REGION 4
INTRA-SERVICE SECTION 7 BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION FORM

[Note: This form provides the outline of information needed for intra-Service consultation. If additional space is needed, attach additional sheets, or set up this form to accommodate your responses.]

Originating Person: *Steve Reagan*
Telephone Number: *662-323-5548* **E-Mail:** *Steve_Reagan@fws.gov*
Date: *August 9, 2012*

PROJECT NAME (Grant Title/Number): *Timber Harvest in Compartments 10 and 27*

I. Service Program:

___ **Ecological Services**
___ **Federal Aid**
- ___ **Clean Vessel Act**
- ___ **Coastal Wetlands**
- ___ **Endangered Species Section 6**
- ___ **Partners for Fish and Wildlife**
- ___ **Sport Fish Restoration**
- ___ **Wildlife Restoration**

___ **Fisheries**
_X_ **Refuges/Wildlife**

II. State/Agency:

III. Station Name: *Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge*

IV. Description of Proposed Action (attach additional pages as needed):

Exchange of timber products on Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge for lands owned by Prisock Brothers Logging, Inc was approved on February 7, 2012. A refuge Special Use Permit (SUP) for two seed tree harvests, Compartment 27, in portions of Stands 7 and 11, were approved 2007, in accordance with the 1995 Forest Habitat Management Plan, to remove certain timber (960 MBF pine sawtimber, 103.7 cords pine pulpwood, and 137.5 cords hardwood pulpwood) in Compartment 27 in exchange for 100 acres in Section 1, T16N, R15E of Noxubee County, Mississippi. Now, the SUP is being modified for the harvest of timber with 6 thinnings, Compartment 10, Stands 8, 10, 15 and 21 and Compartment 27, Stands 7 and 11. In Compartment 10, parts of Stands 8 and 10 will be thinned, while thinning will occur throughout all of Stands 15 and 21. In Compartment 27, parts of Stands 7 and 11 will be thinned.

V. Pertinent Species and Habitat:

A. Include species/habitat occurrence map:

Maps are provided in that attached foraging habitat analysis for the location of the timber sale thinning areas, red-cockaded woodpecker cluster sites, and red-cockaded woodpecker partitions. Foraging habitat analyses of affected clusters are provided.

B. Complete the following table:

SPECIES/CRITICAL HABITAT	STATUS[1]
Red- cockaded woodpecker	*E*

[1]STATUS: E=endangered, T=threatened, PE=proposed endangered, PT=proposed threatened, CH=critical habitat, PCH=proposed critical habitat, C=candidate species

VI. Location (attach map):

A. Ecoregion Number and Name: *29; Central Gulf Coast*

B. County and State: *Oktibbeha, Noxubee, and Winston MS*

C. Section, township, and range (or latitude and longitude):

Lat 33 16; Long 88 47

D. Distance (miles) and direction to nearest town: *Brooksville, MS, 15 miles E.*

E. Species/habitat occurrence: *Red-cockaded woodpecker*

VII. Determination of Effects:

A. Explanation of effects of the action on species and critical habitats in item V. B (attach additional pages as needed):

SPECIES/ CRITICAL HABITAT	IMPACTS TO SPECIES/CRITICAL HABITAT
Red-cockaded	*Thinning will remove excessive midstory and canopy hardwoods.*
woodpecker	*Habitat quality will be improved with hardwood reduction*
	Sufficient pine will remain to provide RCW foraging habitat.
	Post-thinning pine and hardwood stocking will meet RCW recovery criteria for the pine and hardwood elements of good quality foraging habitat.

B. Explanation of actions to be implemented to reduce adverse effects:

SPECIES/ CRITICAL HABITAT	ACTIONS TO MITIGATE/MINIMIZE IMPACTS
Red-cockaded	*Logging decks prohibited within clusters.*
woodpecker	*No logging roads or trails allowed thru clusters.*
Other Species	*No adverse impacts*
	Critical habitat has not been designated for the RCW

The 2012 RCW breeding season survey was completed on June 30, 2012. The status of clusters that may be affected by the proposed action is based on this survey.

