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Comments: These comments regarding the Red Spruce Restoration Project are focused on the impact of this forest management effort on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (ANST), which has its own management plan, in the four national forests cited in the scoping letter.

ANST Desired Condition AT-DC-06: The ANST corridor management area retains a natural, forested, or pastoral scenic character shaped by both natural processes and humans. While stands of old growth continue to develop in locations throughout the area, where appropriate, vegetation management activities are designed with recognition of the nationally significant aesthetic and recreation values of these lands. Low intensity vegetation management is appropriate to maintain the long-term goals and stewardship objectives of the ANST corridor management area. Management activities needed to preserve, maintain, or create vistas, desirable open areas, and balds are a high priority. Activities are planned and carried out in cooperation with appropriate ANST management partners.

Desired Condition AT-DC-09 holds proposed actions to be designed to meet or exceed the Desired Scenic Integrity Objective of "High". SC-DC-06 for SIO of "High": management activities are unnoticed, and the landscape appears to be unaltered. Actions not keeping with this objective should not be pursued.

For activities planned for withing ANST viewshed, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the designated trail-maintaining clubs, such as Carolina Mountain Club and Tennessee Eastman Hiking & Canoeing Club, regularly interact with the National Forests thus should also be engaged for this program. These organizations have "A.T. Partnership Meetings" in the Spring and Fall to cover upcoming activities along the ANST. This discussion would be a very suitable forum for decisions regarding proposed actions along the ANST, especially for the following calendar year. The District Ranger is the point person for all work in their district and attends these A.T. Partnership Meetings.

From the choices given in the Decision to be Made section of the scoping document, Option 2 using an Implementation Checklist for each project is the most appropriate to focus the selection of treatments to the specific plots of red spruce. On-the-ground reviews with partners could be expedited to not delay the suitable treatments, thus achieving the goal of healthy red spruce stands.