

2021 Forest Plan Intent and Explanation of FW-TIM-STD-08 and 09

Introduction

This paper addresses the tandem nature of **FW-TIM-STD-08 and 09** related to maximum opening sizes allowed for even-aged regeneration harvest under the direction of the 2021 Forest Plan. It describes the forest intent for the development of these plan components and guidance for project-level management activities and NEPA analysis.

Implementation of FW-TIM-STD-08 and 09

As the Helena-Lewis and Clark NF (HLC) has begun to design site specific projects consistent with the 2021 Forest Plan, some questions have arisen regarding FW-TIM-STD-08 and 09. The objective of the following document is to clear up confusion or questions on how these standards apply.

[HLCNF_2021LandManagementPlanWithAppendicesUpdatedSept2022.pdf \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

FW-TIM-STD-08 The maximum opening size created by clearcutting, seedtree cutting, shelterwood seed cutting, or other cuts designed to regenerate an even-aged stand of timber in a single harvest operation shall normally be 40 acres. This standard applies to new harvest proposals on NFS lands only and need not consider existing openings on NFS lands, adjacent private or other agency lands. An exception applies to achieve desired ecological conditions for the forest planning area, including those associated with forest patterns, patch sizes and resilience in the short and long term (FW-VEGT-DC[1]01, 04 and FW-VEGF-DC-08, 09). The maximum opening size exception for the HLC NF is 75 acres. This is consistent with the estimated natural range of variation (NRV) for average patch size of early successional forest openings.

FW-TIM-STD-09 Harvest openings, created as a result of a single harvest operation, that exceed the maximum opening sizes established in FW-TIM-STD-08 shall require 60-day public review and Regional Forester approval.

The planning regulations at 36 CFR 219.11(d)(4) required the HLC plan to include standards limiting the maximum size for openings that may be cut in one harvest operation to 40 acres, while allowing the standard to authorize an exception to that limit to achieve desired ecological conditions (36 CFR 219.11(d)(4)(i)). The regulations also allowed the HLC plan to include plan components to exceed the standard establishing a 40-acre limit and identified exception on an individual timber sale basis after 60-days public notice and review by the regional forester (36 CFR 219.11(d)(4)(ii)).

Standard 08 and Standard 09 address planning regulation requirements in tandem. Standard 08 indicates the maximum regeneration harvest size shall normally be 40 acres but describes when the opening size may be as large as 75 acres without needing 60-day public notice and regional forester approval. Standard 09 describes the public notice and regional forester process required if a regeneration harvest larger than 75-acres is needed.

This is described in the 2021 Forest Plan FEIS Vol 2, pg 257-258:

The effect of FW-TIM-STD-08 is that even aged harvest opening sizes would generally be constrained to 75 acres, unless exceptions apply (e.g., catastrophic mortality). This may influence the amount or placement of treatment units or the selection of prescription types, and in some cases reduce the amount of timber volume cut. However, this opening size could be exceeded, with Regional Forester approval, if a site-specific analysis supports it, as allowed by FW-TIM-STD-

09. The ecological importance of patches larger than 75 acres is indicated by the NRV 95th percentile range of the average patch size (up to 151 acres forestwide) as well as the area weighted mean patch size (up to 14,051 acres forestwide).

Suggested Implementation

If the project contains both even-aged regeneration harvest with openings between 40-75 acres and some over 75 acres, ID Teams should state to which units and acres only Standard 08 applies and to which units and acres both Standard 08 and Standard 09 apply concurrently. The environmental document (CE/EA/EIS) must describe how the opening size supports achieving desired ecological conditions for openings between 40 and 75 acres. And if greater than 75 acres, ensure the environmental document describes how the opening size fits within the NRV for patch size and is consistent with all other applicable plan components.

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