

**File Code:** 2400**Date:** DEC 14 2017**Route To:****Subject:** Region 8 Request for Additional Farm Bill Designation - National Forests in North Carolina**To:** Deputy Chief, National Forest System

Per section 8294 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, I am requesting the designation of an additional 113 acres of sixth-level hydrologic units (HUCs) that total approximately 415,531 acres as insect and disease treatment areas on the National Forests in North Carolina. The HUCs that are proposed for designation can be found in Table 1 on page 3 of the enclosed letter dated November 3, 2017, from the National Forests in North Carolina.

The original 2014 designation for North Carolina focused on the threat that Southern pine beetle and hemlock woolly adelgid pose to "dense pine stands" and hemlock communities on National Forest System lands in North Carolina. The objective of this request is to enable the districts to address the presence of Emerald ash borer and 1000 cankers disease, expand the ability to address Southern pine beetle, and oak-related health issues such as oak decline, oak wilt, and gypsy moth. These pests combined have the ability to impact several important forest tree species such as walnut, butternut, ash species, and multiple pine and oak species. The majority of the National Forest's districts within North Carolina would be impacted.

This designation would address the following criteria in section 602:

Criteria 1: The area is experiencing declining forest health:

Emerald ash borer: Regional Forest Health and Protection staff have continued to document the spread of Emerald ash borer (EAB) throughout western North Carolina. Areas on the Forest have expanded dramatically in the last two growing seasons, and now include infested ash on three districts across the northern portions of the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests and seven counties in western North Carolina. These include sites along the French Broad River basin, Fontana Lake, and the I-40 corridor. The last two locations are adjacent to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Southern pine beetle: Regional Forest Health and Protection staff have identified increased Southern pine beetle (SPB) activity through aerial detection flights, ground damage inspections, and beetle trap counts across all districts in North Carolina since 2016. Ground reconnaissance and flights located multiple spots across the Cheoah, Tusquitee, and Nantahala Districts in both 2016 and 2017 resulting in treatments on the Cheoah District in 2016. The annual trapping program also identified an increased presence of SPB on the Croatan District in 2017.

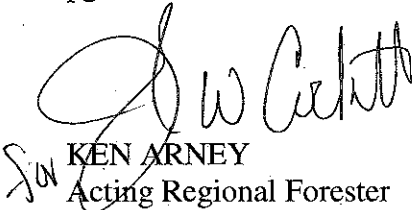


Maturing Oak forests: The gypsy moth "Slow the Spread" program continues to trap on northern portions of the Appalachian and Grandfather Districts as gypsy moth activity continues to occur along the North Carolina and Virginia border. As Oak forests in western North Carolina and the Uwharrie District continue to age, their susceptibility to oak decline and oak wilt increases.

Criteria 2: A large proportion of National Forest System lands are at risk for basal area loss in the near future due to insect and disease vectors. See the risk maps on pages 2 and 3 in the Forest's request enclosed letter dated November 3, 2017.

The enclosure provides the supporting documents. In addition, the Geographic Information System (GIS) files are located at:
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Please contact Peter Gaulke, Southern Region Planning Director, at 404-347-3183, or email at pgaulke@fs.fed.us for additional information.



KEN ARNEY
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Enclosure