



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Green Mountain & Finger
Lakes National Forests

www.fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl

231 North Main St.
Rutland, Vermont 05701
Tel. (802) 747-6700
TTY (802) 747-6765
FAX (802) 747-6766

File Code: 1950

Date: August 20, 2002

Subject: North Half Overstory Removal EA Comment Period

Dear Commentor:

Enclosed is a copy of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the North Half Overstory Removal project. This proposed project involves completing the final phase of shelterwood system harvests begun in 1992 through 1995 (with the exception of one being harvested in 1984) on 19 stands in the northern portion of the Green Mountain National Forest.

This Environmental Assessment documents the environmental analysis of this proposed federal action. This project proposal was sent out for public scoping review in May of 1999. Comments were gathered and an analysis was begun shortly thereafter. However, new issues and information related to threatened, endangered, and sensitive species (TES), specifically the Indiana bat, prompted the Forest Service to suspend work on this proposal until more analysis of the TES species was completed. An amendment to the Forest Plan for TES species was completed in September, 2001, and analysis of the North Half Overstory Removal project resumed. The EA is now ready for public review and comments.

The EA analyzes four alternative actions including the No Action Alternative. As the responsible official for this project, I am considering selecting Alternative 3, entitled in the EA as "Modified Cutting in Oak Stands." Alternative 3 is most responsive to the purpose and need and issues raised for this project. This alternative responds best to the need to release young stands from shade and create more diverse early successional habitat for wildlife. The harvests proposed in Alternative 3 will meet these vegetation and habitat needs while still maintaining substantial remnant overstory oak trees in 4 oak stands.

I feel this is the best strategy for sustaining oak in these stands. This Alternative will sustain two-storied oak stands with continued seeding potential while adequately releasing the young oak trees from shade. As described in the EA, mitigation measures and Forest Plan standards and guidelines will assure that all adverse environmental effects are within acceptable limits.

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.6, this EA is available for public comment and review for a 30-day period. The legal notice announcing the comment period is anticipated to be published in The Rutland Daily Herald during the week of August 26, 2002. Please call the Rutland Herald at 802-747-6121 to inquire as to the exact date of publication of the legal notice, (which is entitled "North Half Overstory Removal Project") or contact Chris Casey of the Green Mountain National Forest at 802-388-4362 ext. 115. To ensure your comments are considered before I



make a final decision, they must be postmarked, faxed, or submitted orally by close-of-business on the 30th day after the legal notice appears.

I am very interested in your response to this EA, and will carefully consider your comments. All comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will become part of the public record for this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Copies of the Decision Notice will be mailed to those who submit comments before or during the comment period and to those who request a copy of the Decision Notice.

Please be sure to include the following information with your comments:

- (1) Your name, address, telephone number, organization represented and your title (if any);
- (2) Title of the document and project (Environmental Assessment, North Half Overstory Removal Project) on which the comment is being submitted ; and
- (3) Specific facts and supporting reasons regarding your comments. Please be as specific as possible.

Written comments should be addressed to:

Green Mountain National Forest
ATTN: District Ranger
99 Ranger Road
Rochester, VT 05767

This EA can also be viewed on our website at
http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl/nepa_planning/ea/osr_ea.htm

Thank you for your interest in the management of Green Mountain National Forest. If you have further questions, please contact Chris Casey at 802-388-4362 ext. 115.

Sincerely,

/s/ Laurie Arnado for

STEPHEN J. KIMBALL
District Ranger, Middlebury and Rochester Districts

Enc.