

Project Proposal – Goosetown Blowdown

Background

On May 8, 2003, a tornado struck Perry County, Indiana, damaging trees on approximately 80 acres in the Tell City Ranger District of the Hoosier National Forest. The area is located approximately eight miles east of Tell City, Indiana (see attached vicinity map).

Thirty-five of the 80 acres were severely damaged with the remaining 45 acres receiving scattered damage. The western boundary of the blowdown on National Forest System land abuts private land for approximately one mile. The German Ridge Trail, used by hikers, mountain bikers and horseback riders, runs through the eastern portion of the blowdown.

Project Proposal

This proposal is to remove damaged trees and then follow up with a prescribed burn of the area. The two pieces of the proposal are explained in detail below with pictures of the affected area.

1. Remove weakened and severely damaged standing trees and downed and uprooted trees on approximately 80 acres of hardwood and pine stands on the Hoosier National Forest. The purpose of the project is to achieve the following results:

- Reduce the safety hazard to German Ridge trail users, hunters and general forest users from weakened trees and hanging trees and limbs
- Reduce fire hazard to National Forest System land and adjacent private land
- Prevent insect and disease damage to nearby healthy trees on National Forest System land and private land
- Improve the visual appearance along the German Ridge Trail system
- Salvage merchantable wood

The following defines the different damaged tree conditions:

- **Downed** trees are those whose main stem is less than six feet from the ground
- **Uprooted** trees are those with more than 20 per cent of the root system exposed to the air
- **Weakened** trees are those with signs of partial root upheaval, twisted stems, broken tops, or excessive lean
- **Severely damaged** trees are those having broken stems, 50 per cent or more of the live branches broken, or the appearance of having suffered whipping or stress

Guidance on cutting and removal operations would include the following:

- No healthy trees would be cut except to reduce safety risks or provide salvage operations access
- Trees to be removed would be determined by physical inspection and would be individually marked
- No new roads would be constructed—access to damaged trees would use existing roads



Uprooted trees in blowdown area



Severely damaged trees creating safety hazard for users of old road

2. Prescribed burn 160 acres on National Forest System land to achieve the following results:

- Reduce fuels and fire hazard to National Forest System land and adjacent private land
- Reduce maple, beech and pine competition to allow oak and hickory to grow providing more hard mast, i.e., acorns, for wildlife
- Minimize soil disturbance

The burn area perimeter would include roads outside the 80 acre blowdown area. These roads would be used in order to minimize soil disturbance compared to having to bulldoze interior fire lines and allow for a more manageable burn, consequently, the burn would cover 160 acres

The 160 acre project area falls within Management Area 2.8 described in the *Land and Resource Management Plan- Hoosier National Forest (Forest Plan)*. The following is some of the relevant guidance and desired conditions for Management Area 2.8 in the Forest Plan:

Downed logs, limbs, and other scattered ground materials resulting from vegetative management or natural causes are left on the site. Exceptions to this may be made for visual concerns, reducing fire hazard in certain situations, firewood gathering, and recreation area cleanup.



Damaged area viewed from German Ridge Trail

The area is general forest land with the appearance of large areas of old forests with scattered openings. There is evidence of human activities, but most blend in well with the natural environment. Interaction among visitors is frequent.

Habitat in these areas is best suited to animals that use large hardwood trees and a mosaic of different-aged hardwood forests. There is also more early successional habitat in these areas than in most other areas of the Forest.

Viewing scenery, hunting, fishing, gathering forest products, and hiking are key recreation activities. Some of the areas are landlocked by private lands, but most are generally accessible by foot travel and state and county roads.

View of scattered and heavy damage



Far left leaning tree to be removed

Large tree in center to stay



Healthy trees to be left in scattered damage area

This project would utilize the soil and water protection measures in Appendix K of the Forest Plan and the best management practices guide for water quality in Indiana.

Salvageable trees would be removed through a timber sale. Approximately 250 MBF of timber would be sold.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Forest Silviculturist, Tom Thake, 812.547.9248 or Public Affairs Officer, Franklin Lewis, 812.277.3580.