Economic Impacts of Collaborative Ecological Restoration in the Ouachita National Forest

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ABSTRACT

The Shortleaf-Bluestem Community Restoration Project is being implemented under Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program to restore 348,482 acres of the Ouachita National Forest. Investments in the restoration activities such as timber harvesting, thinning and prescribed burning generate economic impacts by creating jobs and supporting businesses in the regional economy. This study aims to estimate the economic impacts (direct, indirect and induced) of the total investment including federal funds, collaborator’s contributions and timber sales within the regional economy. Detailed expenditure data on various activities and timber sales related to the restoration project were collected from the US Forest Service and other collaborators. Based on the North American Industry Classification System, investments were assigned to respective IMPLAN sectors. Mill delivered prices of timber were calculated using Timber Mart South estimates. Impact Analysis for Planning (IMPLAN) software based on the Input-Output model was used to analyze the data. The restoration project generated a total of 275 jobs and $27.6 million of output within the regional economy. Of this total, 153 jobs and $ 14.1 million of output were direct impacts of project expenditures, the rest were indirect and induced impacts of the project.