

Walker Conifer Thin

APPENDIX A

Scoping Comments and Responses

August 2004

**Comments received during Scoping on Conifer Thin
(March 29-April 19, 2004)**

Respondent	Comments	Response
RGS	“We are in favor of Alternative 3 because it will provide more within-stand diversity for wildlife.... Reintroducing fire will improve habitat conditions.... We will support whatever decision the Ranger selects.”	Your support is appreciated.
D. Neilson	“The project appears to substantially improve the health of selected stands and provides wood to local mills. You have my enthusiastic support.”	Your support is appreciated.
K. Hawes MN DNR	“Refrain from thinning any naturally regenerated stands 80 years of age or older. These stands should be designated as old growth. ...old undisturbed pine stands are especially unique. ...evaluate all natural stands for potential for future old growth stands. Once stands are thinned their... values as old growth sites is compromised.”	There are only two stands naturally regenerated over 80 years old in the project. One of these stands, 2-122-15, has been previously thinned. In the other, 2-60-59, harvest is not planned; application of low intensity fire will be evaluated in alternative 3. The forest has evaluated and identified old growth stands, complexes, and special management complexes. Stand 2-122-15 is in a special management complex. The second stand has not been identified as an old growth stand, as being within an old growth complex, or in a special management complex.
LLBO	<p>Plantations - “...these stands do not provide for traditional gathering by tribal members, provide very little wildlife habitat, are potential sources of insect and disease problems... and are the major uplands source of potential fire problems. ...use fire with no harvest, which would more naturally replicate natural occurrences in these stands. Promotion and retention of all other ...species ...would...speed the conversion...back to forest.”</p> <p>Ten Section Area -“ ...MA 8.3 in the current Forest Plan...is not to be managed for timber production. ...your proposal to go in and do some thinning ...to meet your timber harvest goals is in violation of the act {Minnesota National Forest Act} and the current Forest Plan. ...all plans to do anything in the Ten Section Areas should be dropped...”</p> <p>Title lands and 2415 land claims- “project contain...parcels of land having clouded titles...the reservation will be seeking return of these lands....keep these issues in mind as you decide on what, if anything, you do with these lands.”</p> <p>Supervisors office land-“area...is littered with hundreds of rare,</p>	<p>Plantations – concerns raised are addressed to different degrees in alternatives 2 and 3. Use of fire with no harvest is considered under alternatives eliminated from detailed study.</p> <p>Ten Section Area- This area has been identified as National Forest land and the Forest Plan specifies the purpose and direction as summarized in Chapter 1. Harvesting to achieve objectives is not precluded in these stands (Forest Plan, 3-27). Minnesota National Forest Act does not preclude management activities in this area.</p> <p>Title lands –This is outside the scope of this project. Management activities proposed are consistent with Forest Plan direction.</p> <p>Supervisors office land – We are currently aware of the location of</p>

	<p>threatened, and endangered <i>Botrychium</i> ferns, and we do not believe that a thorough, systematic search of the area has been made. ...you need to address the ATV use that is occurring on the site. ...Land associated with the Supervisors Office is an administrative site and not actually part of the National Forest. This brings into question how and by whom management decisions should be made.</p>	<p>many of these plant and sites are flagged. Additional field checks for <i>Botrychium</i> are planned for spring and summer of 2004. Mitigation measures will be applied where the species is found. A Goblin Fern Study as you suggest has been set up on another parcel of National Forest land.</p> <p>An assessment of ATV use will be made outside this analysis; appropriate signing will occur, and activity monitored.</p> <p>This area is an administrative site; was acquired with the Weeks Act; it is considered to be part of the National Forest land; is headed by the Forest Supervisor (36 CFR 200.1 (2)) who has the authority to make or delegate decisions. This issue is outside the scope of the project.</p>
B. Behr, Blandin Forestry	<p>“I agree with your efforts to improve the health, growth and vigor of conifer stands through thinning. Do as much as you can, as fast, and as often as you can.” Also provided suggestions to improve the description of the Wood Fiber Existing and Desired Condition for the Purpose and Need.</p>	<p>Your suggestions are appreciated. Minor adjustments were made to the wood fiber purpose and need statement. Some of your suggestions were also captured in the “maintain or improve health, growth, and vigor of conifer stands” existing and desired condition statements. Our presentation is more general, whereas, your suggestions are more detailed.</p>
B. Bignall Potlatch	<p>“I support alternative 3 with some concerns. What I like...is that more acres are treated which will increase the overall landscape diversity and provide more habitat for wildlife. It also creates healthier forest...prevent insect and disease outbreaks...reduces fuel loading...benefits the local economy... My main concern ...is the use of prescribed fire in commercial timber. This can lead to unnecessary damage to the residual stand. Is fire necessary?”</p>	<p>Concerns are addressed in alternatives 2 (no burning) and the effects of burning are discussed for alternative 3.</p>
B. Pasko Sierra Club	<p>Purpose and Need- “The Forest Service must not define the purpose and need...unreasonably narrowly. ...purpose and need should be amended to include a net reduction of temporary and classified roads in the project area.”</p> <p>Adequate alternative analysis - “...give meaningful and unbiased consideration to all reasonable alternatives, which specifically include the no-action alternative and alternatives that generally seek to restore forest types and achieve to their range of natural variation and achieve project objectives without using logging techniques.”</p> <p>Adequate analysis of road system – “...a complete analysis of all classified, unclassified, and other roads should be initiated.... ineffectively closed result in the conversion of temporary roads into permanent unclassified roads. ...The agency’s proposal should call for the immediate obliteration of all unneeded roads in the project area, and must contain a plan that will adequately address the need</p>	<p>The purpose and need is tied to meeting Forest Plan expectations. How broadly or narrowly it is defined is the discretion of the line officer. Transportation needs are included in the purpose and need. In addition a roads analysis will be done for roads that access proposed treatment areas and recommendations made. This analysis and resulting recommendations are included in the project file. A more detailed analysis will be conducted on an area basis at some point in the future to consider all roads and to make recommendation on their disposition.</p> <p>Alternative analysis – Alternatives that meet the purpose and need and respond to issues have been identified and analyzed in this project. In addition, rationale for alternatives considered and eliminated from detailed study is presented in Chapter 2.</p> <p>Road system - Recommendations from the road analysis will be the basis for determining road closures, obliteration and</p>

