

Bankhead National Forest Liaison Panel Meeting Summary – May 8, 2019 Meeting

Bankhead National Forest Liaison Panel Meeting Agenda Moulton Recreation Center May 8, 2019

6:00	Ranger Welcome, Updates and Intro Ground rules review	Andy Scott District Ranger, USFS Bankhead
6:05	2019 SPB Mitigation and Restoration Proposal	Jason Harris Silviculturist, USFS, Bankhead
6:15	Recreation & Roads Program Updates	Andy Scott District Ranger, USFS Bankhead
6:30	America's Longleaf Million Acre Challenge NFs in AL and Bankhead Longleaf Challenge	Andy Scott and Jason Harris ,USFS, Bankhead
6:45	Eastern Spotted Skunk Project	Nicholas Sharp Non-game Biologist, ADCNR, Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries
7:00	Bankhead Wildlife Monitoring (Aquatics/Herps)	Allison Cochran Wildlife Biologist, USFS, Bankhead
7:15	Question and Answer	Andy Scott
7:30	Closeout & Adjourn Next meeting & agenda items Other panel business items	Andy Scott



Meeting Summary –

Liaison Panel Members in Attendance: Anthony Hood, John Howell, Mark Kolinski, Kevin Pugh, Chuck Byrd, James Barnacastle, James Alexander, Charles Borden

Forest Service staff in Attendance: Andy Scott, Blake Addison, Jason Harris, Allison Cochran

Interested members of the public in attendance: Nick Sharp, Megan Carter, William Stone, Janice Barrett, Rickie Gardner, Kenneth Kilpatrick, Roger Robertson

Jason Harris gave an update on the 2019 Southern Pine Beetle Mitigation and Restoration Project. A change to the project was introduced. New prescriptions for this project include planting longleaf and shortleaf pine in Area 1, which will change the Desired Future Condition from hardwood to pine or mixed pine hardwood type. This decision will be based on conditions on the ground in stands being clear-cut.

Jason described a stand on the northwest side of the District that has some very old natural longleaf. Members were interested in that site, as it could be the northern most longleaf pine and should be cored to check the age. Jason will follow-up with interested individuals. This area is proposed for clear-cutting and restoration to longleaf pine.

Andy Scott gave updates on a number of projects and programs. The current road situation is a challenge. The road maintenance contractor is delayed due to rain. Some spot treatment of especially rough spots is being completed in-house, although that is limited by in-house capacity.

The Lee Creek crossing project was discussed. The Forest applied for an Aquatic Organism Passage Project/funding to replace the current crossing, as the culverts cannot handle the flow at this site. The current proposal is to install a bridge at this site.

The Forest Service Road 254 – Tributary to Brushy crossing project was discussed. A bottomless arch is proposed to replace the existing failed culverts.

Flint Creek ATV trail remains closed due to weather, safety and maintenance needs.

The Clear Creek and Corinth Recreation Areas are operated under a concession permit. That permit is out for bid at this time.

Improvements continue to be made along the Owl Creek trail system by Forest Service staff and partners.

Andy continues to work to develop a Waterfalls Trails Project by looking for a holistic approach to meet trail/access needs and addressing sustainability.

Questions/Comments on recreation/engineering projects –

There was a question about permanently closing Flint Creek ATV trail due to resource damage. There is a need to consider if motorized use is appropriate. There is no volunteer group helping maintain Flint Creek. Andy is working to address that and see if the Forest Service can manage it and get it back into shape with a partner's help.

There was a recommendation that there should be some consideration given to closing the Alexander Motorway, rather than replacing the Lee Creek crossing. The proponent felt that it is not an essential entry/exit to the Forest and it

could be closed at both ends and made accessible as a walk-in area. The proponent felt that this action would address other issues, as well, like the Gillespie Creek crossing and Indian Tomb Hollow illegal use (riding/dumping). This action might require changing the management prescription to something like Backcountry Prescription.

Jason and Andy introduced the Longleaf Challenge. America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative has a goal of doubling the acres of restored longleaf by 2025. The Forest Service Southern Region has issued a Million Acre Longleaf Challenge in 2017 to fulfill the spirit and goals of the ALRI. On Alabama's National Forests, there is a goal to restore 40,000 acres of longleaf pine ecosystem. Andy described the process and types of projects that will be on the horizon on Bankhead to meet our portion of the challenge.

There was a question about the susceptibility of longleaf to Southern Pine Beetle. Longleaf is much less susceptible to SPB than loblolly pine. There are opportunities for restoring longleaf in areas where we have loblolly that is susceptible to SPB and that's what Jason talked about and is working on in the 2019 SPB Mitigation and Restoration project.

There are incentives available for private landowners to plant and manage longleaf pine, as well.

Nick Sharp shared information on an on-going Eastern Spotted Skunk research and monitoring project. This project included sites on the Bankhead National Forest/Black Warrior Wildlife Management Area. Radio-tracking of Eastern Spotted Skunks took place on Freedom Hills WMA this winter. Please report sightings of the spotted skunk to Nick or on-line at www.outdooralabama.com

Allison Cochran provided updates on wildlife monitoring this year on Bankhead, including rush darter, Black Warrior waterdog and green salamander work. New locations of all species have been documented on Bankhead this year.

General questions and comments follow.

There was discussion about illegal horse riding and issues with creek crossings and erosion. There was discussion about the difference between "illegal" and "user created" trails. There was discussion about apps that show unofficial trails and the challenges this presents to management.

There were questions about the plans for the Caney Creek waterfall area. Andy is working on plans, as previously discussed, to develop short waterfall trails. He and Shane Hoskins are meeting with the National Forest Foundation next week to help identify groups and opportunities, for example the North Alabama Waterfalls bringing tourists in. There is a need to use a shared stewardship model and we are working on figuring that out. The internet/social media/apps – the availability of information – are leading to issues and overuse.

A copy of all presentations (power point presentations) are available by contacting Allison Cochran at jera.cochran@usda.gov.