Portions of the thinning of 5 stands occur with the foraging partitions of 6 clusters. The thinning for Stand 8 in Compartment 10 is not associated with any RCW partitions. In Compartment 10, thinning will occur within the partitions for 2 active clusters (23 and 94) and and 1 inactive cluster (118). In Compartment 27, parts of the 2 stands to be thinning are within the partitions for 3 inactive clusters (90, 91, 101). Based on the RCW foraging habitat analysis (attached), habitat within these partitions and the stands to be thinned, habitat is in poor to unsuitable condition relative to the attributes of the desired future condition of good

quality foraging habitat, as described in the 2003 RCW Recovery Plan. Overall, poor to unsuitable conditions are primarily due to excessive hardwoods in the midstory and canopy. In Compartment 27, the isolated location of this area and small subpopulation size makes it unlikely these inactive partitions will become active without future translocation of RCW pairs. Thinning will remove or reduce hardwoods in the midstory and overstory. Post-project, sufficient pine will remain in the thinned stands to provide suitable RCW foraging habitat. Furthermore, the condition of foraging habitat in the thinned stands will be improved and meet the criteria for pine and hardwood stocking elements of good quality foraging habitat, as described in the RCW Recovery Plan. Although clusters 90, 91, 101, and 118 are inactive and unoccupied by RCWs, our goal is to restore habitat and reestablish RCWs. Accordingly our foraging habitat analysis (attached) for the effects of thinning included these inactive clusters. Additional measures are prescribed to prohibit the establishment of any logging decks and logging roads or trails in or thru the active clusters to avoid potential RCW harassment. None of the proposed areas to be thinned occur within a cluster, whether active or inactive, as defined as the minimum convex polygon of all active and inactive cavity trees surrounded by a 200-foot buffer. In conclusion, the proposed action – which is supported by the Regional RCW Recovery Coordinator, is not likely to adversely affect the RCW.

VIII. Effect Determination and Response Requested:

SPECIES/ CRITICAL HABITAT	DETERMINATION[1]			RESPONSE[1] REQUESTED
	NE	NA	AA	
Red-cockaded woodpecker		*X*		*Concurrence*

[1]DETERMINATION/RESPONSE REQUESTED:

NE = no effect. This determination is appropriate when the proposed action will not directly, indirectly, or cumulatively impact, either positively or negatively, any listed, proposed, candidate species or designated/proposed critical habitat. Response Requested is optional but a "Concurrence" is recommended for a complete Administrative Record.

NA = not likely to adversely affect. This determination is appropriate when the proposed action is not likely to adversely impact any listed, proposed, candidate species or designated/proposed critical habitat or there may be beneficial effects to these resources. Response Requested is a "Concurrence".

AA = likely to adversely affect. This determination is appropriate when the proposed action is likely to adversely impact any listed, proposed, candidate species or designated/proposed critical habitat. Response Requested for listed species is "Formal Consultation". Response Requested for proposed or candidate species is "Conference".

