



File Code: 1900

Date: May 10, 2010

Dear Friend of Land Between The Lakes:

The US Forest Service Land Between The Lakes (LBL) National Recreation Area is seeking your involvement in the process of preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a forest health project. I am requesting your input in the scoping process as required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) 40 CFR 1500-1508.

Background

The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) at LBL is beginning an analysis to implement the Land and Resource Management Plan (Area Plan) in the Demumbers Creek project area in the northern portion of LBL, approximately 5 miles southeast of Grand Rivers, KY (see attached map).

The Demumbers Creek project area, approximately 3,600 acres, is primarily mature oak-hickory forest with shade tolerant species, such as red maple, black gum, and winged elm, in the understory. There are small inclusions of coniferous forest within the site that consist of planted loblolly, Virginia, and eastern white pine. Demumbers Creek runs through the site.

The area suffers from forest stagnation; meaning trees are uniform in terms of species, age, and height. This limits forest characteristics that optimize the availability of food and shelter for a diversity of wildlife. Native oaks and hickories are being prevented from developing full crowns; thus minimizing the amount of forage they produce. The proposed actions encourage resilient forest conditions through silvicultural treatments. These include commercial thinning, prescribed fire, replanting of native species, and a limited use of herbicides, which will enhance the diversity of tree types and structures.



Project Area

The project area (see attached map) is adjacent to Demumbers Bay at the north end of LBL in Lyon County, KY. It is bounded by Forest Service Road (FSR) 117 to the south, FSR 119 and 120 to the east, The Trace and FSR 112, 304, and 108 to the west, and Demumbers Bay to the north. A small portion of core area, 146 acres, is within the prescribed burn boundary. Core area also bounds the project along the northeastern edge.

Purpose and Need for Action(s)

The need for this project has been identified in the Area Plan. Desired conditions include a wide range of wildlife habitat and multiple forest age classes, structures, and types. The Area Plan states that General Forests are to have “patches of young trees and dense areas of regenerating forests” as well as mature open forests, mature woodlands, and pine forest types. This project will also provide valuable opportunities for environmental education through a self-guided interpretive program with a focus on forest management practices.

The Demumbers Creek project area has been affected by multiple storm events, which have caused damage to trees and created the accumulation of hazardous fuels. Implementing forest management practices in this area will increase light levels to the forest floor by opening up the overstory and removing shade-tolerant understory trees. Reintroducing fire into this fire adapted ecosystem will reduce hazardous fuels, and encourage the growth of native species such as oaks, hickories, shortleaf pines, wildflowers, and grasses that better support a diversity of wildlife habitat. Reducing tree density, which improves residual tree vigor, will enhance forest health. An integrated approach to reducing the occurrence of non-native invasive species will be used in shortleaf pine regeneration areas.

This project, by improving forest health, encourages dispersed recreation and environmental education. Removing dense undergrowth increases access and visibility into the forest interior for hunting, hiking, backcountry camping, wildlife viewing, and scenic driving opportunities.

The proposed actions will help surrounding communities by contributing to an alternative energy demonstration program. Partnerships are being developed with both a public school in Lyon County and a community health center in Trigg County to utilize biomass from LBL.

The project supports specific prescriptions, goals, and objectives in the Area Plan. Goals emphasize providing dispersed recreation, environmental education opportunities, and community partnerships. The Area Plan also encourages vigorous forests via resource stewardship, functioning watersheds, and varied habitat, to support a diversity of plant and animal species.

Proposed Action(s)

The Forest Service is proposing the following actions in the Demumbers Creek project area:

- Using the methods described in the table below, develop the following forest types: mature oak woodland (20-40% canopy cover), mature open oak forest (40-90% canopy cover), mature forests with canopy gaps, oak and shortleaf pine regenerating forest (forest dominated by less than 10-year old trees).

Forest Structure	Estimated Total Acres	Proposed Methods to Achieve Forest Structure
Oak Woodland	800	Intermediate timber treatment to thin existing canopy and create canopy gaps, and prescribed fire
Open Mature Oak Forest	700	Intermediate timber treatment to thin existing canopy, and prescribed fire
Shortleaf Pine Forest	100	Regeneration timber treatment to remove existing planted pine trees, prescribed fire, herbicide use to control non-native invasive species, and planting of shortleaf pine seedlings
Regenerating Forest	250	Regeneration timber treatment to remove large portion of overstory and create a new oak age class.
Total Area	1850	

- Prescribed burning of approximately 3400 acres on a 2-5 year rotation within treatment areas and project area.
- Use of herbicides to control non-native invasive species.
- Restore about 5 acres of native canebrakes.
- Develop a self-guided interpretive program with a focus on the various management practices and their benefits in comparison to core areas, which are designated sections of the forest where minimal management measures are applied.
- Remove slash and small diameter woody biomass from proposed treatment areas, to be used for community alternative energy demonstration projects.
- Restrict access to Forest Service Road 304 and 303 to Forest Service staff, contractors, and partners.

These silvicultural treatments will establish areas of each forest type within the matrix of the existing forest at the project site. Monitoring will determine when these objectives are met.

Tribal Involvement

The NEPA process coordinates tribal consultation to address potential impacts or concerns related to traditional use or sacred sites as a result of project implementation. This coordination is designed to meet the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 as amended, the American Indian Freedom of Religion Act, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. If your tribe has information, comments, or concerns related to historic properties with traditional or religious significance pertaining to this project, please email them to comments-southern-land-between-lakes@fs.fed.us with the project name and Tribal Comment in the subject heading.

Public Involvement

The public scoping process is to determine alternatives to be considered and issues to be addressed in the development of these proposed actions. These proposed actions are not decided matters. I invite your comments and suggestions about this project. Sharing specific concerns with us early in the process will lead to a collaborative approach in resolving those concerns.

Please send your comments to: Jaime Hernandez, Land Between The Lakes NRA, 100 Van Morgan Drive, Golden Pond, KY 42211; e-mail: comments-southern-land-between-lakes@fs.fed.us; telephone (270) 924-2073.

To be most useful, your comments should be received by **June 10, 2010**.

Section 106 Public Participation

Any questions, concerns, or comments related to heritage compliance for this project should be emailed to comments-southern-land-between-lakes@fs.fed.us with the project name and Heritage Comment in the subject heading.

Thank you for your interest in resource management at LBL.

Sincerely,

/s/ William P. Lisowsky

WILLIAM P. LISOWSKY
Area Supervisor

Enclosure