

# **Proposed Action**

## **Music Run Wildlife Opening Maintenance Project Fiscal Year 2007**

USDA Forest Service – Monongahela National Forest  
Gauley Ranger District  
Nicholas County, West Virginia

### **1. Background**

The Gauley Ranger District of the Monongahela National Forest (MNF) is proposing to enhance 20 acres of wildlife openings. Preliminary issues were identified based on internal review of the project area, issues developed for connected projects, and site-specific concerns raised by resource specialists. The Project Area consists of 20 acres of habitat enhancement within Nicholas County off of county road 94/4 near Forest Road 907 (see map 1). All enhancement work would occur on National Forest System lands in Management Prescription 3.0.

The proposed enhancement would be achieved by re-vegetating 20 acres of grassy openings with native species and eliminating non-native vegetation. Open area re-vegetation will be accomplished with tractor with disc and other mechanical equipment.

The proposals for this project are listed in the following table and related discussion. The enhancement areas are displayed as shapes on the attached map. The location and distribution of the proposed management areas on the map are approximate. The proposed areas where enhancement work would be completed for this project area are displayed on the attached map.

#### **REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE DECISION**

I have concluded this decision is appropriately categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment consistent with Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 section 31.2 (6): “Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction (Service level D, FSH 7709.56).” There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative effect on the quality of the human environment (see documentation in the project file).

- This project will not affect any federally endangered or threatened, nor impact any forest sensitive species. A biological evaluation was completed and is available in the project file.
- No municipal watersheds will be affected by this project. The release will not adversely affect the character of floodplains or wetlands.
- This project is not located within or near any congressionally designated areas such as Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, and National Recreation Areas. Also, there are no inventoried Roadless Areas or Research Natural Areas, and therefore will not affect these resources.

- Maintenance on wildlife openings will not impact American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites and no archeological sites or historic resources. No known historic or prehistoric sites which are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places will be affected by this project.

## **2. Purpose and Need**

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to enhance wildlife habitat through reduction of non native vegetation and planting of native shelter providing conifers and native food.

The need for the Proposed Action comes from lack of vegetation diversity within the open habitat of the area. By increasing the diversity of beneficial native vegetation the area will become more suitable for a larger variety of species associated with open and edge habitat including the Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, and Bobwhite Quail.

Implementation of the Proposed Action is consistent with, and responds to, direction in the 2006 Monongahela Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). “When consistent with management prescription emphasis and direction, openings may be created and maintained in coordination with other resource projects to provide for vegetation diversity” (Forest Plan page II-31). The Desired Conditions outlined in the Forest Plan for MP 3.0 states on page III-7:

“Roughly 3 to 8 percent of the prescription area units are in maintained or natural openings, including beaver meadows, shrubs and brush fields, savannahs, grazing allotments, seeded log landings and logging roads, mine reclamations, utility corridors, and natural disturbance gaps.”

## **3. Public Involvement**

Scoping both internally and externally raised no concerns. On August 3, 2007 a scoping letter was sent out to 71 individuals and organizations asking for responses to the proposed action. The scoping period began on August 6, 2007 and ended 14 days later on August 20, 2007. Comments were in strong support of the Project as well as future habitat enhancement projects. Comment letters are contained in the project file at the Gauley Ranger District office in Richwood, West Virginia.

## **4. Findings Required By Law**

This project is consistent with the 2006 Forest Plan. The actions in this project fully comply with the Forest-wide standards as well as standards applying to management areas (2006 Forest Plan) and management prescriptions where the actions will take place. This project complies with the seven requirements of 36 CFR 219.27(b):

1. It is best suited to the multiple-use goals established for the area based on the direction in the 2006 Forest Plan. This suitability is based on the potential environmental, biological, cultural resource, aesthetic, engineering, and economic impacts.
2. No regeneration harvesting is proposed.

3. This action has not been chosen primarily due to cost considerations, although this was taken into consideration.

4. This action has been chosen after considering potential effects on residual trees and adjacent stands.

5. The proposed actions will avoid permanent impairment of site productivity and ensure conservation of soil and water resources.

6. The action will provide the desired effects on water quantity and quality, wildlife and fish habitat, woody regeneration, forage production, recreation uses, aesthetic values, and resource yields.

