

**30-Day Notice and Comment
Summary and Issues Approval
Continued Maintenance of Open Lands Management
Environmental Assessment
February, 2007**

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Comment Avenues and Results

A request for comments for the Continued Maintenance of Open Lands Management Environmental Assessment (EA) was sent in early November 2006 to 89 persons who expressed interest in the open lands program. The request was posted on LBL's website in early November 2006. A legal notice for the 30-Day Notice and Comment period was printed on November 7, 2006, in the Paducah Sun. Copies of the request letter/ email with mailing lists and website information are located in the project record.

One hundred and eighteen letters were received as a result of public involvement during the 30 Day Notice and Comment period. Two letters were received from organizations and 116 letters were received from individuals. Of the 118 letters received, 111 were form letters.

Members of the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) coded the comments by making notes in the margins of the photocopies. The comments were entered into a database by the IDT. The comments were organized into the following groups: Alternatives, Regulations, Proposed Actions, Air, Economics, Heritage, Soils/water, Pesticides, and Wildlife. The comments were summarized into public concern statements. The IDT responded to the public concern statements. The database used for the comments, public concern statements, and responses is located in the project record.

The IDT then discussed and refined the issues and alternatives at meetings in December and January. The preliminary issues and alternatives were also discussed with the Area Supervisor and the Region 8 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Coordinator. This comments summary incorporates those discussions.

Comments, Responses, and Issues

An issue is a point of discussion, debate, or dispute about the environmental effects of the proposed action. Issues become significant because of the extent of their geographic distribution, the duration of their effects, or because of the magnitude or intensity of interest or resource conflict. Non-significant issues are those issues that are:

- Beyond the scope of the proposed action
- Irrelevant to the decision to be made
- Already decided by law, regulation or policy (Area Plan, etc.)
- Conjectural in nature or not supported by scientific evidence

- The magnitude, extent, duration, speed, and direction of preliminary effects are considered limited.

Each comment was considered for significance, and documented in a spreadsheet contained in the project record. There are no significant issues identified in the comments. A general discussion of the findings for each comment category follows.

Alternatives: Comments in this category made suggestions on alternative management plans for open lands. In the proposals for scoping and notice and comment, the proposed action and the no action alternatives were the alternatives to be carried into the effects analysis. A concern raised during IDT meetings and from the public comments was whether these two alternatives were adequate. Some felt there needed to be a broader range of vegetation cover type analyzed, others wanted to eliminate traditional row crops (croplands in this EA) or all open lands, and some wanted substantially less pesticide use addressed. After consideration of all of the IDT discussions and public input, the responsible official decided to develop another alternative to carry forward into the effects analysis. This alternative is titled “Eliminate Traditional Row Crops and Substantially Decrease Pesticide Use.”

Regulations: Comments in this category expressed concern that the LBL follow regulations determined by NEPA and National Forest Management Act (NFMA). LBL is compliant with all applicable regulations. The majority of these comments suggested that LBL prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to support open lands management. The actions suggested in the EA will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts. The finding of no significant impact is disclosed in the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, so no EIS will be prepared.

Proposed Actions: Comments in this group included suggestions that LBL should make changes to waterfowl hunter permits and designate LBL as a Traditional Cultural Property as defined by the National Historic Preservation Act. These proposed actions are outside the scope of this decision. Other comments asked the Forest Service to disclose types and rates of fertilizers used on LBL. These will be provided in the EA. The majority of comments in this category suggested that LBL discontinue open lands management and encourage reforestation. Amounts of open lands and forested lands were determined by the 2004 Area Plan.

Air: Comments in this group expressed concern that an increase in prescribed burning would increase air pollution. One commenter expressed concern as to the effects of pesticides on air quality on LBL. Prescribed burning will be addressed under a separate NEPA decision. Cumulative effects from burning will be disclosed in Chapter 3 of this EA. Pesticide effects are addressed under Chapter 3 of the EA.

Economics: Commenters expressed concern that coop farming on LBL would negatively affect the economics of the region. Economical effects of the open lands proposed actions are addressed in Chapter 3 of the EA.

Heritage: Comments in this group expressed concerns that farming and other open lands management were damaging heritage resources on LBL. Heritage effects are disclosed in Chapter 3 of the EA. The Forest Service complies with the requirements of NHPA to protect heritage resources.

Soils/water: Comments in this category included concern that farming and other disturbance techniques used to maintain open lands will have a detrimental impact on soil structure and water pollution, that fertilizers used in farming will contribute to water pollution, and riparian corridors are degraded and therefore not sufficient to buffer effects of open lands management. Effects of open lands management on soils and water will be addressed in Chapter 3 of the EA. The 2004 Area Plan standards for riparian corridors will be met to insure effectiveness.

Pesticides: Comments in this group expressed concern that appropriate risk assessments be completed for proposed pesticides, and that use of multiple pesticides over time would have cumulative effects on the environment. Effects and risk assessments of pesticides are disclosed in Chapter 3 and the Appendix of the EA as well as the project record.

Wildlife: A wide range of comments concerned the impacts of open lands management on wildlife, including birds, deer and turkey, reptiles and amphibians, and endangered bats. The site specific effects for open lands management for all of these species groups are addressed in Chapter 3 of the EA and the effects on listed species are disclosed in the Biological Assessment and Evaluation (BAE).

A few commenters raised specific concerns about the adequacy of the riparian corridor widths in the plan standard for reptiles and amphibians, and provided scientific references to be considered. A literature review (“Open lands, management practices, and herpetofauna: are they compatible on LBL NRA?” by Richardson and Bloemer, 2007) was conducted to determine if the riparian corridor width/amphibian reptile concern was a significant issue for this proposed action. The Area Plan FEIS, the literature review, discussions with the IDT and researchers indicate the concern is not significant.

Open Lands Management EA Comment Summary and Issues Approval

The comment summary captures the comments received during the 30-Day Comment Period of the Open Lands Management EA. There are no significant issues. The non-significant issues are adequately described in this summary and specifically described in the comment analysis in the project record.

Approved by:

/s/ William P. Lisowsky _____

4/12/07

William P. Lisowsky, Area Supervisor
Land Between The Lakes Nation Recreation Area

Date