



File Code: 2400
Route To:

Date: MAY 14 2019

Subject: Review Process for Healthy Forest Restoration Act Section 602(c), Additional Insect and Disease Landscape-Scale Designation

To: Chief

Region 9 proposes that four areas on the Shawnee National Forest (Forest) be designated as an insect and disease landscape-scale area under the provisions of Section 8204 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill). Documentation provided by the Forest, which is enclosed, delineates the areas proposed for designation. At this time no part of the Forest has been designated, but has significant insect and disease problems that meet the criteria outlined in the Farm Bill. The State of Illinois recognizes these problems and supports this proposal.

The most significant problem confronting the Forest is oak decline. Oaks are a keystone species on the Forest and oak forest types comprise almost three quarters of the land base. Oak decline is most severe in areas where oaks are overstocked and almost half of the hardwood forests are either overstocked or have high stocking. These areas are expected to suffer significant mortality due to oak decline over the next 15 years. The Forest plans to use the Farm Bill authorities to improve forest health by reducing the stocking in oak forest types.

Another significant problem is Emerald Ash Borer which is expected to kill almost every ash on the Forest. Ash comprise about 20 percent of the basal area of bottomland forests and in some stands make up as much as 80 percent of the basal area. The loss of riparian ash is expected to make sites that are already wet even wetter which will make it difficult to maintain any forest cover. The Forest plans to use the Farm Bill authorities to reduce the amount of ash in areas where it is most common and increase the diversity of other tree species.

The Farm Bill authorities should prove especially useful because almost every acre of the Forest is in either Fire Regime Condition Class 2 or 3. If you have questions, please contact Paul Berrang paul.berrang@usda.gov at (414) 297-3569 or Lisa Helmig, Forest Planning and Resources Staff Officer lisa.helmig@usda.gov, at (618) 253-1018.

ROBERT LUECKEL

Acting Regional Forester, Eastern Region

Enclosures

cc: Bruce Moltzan, James Smalls, David Gwaze, Sunny Ng, Lisa Helmig