7. The proposal will need no additional road building.

## **5. Implementation Date**

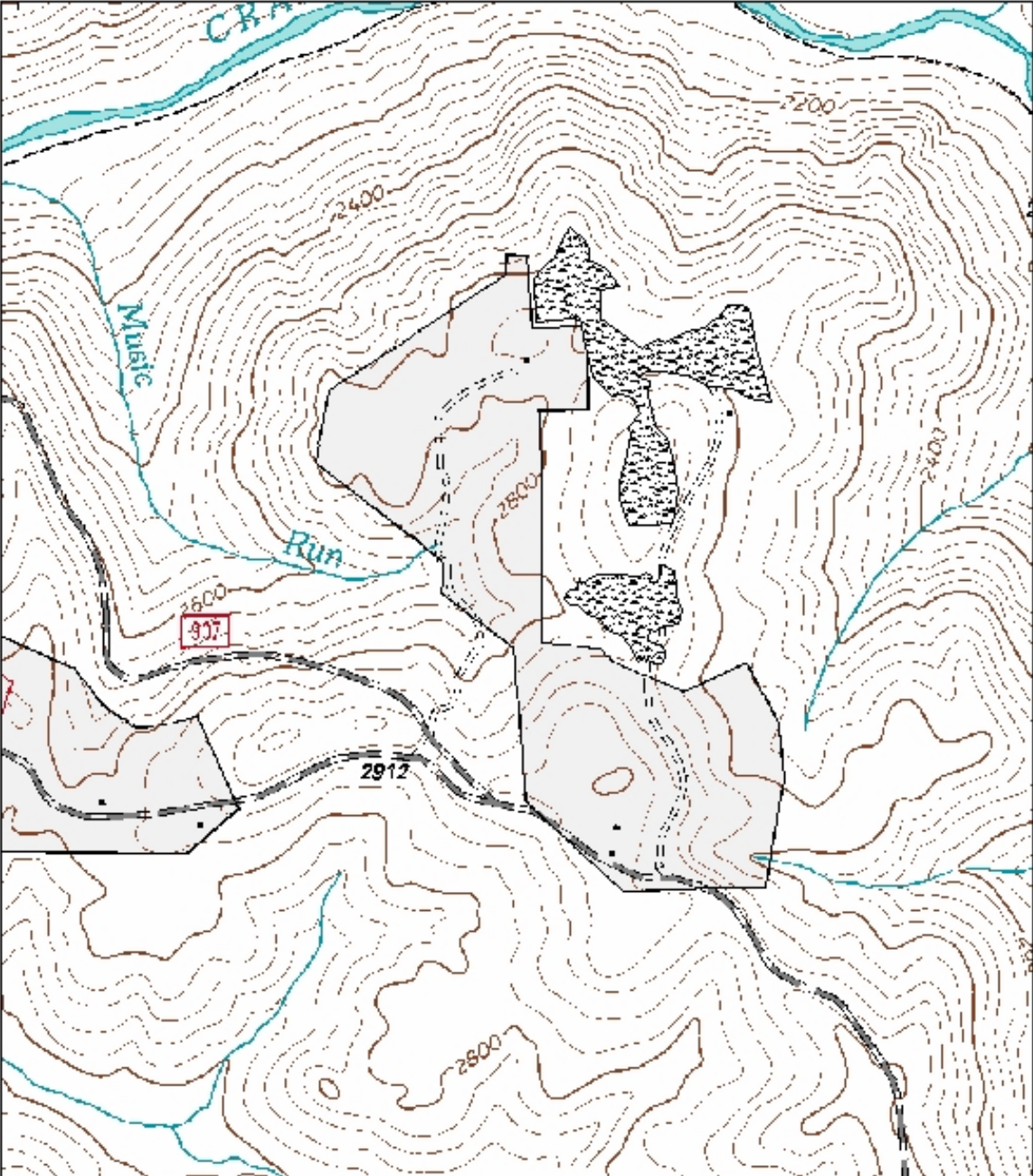
The decision to be made is whether to implement the proposed action as described above, to vary the treatments based on issues generated through scoping, to meet the purpose and need for action through some other combination of activities, or to defer any action at this time.

The decision for this project is expected to be made in September of 2007 with implementation expected in December of 2007. It is anticipated that all proposed treatments would be implemented within five years.

## **6. Contact Person**

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Map 1. Proposed Gauley District Music Run Wildlife Opening Maintenance Project



**Legend**

 Plantings



**COMMENTS CONCERNING THE MUSIC RUN WILDLIFE OPENING  
MAINTENANCE PROJECT**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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*I wish to receive Music Run Wildlife Opening Maintenance Project Decision Memo  
(approx. 3-4 pages)*