

SCOPING COMMENTS INVITED ON THE PROPOSED NUBBLE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROJECT

The Ammonoosuc-Pemigewasset Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest is proposing the following activities within the Nubble Vegetation Management Project Area (previously listed as the Nubble Vegetation Management and the Compartment 20 Vegetation Management Projects in the White Mountain National Forest quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions):

- Timber Harvesting, and
- Maintenance of the existing road system.

Project Area: The Nubble Vegetation Management Project is located in Bethlehem, Grafton County, NH, on the Ammonoosuc-Pemigewasset Ranger District. The project area of approximately 7,4000 acres includes approximately 7,100 acres of National Forest system lands and approximately 300 acres of private land. (Private lands are included for analysis purposes only.) The federal lands include the Management Area (MA) 2.1 and 3.1 lands within Compartments 19 and 20. In addition, the project area is part of the larger Habitat Management Units (HMUs) 110 and 111 (approximately 18,000 acres). See enclosed maps

Background: The word Nubble is a local name given to a rocky prominence on the lower slope of North Twin Mountain. Another name that is most often seen on maps is Little Haystack.

Recreational Activities:

The recreation opportunity spectrum classes for the project area are “roaded natural” and “semi-primitive motorized.” Recreational activities that seasonally occur in the project area include:

- Roadside camping along Forest Road 304 (Haystack Road) and Forest Road 25 (Gale River Road).
- North Twin Trailhead at the end of the Haystack Road.
- Portions of a Snowmobile Trail.
- Portions of the Beaver Brook Cross Country Ski Trail System.
- Beaver Brook Picnic Area
- Hunting
- Fishing in the Little and Gale Rivers.
- Off-trail hiking to the Nubble and the un-named peak north of North Twin.

Vegetation and Wildlife Management Activities: In addition to recreational opportunities, this area has had a long history of vegetation and wildlife habitat management. Timber harvesting first occurred in 1895 when George Van Dyke and Company built the Little River Logging Railroad and harvested much of the spruce in the project area. The area became part of the White Mountain National Forest in the 1920s and the first timber harvesting under Forest Service supervision occurred in 1925. The most recent timber harvesting occurred between 1984 and 1990 with the Hawthorne Knob Timber Sale.

Roads: There are 6.5 miles of road in the project area including FR 304, FR 304A (Haystack Spur, blocked off) and FR 25. FR 25 and 304 are open to the public during the snow free season and are both in good condition.

Forest Plan Goals:

Management Area 2.1 - Protect and enhance visual quality; broaden the range of recreation opportunities, mainly those offering roaded natural opportunities; provide moderate amounts of

high-quality hardwood sawtimber and other timber products on a sustained yield basis; and provide a balanced mix of habitats for all wildlife species.

Management Area 3.1 – Provide large amounts of high-quality sawtimber on a sustained yield basis and other timber products through intensive timber management; increase wildlife habitat diversity for the full range of wildlife species with emphasis on early-successional species; broaden the range of recreation options, mainly those offering semi-primitive motorized experience opportunities; and grow small diameter trees for fiber production.

Forest Plan Desired Conditions:

Management Area 2.1 – The forest will be a mosaic of stands varying in size, shape, height, and species. The stands will be predominantly hardwood trees that provide habitat for game and non-game species. Some stands will consist of trees of about the same age and size; other stands will consist of a mix of tree sizes and ages, ranging from seedlings to very large trees. Along major road corridors, large diameter trees with a variety of bark and foliage characteristics will predominate. Numerous views of panoramic and ephemeral landscapes will be provided. Even- and uneven-aged management will be considered on a site-by site basis and generally will be applied on 50 percent of the management area. There will be noticeable human activity in those areas resulting from many uses. Evidence will usually be in harmony with the natural-appearing environment and consistent with good resource management. Roads will provide access to meet land management objectives. Roads will generally be closed to public vehicular traffic. Generally, there will be 1-3 miles of road per square mile of area.

Management Area 3.1 – The forest on these management areas will be a mosaic of stands of American beech, sugar maple, balsam fir, hemlock, red and white pine, spruce, paper birch, red oak and aspen. These areas will provide habitat for game and non-game species. Some stands will consist of trees of about the same age and size; other stands will consist of a mix of tree sizes and ages ranging from seedlings to very large mature trees. A lesser acreage of the forest will be comprised of individual stands of northern hardwoods, softwoods, paper birch, and aspen of the same age and size grown on a shorter rotation and having a diameter of 6-16 inches. Uneven-aged management will be considered on a site-by site basis and generally will be applied on 10-20 percent of the management area. There will be noticeable human activity in these areas resulting from many uses. Evidence of human activity will usually be in harmony with the natural-appearing environment and consistent with good resource management. A network of gated/blocked roads and trails will provide access for various land management activities. Some roads will be open occasionally to provide opportunities for activities such as firewood gathering or hunting access. Generally, there will be 1-3 miles of road per square mile of area.

Purpose and Need: We analyzed existing resource conditions in the Nubble Vegetation Management Project Area and evaluated them against the Forest Plan desired condition. Based on Forest Plan goals and objectives and the differences between existing conditions and desired conditions, we have identified several needs and opportunities for the project area.

