



FACT SHEET



United States Department of Agriculture
Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

United States Department of Interior
Web: <http://www.doi.gov>

Making A Difference Cherokee National Forest - Tennessee

A project designed to thin tree stands adjacent to the Unicoi Mountain Horseback Trail on the Tellico Ranger District in Tennessee is in the planning stage. The proposed thinning of approximately 100 acres adjacent to the Unicoi mountain horseback trail is part of a larger project to develop and restore parts of the Unicoi Turnpike.

The Unicoi Turnpike has historical significance as a trail used by Native Americans prior to 1492 and later established and used as a commercial turnpike in 1819. It was used for centuries as a primary means of crossing the Southern Appalachians from the Atlantic coast to the interior of the country. The route was used by the Cherokee and Euro-American explorers, traders and settlers and was part of the Trail of Tears --- and is considered by many to be the oldest intact roadbed in the United States. Two of the major intact segments of this route exist in the Cherokee National Forest, Tennessee. One of these segments is located adjacent to the proposed thinning/fuel reduction treatment near the community of Coker Creek.

The proposed treatment is to thin approximately 100 acres of mixed upland hardwood/pine, removing Virginia pine, and white pine and leaving a residual basal area of about 50 to 60 square feet per acre of upland hardwood.

The project has recently been scoped for comments from interested publics with implementation planned for 2005.

NEPA for the thinning portion of the project will be accomplished using a Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) categorical exclusion for hazardous fuels reduction. The ability to use the HFI categorical exclusions will speed up the implementation process and allow us to accomplish the work in a timely and efficient manner.

Thinning will reduce or eliminate risk of southern pine beetle infestations and resulting accumulation of heavy fuels, thereby reducing the risk of wildfire. A prescribed burn may be planned at a later date to also reduce hazardous fuels in the area.

Contact: Janan Hay, Tellico Ranger District, Cherokee National Forest (423) 253-2520.

###