signature (originating station) — *Aug. 9, 2012* **date**

PROJECT LEADER

title

IX. Reviewing Ecological Services Office Evaluation:

A. Concurrence ___X___ **Nonconcurrence** _____

B. Formal consultation required _____

C. Conference required _____

D. Informal conference required _____

Stephen Ricks — 9 AUG 2012

signature **date**

Field Supervisor — MSFO

title **office**

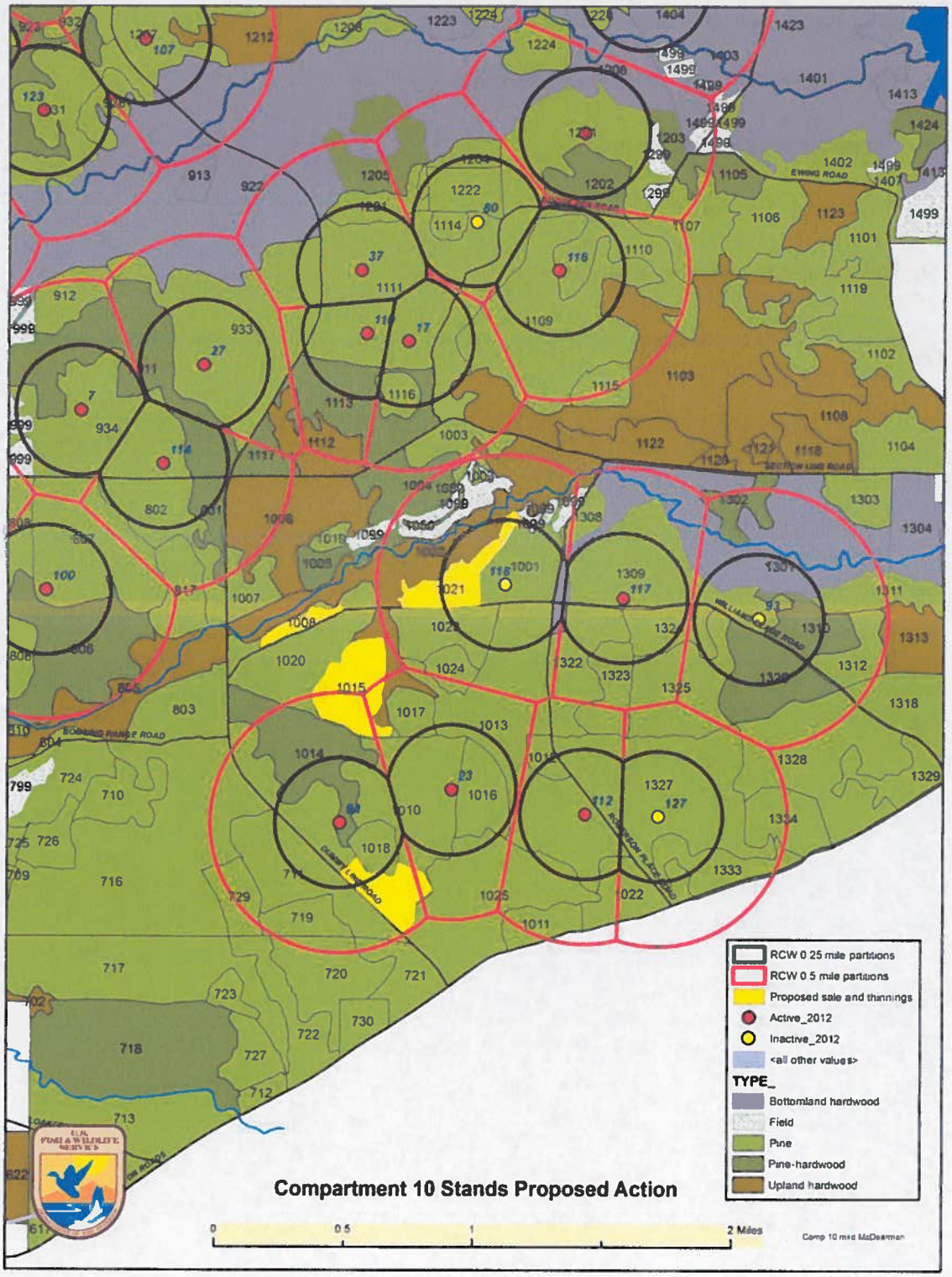

Figure 1. Compartment 10 stands, RCW clusters and partitions, and proposed thinning.

