



File 1950  
Code:  
Route To:

Date: February 19, 2016

Subject: Pearson Gap Projects – Request for Comments

Greetings,

In recent weeks I have been sharing information about the increase in southern pine beetle (SPB) activity we noted this past summer on the Talladega National Forest, Oakmulgee District. We have treated all the active areas discovered in the summer by cutting or pushing down the infested trees. We are monitoring these areas and not seeing any recurrent activity. We will continue to monitor these areas throughout the winter and spring, and longer if necessary.

We have also categorized the trees where we found the SPB and mapped stands showing similar characteristics. We have ranked these similar stands based on their susceptibility to SPB infestations. The SPB infestations we found last summer were in pine stands, heavily stocked with loblolly pine and most were under 30 years old. We also noted, in our review, that the stands we had thinned over the past decade were in good condition and if SPBs came near those stands they did not come inside the stands. From this information we have developed a treatment strategy based on the following values.

- It is important that we manage the National Forest as good neighbors and do not increase the potential of SPB spreading to nearby private lands with pine stands.
- As host to Alabama's largest population of red-cockaded woodpeckers we have a responsibility to protect and improve their habitat.
- The ongoing restoration treatments of removing loblolly, re-establishing longleaf, and prescribed fire are improving the health and resilience of the forest.

This value-based analysis has led us to propose two projects for implementation this year. I am pleased to share with you the attached information which describes the projects. **To allow for a larger conversation, we will host an open-house on March 3, 2016 beginning at 5:30 PM at the Bibb County Board of Education, at 721 Walnut Street, Centreville, AL.**

We would like to know your concerns for the proposed actions within these projects. For environmental analysis we are seeking information on extraordinary circumstances. To assist us in this analysis, your questions should be as specific as possible. Please be aware that the comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be a part of the public record for this project. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environment documents.

If you have any questions, comments, or information you feel we should consider regarding these projects, please feel free to contact me at 205-926-9765 or via email at [comments-southern-alabama-oakmulgee@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-southern-alabama-oakmulgee@fs.fed.us). While your comments are always welcome, they will be most helpful to me if you send them by March 21, 2016. You may also mail or hand deliver your comments to U.S. Forest Service, 9901 Highway 5, Brent, Alabama 35034.

*/s/Cynthia Ragland*  
CYNTHIA RAGLAND  
District Ranger