	<p>for road obliteration, restoration, and the effects of excess road-building.</p> <p>Use of fire- "...hand release and prescribed burns should be used on as many acres as possible... Commercial logging is not and should not be viewed as a tool for reducing fire risk or for achieving forest restoration objectives.</p>	<p>decommissioning.</p> <p>Use of fire – Some hand, mechanical and prescribed fire treatments to reduce fuels concentrations in conjunction with harvesting is proposed in the alternatives and analyzed. An alternative that looks at reducing fire risk without commercial logging was considered and eliminated from detailed study. The rationale is presented in Chapter 2.</p>
H. Tjader DNR Forestry	<p>"I ... endorse Alternative 3... Variable density thinning could be a valuable tool for creating diverse habitats and increasing the species richness in the red pine community. "</p> <p>We have mature red pine stands (4 and 5 acre fragments) in the NWNW and NWSW of Section 1 T. 144 R 29... if we could coordinate this project with yours, there may be come synergistic benefits.</p>	<p>Walker personnel (C. Miller) contacted H. Tjader regarding coordination of this project with DNR project(s).</p>
T. Gilbert NPS	<p>"...the proposal may impact the North Country National Scenic Trail (NST). We want to be sure the recreation value of the North Country NST as a non-motorized trail is carefully considered during this analysis and any type of negative impact to the trail is avoided. ...ensure the trail is usable and effectively signed at the conclusion of any management activities that impact the trail. It should be helpful if you can inform us of any activities that would cause the trail to be closed to the public so that we may help inform the trail users of these closures.</p>	<p>The North Country Trail neither passes through nor is it immediately adjacent to any of the proposed treatment units.</p> <p>There are other trails (Paul Bunyan Connector, Soo Line) in the proximity of treatment units. Mitigation measures and timing restrictions for treatment activities to minimize disturbance will be implemented.</p>
J. Christenson	<p>"The thinning will be done commercially. Will money be received from this and if so, how and where will it be spent? Some diseases were listed. Which is the major threat to this area?"</p>	<p>Some of the money generated can be used for post harvest work, such as surveys, planting, slash disposal, burning, etc. Generally, a portion is returned to the US Treasury. More detail can found in the economics section of Chapter 3.</p> <p>Insects and diseases are discussed in the vegetation section of Chapter 3.</p>
B. Stone G.Rapids C.Commerce	<p>"...we would encourage you to select Alternative 3".</p>	
C. Lund	<p>"cut and harvest only mature trees"</p>	<p>Commercial thinning is generally applied to immature stands that have a merchantable product that can be removed. In most instances the best trees are left with the smallest and poorest quality trees removed. Most of the stands in this project are considered to be "immature". When trees are considered to be mature, regeneration harvests such as clearcuts or shelterwoods are applied unless other</p>

		resource objectives warrant different treatments.
L. Dahr	“My 5 acres is backed by the Chippewa National Forest and beside our personal thinning.... We don’t leave ugly stumps such as I’ve seen after other thinning.... The stumps continue to grow and any diseases haven’t really been eradicated if they have progressed to the roots. I don’t want any thinning to be done on my private parcel.”	Your concern about the stumps, other than aesthetics is not real clear. With the top and bole of the tree removed, there is no source of energy and food for the <i>stump to grow</i> . However, many of the hardwood species will resprout and these shoots may grow and develop eventually into larger trees. The trees to be cut in this project would be conifers which do not resprout. Diseases are typically host specific which means that they generally do not spread from one species to another. Diseases that spread through the root system tend to be root diseases. To our knowledge there is very little, if any, sign of root diseases in the stands in this project. Stumps left in conifer stands recently logged tend to be only 2-3” high because of the type of mechanized equipment they are using. Given the dense understory vegetation in most of these stands, the stumps are usually hidden. Thinning is planned for National Forest lands and would not entail any activity on your private parcel.
M.Glawotsky??	Contacted (called) the district regarding this project. He and L. Dahr both have the same concerns.	Phone discussion with R. Johnson (5/7/04), district silviculturist, regarding past activities on his property, the FS proposed activities and his concerns. FS will not be harvesting on his property, nor would activities impact his property. Slash within 25 feet of property boundary would be removed.
Gimmestad	“...you indicate that we will be receiving additional review materials on this project...”	Package of material/information will be sent upon completion of the project.
Aube Rec’d 8/9/04	“I support...the thinning projects... Opening up these stands will provide for improved growth and health...as well as positive wildlife and plant diversity impacts. ...I encourage thinning down to basal areas less than 100 square feet pre acre...especially on poorer sites. I ...recommend limited use of fire. ...this is an expense and threat to the remaining stand that is not justifiable. ...slash can be laid low to the ground where it will biodegrade quickly, and not be a problem for subsequent operability or visual quality.”	Alternatives 2 and 3 analyze different intensities and approaches to thinning. Concerns with fire are reflected in the issues. Prescribed fire treatments are not included in alternative 2. Effects of prescribed fire are considered in alternative 3.