
DECISION MEMO

Birmingham Ferry and Cravens Bay Salvage Project

**USDA Forest Service, Southern Region
Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area
Lyon County, KY**

December, 2016

This memorandum documents damaged timber as a result of wind damage on Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area.

Background

On July 6, 2016 a severe wind event, later confirmed as an F-2 tornado, impacted multiple locations in Lyon County, Kentucky on the northern end of Land Between the Lakes. The Birmingham Ferry and Cravens Bay areas are sections of the forest most affected by this wind event. Several areas of damage need clearing around areas of high public use. This salvage work will assist us in reducing large concentrations of downed, woody debris that could result in increased fire intensities and potential source points for disease and insect outbreaks.

Purpose and Need

This project is needed to protect forest visitor safety, as well as to enhance forest health conditions in stands substantially damaged by wind throw, or, in danger from insect and disease attacks.

Portions of the Birmingham Ferry and Cravens Bay salvage areas are within the Core management areas. These areas serve as controls in comparative management and, in most cases, have little to no management disturbance. Management activities within Core areas are limited to include only those needed to deal with forest health emergencies, wildfire, restoration and maintenance of native communities, and recovery of threatened and endangered (T&E) species. Cutting only damaged trees in the core areas is needed to protect visitors from overhead risks.

This salvage operation will provide an opportunity to address the damaged timber and meet multiple objectives and goals as stated in the 2004 Land Between the Lakes Land and Resource Management Plan (Area Plan).

Decision

I, Tina Tilley, Area Supervisor, have decided to cut and leave damaged trees within 75 feet of existing road and recreation infrastructure in the Birmingham Ferry and Cravens Bay areas. The work will be conducted by sawyers employed by the Forest Service or hired through a Forest Service contract. Cutting the damaged trees and laying them flat on the ground will improve safety to visitors who use the areas. Less than 100 acres fall within the 75 foot corridor where damaged trees will be cut and laid down as indicated on the map. The downed timber will be too rotten for saw logs in the spring when conditions will be favorable for logging. Therefore, no commercial logging will occur.

Damaged trees to be cut include up-heaved trees with root wads attached, trees with snapped, twisted or otherwise damaged stems, standing pine trees with 20% or more of their live crown broken, and hardwood tree species severely damaged having 20% or more of their live crown broken.

Downed timber may be made available for the public to remove with firewood permits after the Forest Service makes the area safe. No firewood permits will be issued for areas near power lines.

No new temporary roads will be constructed.

My conclusion is based on a review of the project record which provides a thorough analysis of relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgement of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risks.

Table 1: Areas Containing Tornado Damage

Area Name	Total Size (acres)	Watershed (6th level HUC)
A (Core Area)	28	Pisgah Creek/Kentucky Lake
B	7	Pisgah Creek/Kentucky Lake
C	33	Pisgah Creek/Kentucky Lake
D	23	McNabb Creek/Cumberland River
E	82	McNabb Creek/Cumberland River
F (Some Core Area)	69	McNabb Creek/Cumberland River
G	60	McNabb Creek/Cumberland River

Damaged trees and overhead broken limbs in the core areas near Birmingham Ferry Backcountry Area (Area A) and along Road 118 (Area F) may be removed within 75 feet of campsites, parking areas, or roads. Firewood permits may be issued for downed timber within the 75 foot corridor. Since this decision is based on storm damage it does not set a precedent to issue firewood permits in all core areas across Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area.

Location

Located approximately seventeen miles north of U.S. Highway 68, both sides of the Woodlands Trace in the areas of Forest Service roads 114, 117 and 118 were impacted. The impacted area lies in Lyon Country and the eastern boundary touches Lake Barkley's shoreline and Kentucky Lake to the west. Please reference the enclosed map for more information.

Category of Action

The primary action of this decision memo is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA) as described in the Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 Chapter 30 Section 32.2. Category 13 (36 CFR 220.6 (e) (13)):

“Salvage of dead and/or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than ½ mile or temporary road construction. The proposed action may include incidental removal of live or dead trees for landings, skid trails, and road clearing.”

Finding of No Extraordinary Circumstances

There are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects which may significantly affect the environment. The following extraordinary circumstances were considered as part of this analysis, as required by FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30, Section 31.2.

- (1) Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species;
- (2) Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds;
- (3) Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreational areas;
- (4) Inventoried roadless area and potential wilderness areas;
- (5) Research natural areas;
- (6) American Indian and Alaskan Native religious or cultural sites, and
- (7) Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.

A more detailed explanation on each individual circumstance is located in the project record under the Concurrences and Categorical Exclusion Checklist.

Public Involvement

The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies on Land Between the Lakes' public website and released in a news release. We emailed the proposed action for a scoping comment period from August 25 through September 30, 2016 to 269 individuals and organizations on SOPA list, the Land Between the Lakes Advisory Board, and land management partners. A legal notice announcing the scoping period was published in the Paducah Sun on August 26, 2016. Over 30 people participated in a field trip on September 16, 2016 to the Birmingham Ferry area affected by the tornado. Emails and phone calls were exchanged between John Westbrook, Environmental Stewardship Department Manager and interested individuals to answer questions and to provide additional information.

The public and stakeholders submitted 38 letters or emails during the scoping comment period from. The proposed action was scaled back based on comments and further staff evaluation of the damaged areas. Changes made to the proposed action include limiting salvage operations (cutting and leaving the trees on the ground) to areas within 75 feet from the roads and infrastructure. This will provide safety for anyone entering the areas. We summarized the public comments in the project record.

Design Criteria

- Area Plan Standards will be implemented for this project. (Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area Land and Resource Management Plan, 2004)
- The Project Manager will consult with the Heritage Program Manager prior to beginning any work in the field to become familiar with exclusion zones for one known heritage site and one cemetery within the project area.
- No temporary roads will be constructed.
- No salvage operations will occur within 50 feet either side of a stream.
- No damaged trees will be cut and dropped to the ground beyond 75 feet from the roads.
- Forest Service will mitigate the damaged areas within 75 feet of roads or infrastructure for public safety hazards before any firewood permits are issued.

Findings required by Other Laws

This project is consistent with the emphasis of the 2004 Area Plan to “Provide vigorous forest that are resistant to insects and disease.”

The action is consistent with the forest management program strategies outlined in the 2004 Area Plan.

Administration Review or Appeal Opportunity

This decision is not subject to appeal.

Implementation Date

Implementation of this decision may begin immediately.

Contact Person

For further information concerning this decision, contact John Westbrook, Environmental Stewardship Manager, phone (270) 924-2204 or email jdwestbrook@fs.fed.us.

For further information concerning NEPA, contact Barbara Wysock, NEPA Coordinator, phone (270) 924-2131 or email bwysock@fs.fed.us.

/s/ Tina R. Tilley
Tina R. Tilley

12/19/2016
Date

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