

restricting the timing of logging operations to minimize disruption of wildlife; and retaining big leaf maple clumps to increase species diversity.

This project, by virtue of the fact that it was occurring within the Late Successional Reserve, was not particularly controversial. One administrative appeal was received. The District responded to the issues and the Regional Office affirmed the decision.

Region (8): Texas Windstorm Response and Rehabilitation Project, National Forests in Texas

On February 10, 1998, a severe windstorm struck East Texas damaging trees on approximately 103,000 acres within the Angelina, Sabine, and Sam Houston Ranger Districts of the National Forests in Texas. Damage was primarily to large pine sawtimber trees with severity ranging from extensive (loss of greater than 60 percent of existing trees) to light (loss of 10 to 30 percent of existing trees). The downed material greatly increased the potential for catastrophic wildfire and an upswing in southern pine beetle activity. Habitat for the Red Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW), a federally listed species, was also adversely impacted.

Because of the nature of the emergency and the threat to intermixed private lands as well as the national forests, on March 4, 1998, representatives from the Forest Service met with representatives from the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to request, consistent with the provisions of 40 CFR 1506.11, alternative arrangements for complying with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Under the terms of the agreement that was ultimately reached, the Forest Service was allowed to proceed immediately with three priority actions. These were:

- Remove fallen and hazard trees from existing forest development roadways.
- Remove dead, down and leaning trees in and within 300 to 500 feet of active RCW clusters, recruitment and replacement stands.
- Remove fallen trees and tops to reduce fuel loadings and minimize the potential for catastrophic fire.

A fourth priority was to take whatever actions were deemed necessary to suppress southern pine beetle attacks on the remaining live trees. Under the agreement reached with CEQ, the agency was allowed to utilize an Environmental Assessment (EA) as opposed to an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze the probable effects of the tree removal activities that would be associated with addressing this need – however, the EA had to include a discussion of the likely cumulative effects. Finally, a last condition of the agreement was that the agency would prepare an EIS prior to reforestation of the affected areas.



(Light Damage)



(Moderate Damage)



(Heavy Damage)

Figure (3): - Varying Degrees of Damage Caused by the Windstorm That Struck the National Forests in Texas on February 10, 1998.

For TSPIRS reporting purposes, all the sales undertaken in connection with this project were coded as FS10 – 100 percent; which means that they were deemed to be forest stewardship purpose sales that would mainly benefit ecosystem health. In total, some 92 MMBF of timber were eventually removed, including 82 MMBF of pine sawtimber. Because of the magnitude of the project and the high value of pine sawtimber, a timber sale was clearly the most economically efficient way to accomplish the resource management objectives. Indeed, estimates indicate that to have accomplished the same work using a service contract would have cost the government approximately \$39.5 million whereas timber sales yielded a return of \$7.2 million.

All timber harvest activities were conducted in accordance with the standards and guidelines set forth in the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the National Forests in Texas. Additionally, a variety of other measures were used to mitigate the potential undesirable side effects of the logging operations. These measures included the following: avoiding removal of undamaged live trees except as necessary to ensure worker and equipment safety; avoiding removal of trees in riparian areas except as recommended by fisheries biologists, soil scientists, and hydrologists; and using interdisciplinary (ID) teams to recommend removal techniques and to identify areas where operations should be restricted or prohibited.

Following the windstorm event, the predominant concern among most East Texas residents was that the Forest Service would not respond rapidly enough to remove the storm-damaged trees. Landowners in surrounding areas were fearful that wildfires would start on the national forest land and spread to adjacent private lands. On August 14, 1997, Judge Richard A. Schell, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Texas had issued a judgment in a civil lawsuit that enjoined the National Forests in Texas from engaging in all timber harvesting except that intended for insect and disease control, fire protection, or to maintain the health of the forest land. The Forest Service believed that the harvesting operations required to respond to this emergency situation were justified under the court's exception for forest health. However, the plaintiffs in the original lawsuit took an opposing position. After numerous filings by all parties concerned, Judge Schell ruled on April 1, 1998 that the Forest Service could proceed to remove the storm-damaged trees. During the appeal period following release of the EA covering the four priority recovery activities, 3 organizations filed administrative appeals. One appeal was dismissed for failure to meet the applicable regulatory criteria; in the case of the other two appeals, the Regional Forester affirmed the Forest Supervisor's decision. In general, the public seems to have been satisfied with the way this emergency was handled.

Region (9): Wolfmore Timber Sale, Allegheny National Forest

The Wolfmore Timber Sale was carried out on the Marienville Ranger District of the Allegheny National Forest in Pennsylvania. The sites that were treated were archaeologically significant areas; they contain a series of linear ditch and berm-like earthen circles that are the remains of prehistoric camps that were once surrounded by

protective fence-like palisades. During the period that the sites were occupied, probably 450 to 650 years ago, there were no trees within and surrounding the sites because they had all been used by the site occupants to build the site or as firewood. When the sites were abandoned, however, trees and other vegetation became re-established. Prior to creation of the Allegheny National Forest in 1923, the majority of the hemlock, beech, white pine and maple forest on these areas had been completely logged. Today the trees on these prehistoric earthworks are mainly mature or over-mature black cherry and maple. Because the sites are situated on exposed ridge tops, these mature and declining trees are often blown down by the strong winds that pass over the Northern Allegheny Plateau. When this occurs, the roots pull up the soil and disturb the prehistoric site features. The fallen trees eventually decay, but nonetheless change the surface texture of the site and obscure archaeological features, such as the earthen circle. In recent years, this has been occurring with increasing frequency.

The objective of the sale was to remove the trees that had the potential to harm the archaeological features, and to establish a low-profile cover of grasses and ferns. A timber sale was used because it provided an economical and environmentally acceptable way of achieving the preceding objectives. It is estimated that to have accomplished the desired work using a service contract would have cost approximately \$105,000. In contrast, the 77 MBF of sawtimber and 95 cords of pulpwood that were sold as a result of using a timber sale yielded a revenue of \$61,000 – providing a net gain to the government of about \$166,000. The primary danger of using a timber sale was the potential to disturb the soil during removal of the trees. However, a number of options were available for minimizing this risk – e.g., use of horse logging, use of helicopter logging, and limiting logging operations to times when the ground was frozen. After discussing these options with the Pennsylvania Bureau for Historic Preservation, the final decision was to remove the trees with a skidder during snow covered conditions. (Figure 4) All logging operations were carefully monitored by archaeologists and sale administrators.

The Pennsylvania archaeological community responded favorably to the Allegheny National Forest's decision to protect the sites by removing the overstory trees. No administrative appeals or lawsuits were filed. Public reaction to the project has generally been favorable.

Region (10): Ptarmigan Salvage Resale Timber Sale, Chugach National Forest

The Ptarmigan Salvage Resale Timber Sale was carried-out on the Seward Ranger District of the Chugach National Forest in Alaska. The treatment area abutted private land, encompassed a national forest campground, and was adjacent to Ptarmigan Creek – in which sockeye salmon spawn each year. The Lutz spruce stands which predominate the area had been hard hit by spruce bark beetles, with at least one-third of the trees having been killed. The objectives of the project were: 1) to remove hazard trees near developed sites thereby ensuring a safe recreational experience; 2) to reduce forest fuels and the risk of catastrophic fire; 3) to maintain screening between the campground and