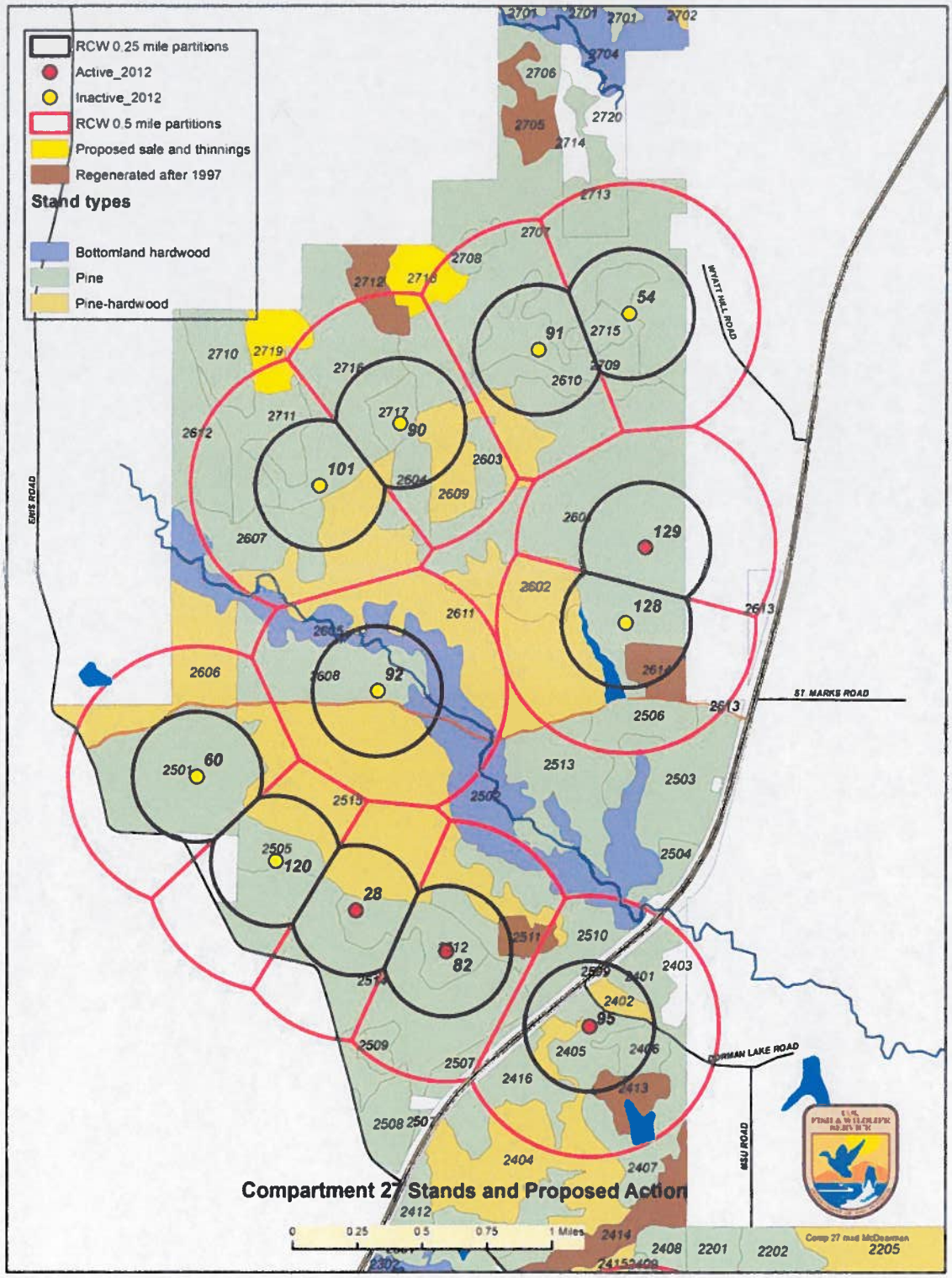

Figure 2. Compartment 27 stands, RCW clusters and partitions, and proposed thinning.

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Mississippi Field Office
6578 Dogwood View Parkway, Suite A
Jackson, Mississippi 39213

August 8, 2012

Memorandum

To: Steve Reagan, Project Leader, Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR and Choctaw NWR

From: Kathy W. Lunceford, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Mississippi Field Office

Subject: Intra-Service Consultation; Timber Harvesting in Compartments 10 and 27

We have reviewed the Intra-Service Section 7 Biological Evaluation Form dated August 8, 2012, **entitled "Timber Harvest in Compartments 10 and 27" on Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR.**

You have concluded that the proposed timber harvest activities would not likely adversely affect the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). In your analysis you base this finding on the fact that the RCW clusters found in the proposed project area are inactive and not likely to become active in the near future and the August 8, 2012 Foraging Habitat Analysis completed by the Regional RCW Coordinator. In addition, in a telephone conversation with this office, you have stated that you will adhere to the forest management recommendations found in the RCW Recovery Plan.

Based on your analysis and the information submitted in the BE, we concur that the timber harvest activities would not likely adversely affect the RCW or any other listed species.

I am enclosing the approved Intra-Service Section 7 Biological Evaluation Form dated 8/8/2012.

If you need additional information, please feel free to contact this office (601) 218-4298.

Sincerely,

Kathy W. Lunceford

For Stephen M. Ricks
Field Supervisor