

SEMP Task 2-2.3: Percent of Intensive Use Area Forest Thinning Goals Met

Beginning in 2004, the Kisatchie National Forest (KNF) began a multi-year effort to thin approximately 21,500 acres of overstocked upland pine stands (see Figure 2-2.3a) in the Intensive Use Area (IUA), the northern portion of the Vernon Unit. The thinning is needed to improve habitat conditions for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) and to improve the utility of the IUA for maneuver training exercises. The thinning was planned to occur over a ten-year period, with initial targets established to conduct detailed stand inventories.

The timber sale process generally requires from 24 to 36 months to complete, from inventory to harvest. The sale process begins with an inventory of forest stands to validate the need for thinning. After inventory, stands that are determined to be unsuitable for sale are identified and removed from further consideration. The remaining stands are then appraised. Following the appraisal, merchantable acreage, if any, is identified and sale boundaries are constructed. Finally, the marked timber is harvested.

In order to measure progress toward IUA forest thinning goals, a performance target was established to accomplish greater than or equal to 90 percent of the cumulative inventory for sale goal, and greater than or equal to 90 percent of the cumulative sale goal each year. Figure 2-2.3b shows the IUA thinning accomplishments from 2004 through 2007. Between 1,300 and 3,100 acres were initially programmed for inventory each year. At the end of FY 2007, KNF had achieved 117 percent of its 2007 cumulative stand inventory goal, and 100 percent of the acres available for sale were sold through 2007 (cumulative sale goal). Therefore, FY 2007 performance results for Task 2-2.3 were Green ($\geq 90\%$ of cumulative inventory for sale goal accomplished; and $\geq 90\%$ of cumulative sale goal accomplished). However, appraisals were completed on just 44 percent of the acres identified as suitable for appraisal through 2007. As a result of the lag in appraisal accomplishments, identification of the acres available for sale—and hence the actual sale and harvest of timber—was delayed.

KNF's ability to meet its intermediate targets for IUA timber sales has been limited by Forest Service budget and staffing constraints. In addition, extensive salvage harvests of storm-damaged timber from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita decreased market demand for timber in 2005 and 2006. In 2006, Fort Polk and KNF worked together to secure additional funding to help meet the IUA thinning targets and reduce the 10-year timeline for completion. The Army provided funding to KNF in FY 2007 and will provide additional funding in 2008 to support sale preparations. This supplemental funding should help to speed the sale process in future years.

Figure 2-2.3a.
Typical overstocked
pine stands in the
Intensive Use Area



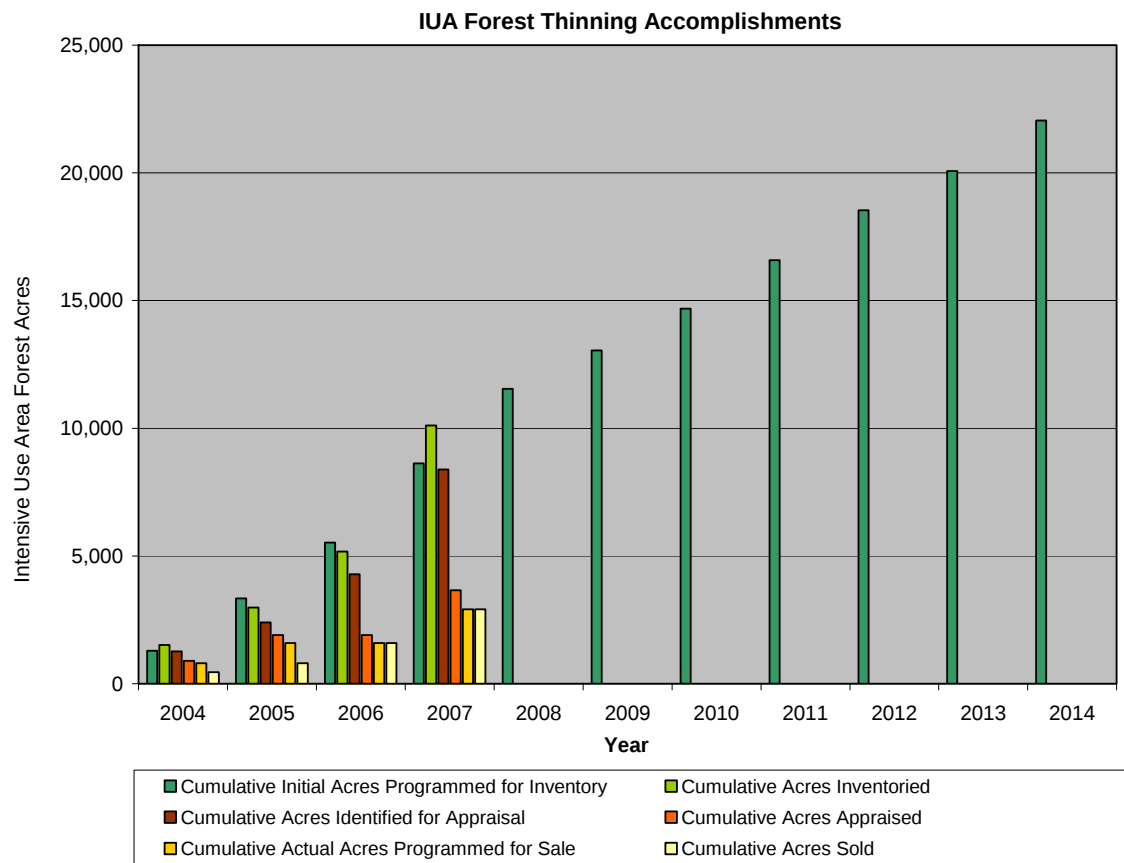


Figure 2-2.3b. Annual and cumulative IUA timber sale accomplishments through FY 2007.