address the pending conditions we expect as a result of Hurricane Michael. To illustrate, there is currently a southern pine beetle outbreak within 20 miles of the Apalachicola Forest boundary. The widespread damage caused by the October 2018 hurricane has created a situation where the existing outbreak could rapidly expand onto the damaged areas on the Forest. The designation will give the National Forests in Florida additional tools for increasing forest resilience and facilitating a rapid response if pest outbreaks occur.

The areas requested for designation meet at least one of the criteria described in section 602. Although the Apalachicola and Osceola National Forests have not yet experienced widespread declines in forest health due to insects and disease (i.e., does not currently meet Criteria 1 or 3), risk maps and recent surveys have shown risk of substantially increased tree mortality (i.e., does meet Criteria 2):

Criteria 2: A large proportion of National Forest System lands are at risk for basal area loss in the near future due to insect and disease vectors. The 2013-2027 National Insect and Disease Forest Risk Assessment for southern pine beetle, 2018 Florida Forest Service 2018 southern pine beetle forecast, and 2018 Apalachicola National Forest, and forest health survey flight results all predict an increase in insect and disease, and mortality in the coming growing season.

See enclosure 2 for all supporting documents. In addition, geographic information system (GIS) files are located at: T:\FS\NFS\NFinFlorida\Project\SO\2018ForestSilv\2018sec602.



For additional information, please contact Peter Gaulke, Southern Region Planning Director, via phone at 404-347-3183 or email at Peter.Gaulke@usda.gov.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Arney". The signature is stylized and cursive.

KEN ARNEY  
Regional Forester

Enclosures (2)

cc: National Forests in Florida, Forest Supervisor, and Peter Gaulke