

**File Code:** 1950

**Date:** September 14, 2020

**AP White Pine Project  
60-Day Public Notice Letter for Proposed Exemption to 40-Acre Standard**

Dear Interested Party,

The Andrew Pickens Ranger District of the Sumter National Forest is proposing the AP White Pine Management Project (White Pine Project). This project proposes a variety of forest management activities to meet the Sumter National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) objective to restore more natural forest conditions on sites that are currently even-aged Eastern white pine plantations. Additional information regarding this project is available on the project webpage:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55429>

Proposed activities include regeneration treatments (creation of a new stand of trees) on some upland sites which would result in openings that would exceed the 40-acre opening limit identified as Forestwide Standard 54 in the Forest Plan. In accordance with the USDA Forest Service Land Management Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.11(2)(d)(4)), larger openings may be harvested to help achieve desired ecological conditions following a 60-day public notice and approval from the Regional Forester. This letter initiates the 60-day public notice.

**Need to Exceed 40-Acre Limit**

The size of the temporary openings that would be created from timber harvest is driven by the current size of the pine plantations to be regenerated. Leaving portions of the plantations unharvested would not be logical because the objective is to replace them with another forest type. The harvest of 12 stands in the project would result in 11 temporary openings larger than 40 acres (two of the stands are joined together). Ten of the openings would be a result of harvesting white pine stands as part of the same timber harvest entry as nearby loblolly pine plantations. The loblolly pine plantations were previously authorized for harvest under a different project, the AP Loblolly Pine Removal and Restoration project. Stands within 330 feet of one another were considered adjacent and their acreage was combined to count as one opening. Most of these stands that were combined are separated by hardwood-dominated hollows or share a boundary for only a short distance. More detailed information, including a list of proposed openings and associated stands and maps are provided on the project website (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55429>).

The project team reviewed proposed treatments to minimize the number of openings that would exceed 40 acres without compromising the purpose and need for the project. These remaining 11 sites are those where the team determined that exceeding 40-acre openings would be needed to remove the existing pine plantations and move toward the desired condition of restoring mixed shortleaf pine/upland hardwood forest types. These forest types would naturally occur on these sites and have been declining across the Southern Appalachian landscape (see <http://www.shortleafpine.net>).

Thinning instead of regenerating these stands was evaluated but would only partially meet the purpose and need for the project. While there would be some forest health benefits from thinning, white pine would remain the dominant forest type on these upland sites which is not a natural condition.

The team also evaluated dividing up these sites to harvest smaller portions at a time (5 years or more apart). The team determined this option would not work because:

- Portions of undesirable pine plantations would persist for many years



- Seed from unharvested portions of pine plantations would produce new unwanted trees that would interfere with establishing the desired forest type
- Returning to an area every 5 years to harvest a portion of the plantation would not be economically viable due to a smaller scale harvest, costs to mobilize equipment, etc.
- Impacts to soil and water resources from multiple harvests of portions of the plantations would be greater compared with a single harvest of the whole plantation because of repeated ground disturbance from log skidder trails, temporary roads, etc

### How to Comment and Timeframe

If you desire to provide comments on this proposal to exceed the 40-acre opening limit, please provide your comments within 60 days of the date of this letter. Comments should be within the scope of this proposal and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider.

This notice is specifically for the proposal to exceed the 40-acre opening standard. We anticipate releasing a preliminary environmental assessment (EA) for the White Pine Management Project in approximately 30 days, and we will initiate a separate 30-day comment period in accordance with agency regulations at 36 CFR 218 at that time.

Comments received in response to this notice, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents.

Specific written comments regarding this proposal must be submitted either by:

- Mail to: Robert Sitzlar, District Ranger, 112 Andrew Pickens Circle, Mountain Rest, SC 29664.
- Or electronically to [SM.FS.r8fmsapcom@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FS.r8fmsapcom@usda.gov). Comments must be submitted in a common digital format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Word (.doc, .docx), or adobe acrobat (.pdf).

In the subject line, please state “*White Pine 40-Acre Exemption*”, when responding with electronic comments, or on the envelope when replying by mail.

If you would like additional information or have questions regarding this proposal, please contact Victor Wyant, Silviculturist, by email [victor.wyant@usda.gov](mailto:victor.wyant@usda.gov) or by phone 864-638-9568.

Sincerely,



ROBERT SITZLAR  
District Ranger

cc: Victor Wyant, Larry Westcott, Patrick Yamnik, Mary Morrison