



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Mark Twain National Forest
Poplar Bluff Ranger District

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File Code: 1950-1

Date: September 7, 2004

Dear Planning Participant:

I am enclosing a summary of proposed resource management activities for the Pine Ridge Project area for your review and comment per CFR 215.5(a)(1). This is a revised version of an earlier proposal sent out for 30-day comment in August 2003. This proposal, known as the Revised Proposed Action, is available on our website at www.fs.fed.us/r9/marktwain/publications.htm. Copies of the proposal can be obtained by contacting Bill Paxton at this office. This Project falls under the revised 36 CFR 215 appeal regulations effective June 4, 2003. **This correspondence constitutes notice of your opportunity to provide comment on the Proposed Action per 36 CFR 215.5.** Any substantive comments received during this 30-day comment period will be used to develop reasonable alternatives to the Revised Proposed Action.

My decision was pending for an earlier (August 2003) proposal for the Pine Ridge Project Area when a maternity colony of Indian bats was discovered by scientific researchers in Compartment 29 in May 2004. The Pine Ridge environmental analysis process was subsequently suspended until the discovery of the Indiana bat was addressed.

Following a public involvement period conducted regarding establishment of an "Area of Influence" (AOI) for protection and management of the maternity colony, the Mark Twain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) was amended and an AOI established for the Indiana bat on August 13, 2004 in a decision by Forest Supervisor Ronnie Raun. Two compartments (28 and 29) included in the earlier proposal were re-classified from a 4.1 Management Area (MA), to a 3.5 MA. A 3.5 MA provides special designation, protection, and management for the Indiana bat. More information regarding this re-classification can be found on the Mark Twain National Forest website at www.fs.fed.us/r9/marktwain/projects/40405/index.htm.

Future management direction for the newly established AOI will be addressed under separate analysis. That analysis will specifically address a Management Recovery Strategy (MRS) for the Indiana bat.

Following my review, I have determined the Purpose and Need for Action for those remaining compartments remains viable; there are still resource management needs in the remaining landscape area that need to be addressed. The other compartments in the original Pine Ridge proposal (August 2003) remain in non-compliance with the Mark Twain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). Thus, the original project proposal has been revised to remove only those activities proposed within what is now the AOI. All other proposed activities for the remainder of the original Pine Ridge Project area remain the same.

As the responsible official for this project, I am considering selecting the Revised Proposed Action for implementation. However, I want to consider your comments before I make a final decision. Comments must be postmarked or received within 30 days of the date the legal notice is published in the Daily American Republic, Poplar Bluff, Missouri, the Poplar Bluff Ranger District's "newspaper of record". The date this legal notice is published in this newspaper is the exclusive means for calculating the time to submit comments on a proposed action to be analyzed and documented in an EA.

We ask that comments be as specific as possible. Substantive comments are required. These are comments that are within the scope of the proposed action, specific to the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the revised proposed action, and include supporting reasons for me to consider those comments in the EA and my subsequent decision (36 CFR 215.2).



Individuals and organizations desiring eligibility to appeal must provide the following information:

- (i) Name and address;
- (ii) Title of the proposed action (this proposed action is the **Revised Proposed Action: Pine Ridge Project Area**)
- (iii) Substantive comments on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that I should consider in reaching a decision; and
- (iv) Signature or other verification of identity upon request.

Only those who submit timely and substantive comments will be accepted as appellants. Identification of the individual or organization that authored the comment(s) is necessary for appeal eligibility. Each individual or representative from each organization submitting comments must either sign the comments or verify their identity upon request.

The decision notice for this project will be mailed to those who have commented during the public involvement process for this project, and to those who request the decision notice. To obtain more information about this project, please contact Bill Paxton, Integrated Resource Analyst, at (573) 785-1475. Please send comments to: District Ranger, Poplar Bluff Ranger District, P.O. Box 988, Poplar Bluff, MO 63901. ATTN: **Revised Proposed Action: Pine Ridge Project Area**. That is also the address to reach me. My telephone number is (573) 785-1475. Send any fax comments to me at (573) 785-0267, and submit any e-mail comments to comments-eastern-mark-twain-poplar-bluff@fs.fed.us.

The office hours (for those delivering comments by hand) are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday – Friday. Oral comments must be provided at my office during office hours. Acceptable formats for electronic comments are: text or HTML e-mail, Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF), or formats printable in Microsoft Office applications.

We appreciate your interest in the management of the Mark Twain National Forest.

Sincerely,

HENRY B. HICKERSON
District Ranger