1. At the landscape level, there is little diversity of age classes. Regeneration habitat (trees less than 10 years old) makes up 6% of Habitat Management Unit 110 and 5% of HMU 111 and this amount will decline to zero percent in 2003 as the trees increase in age and size. There is a need to increase the amount of the 0-10 year old forest type to improve wildlife habitat diversity for species that depend on early-successional habitat. Opportunities exist, through timber harvesting and reforestation treatments, to improve the growth, vigor, and health of forested stands by harvesting mature or poor quality trees and regenerating new trees, and thus to provide a variety of wildlife habitat types and conditions. Stands would be harvested in accordance with the appropriate silvicultural guidelines and Forest Plan direction. Activities could include group cutting, single-tree harvesting, and clearcutting.
2. In both the short- and long-term, an adequate transportation system to access to the project area is

needed for management of National Forest Lands and to provide motorized recreation opportunities.

3. Congress annually funds the Forest Service to provide commercial timber within the capability of the lands and individual Forest Plans. The White Mountain National Forest Plan allocates land for sustainable wood production (MAs 2.1 and 3.1). People’s demand for hardwood and other wood products continues to be high, which supports the need to supply this renewable resource. Projects such as this, which supply wood products, provide a means to satisfy people’s demand for wood and contribute to the economic viability of local communities.

The Forest Service is proposing the following activities to move the Nubble Vegetation Management Project Area towards the Forest Plan desired condition. As the project is fully developed and analyzed, actual amounts of activities accomplished on the ground (measured in acres or miles) may vary. The Nubble Project proposal would utilize one or two timber sales to accomplish its goals.

Activities Proposed for the Nubble Vegetation Management Project

Activity	Amount
TIMBER HARVESTING:	
Even-Aged Management	
Clearcutting (northern hardwood, paper birch)	132 Ac
Thinning	66 Ac
Uneven-Aged Management	
Single-Tree Selection	558 Ac
Group Selection (groups range in size from 1/10 to 2 acres in size; ½ acre average) *	629 Ac
TRANSPORTATION	
Road Maintenance (Forest Roads FR304, FR304A – currently blocked and would need culverts, FR25)	6.5 Mi
ESTIMATED HARVEST VOLUME	5.1 MMBF

* = Groups harvested represent approximately 25% of stand acres

Decision to be Made: As the District Ranger of the Ammonoosuc-Pemigewasset Ranger District, I will make the following decisions based on the interdisciplinary analysis presented in the Nubble Vegetation Management Project environmental assessment (EA):

1. Which actions, if any, will be approved (which alternative to implement) that will move the Nubble project area towards the desired condition per Forest Plan direction and addresses the needs and issues identified for this project?
2. Is the information in this analysis sufficient to implement the proposed activities?
3. Does the proposed project have a significant impact that would trigger a need to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement?
4. What mitigation measures and monitoring requirements should the Forest Service apply to these activities to meet Forest Plan standards and guidelines for all resources?
5. Will a Forest Plan amendment be required to accommodate this project?

Commenting: We would appreciate hearing any additional opportunities you know of for this area or any concerns you may have with this proposal. Comments on the proposed action should address site-specific concerns and opportunities for the management of the Nubble Vegetation Management Project Area.

The purpose of soliciting comments during the scoping period is to determine if there are opportunities that we may have missed for the project area, or if there are unresolved issues that

affect a proposed action. Unresolved issues will be used to develop alternatives to the proposed action. To be considered, comments may be provided orally or in writing (phone, FAX, or e-mail) and must be received (phone, e-mail), postmarked, or facsimile imprinted no later than the closing date of the comment period, April 25, 2002. Indicate clearly in your response that your comments are in reference to the proposed Nubble Vegetation Management Project. Comments should be addressed to the District Ranger in one of the following ways:

- **By Mail** - Pemigewasset/Ammonoosuc Ranger District, RFD #3, Box 15, Plymouth, NH 03264-9103 (you may use the enclosed form);
- **By FAX** - (603) 536-5147;
- **By phone** - (603) 536-1315 (voice) or 603-536-3281 (TTY); or
- **By email** - swingate@fs.fed.us

If you decide to comment, your comments need to be submitted as indicated above, and you must include the following information:

- 1) Your name, address, and, if possible, telephone number;
- 2) The title of the project you are submitting comments on; and
- 3) Site-specific facts or comments, along with supporting reasons that you believe I should consider in reaching a decision. Comments should be site-specific to the proposed Nubble Vegetation Management Project. For example, *"Timber harvesting along forest road 304 is inappropriate, because it spoils the views for people driving along the road,"* is a site-specific comment. *"Timber harvesting is an inappropriate use of National Forest land,"* is not a site-specific comment. It is an issue beyond the scope of individual projects and should be addressed at the national level.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including name and address of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection¹. Your views on this project are important. If you need more information on this project, please contact Steve Wingate at (603) 536-1315. If you would like to receive further information about this project, please fill out the enclosed form and return it to us. Thank you for your interest in assisting us to manage the White Mountain National Forest.

¹ Comments received in response to this solicitation, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Additionally, pursuant to 7CFR1.27(d), any person may request that a submission be withheld from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that confidentiality is granted in only very limited circumstances. The Forest Service will inform the requester of its decision regarding a request for confidentiality. Where the request is denied, the submission will be returned, and the requester notified that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

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