

File Code: 1950

Date: March 26, 2007

Dear Interested Party:

I am pleased to announce the publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Myrtle Creek Healthy Forests Restoration Act Project. This project is designed to protect the drinking water for the community of Bonners Ferry based on a request which was initiated by the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Boundary County and the City of Bonners Ferry in early 2004 after a 3450-acre wildfire in the Myrtle Creek watershed shut down the community's drinking water supply.

Many hours of hard work went into the development of this project for which I wish to thank the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI) who provided the public forum for discussions between local government agencies, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, interested members of the public and Forest Service personnel; the Myrtle Creek Working Group, a subcommittee of the KVRI who met numerous times in meetings and in the field to discuss project design; and Forest Service employees at the Bonners Ferry Ranger District and Supervisor's Office who produced the FEIS. This has been a collaborative effort among interested partners who have worked for more than 18 months to develop the project. It is my hope that the efforts of these dedicated individuals will have long lasting benefits to the citizens of Boundary County who depend the Idaho Panhandle National Forests as the primary source of their drinking water.

Alternative 2 as described in the FEIS, the proposed action and preferred alternative, is designed to minimize impacts from a future wildfire that could have devastating effects on the community's drinking water supply, and pose safety risks for firefighters and the public. Specifically, Alternative 2 would use silvicultural treatments on approximately 2080 acres to meet fuels reduction and other resource objectives including maintenance and improvement of wildlife and fish habitat; improve road conditions on approximately 29 miles of existing roads; decommission approximately one mile of an existing non-drivable road; and reconstruct approximately 0.6 mile of temporary road (to be decommissioned following use to help meet water quality goals).

This project is an authorized fuel reduction project as defined by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003, section 102(a). As such it is subject to the Predecisional Administrative Review Process (referred to as the 'objection process') pursuant to 36 CFR 218, subpart A. Thus, this project is not subject to notice, comment, and appeal provisions under 36 CFR 215 (see 36 CFR 218.3). Objections will be accepted only from those individuals and organizations who previously submitted substantive written comments specific to the proposed project during the 45-day public comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Section 105 (a)(3) and 36 CFR 218.6).

A legal notice published in the Coeur d'Alene Press, our designated newspaper of record, announcing availability of the FEIS also describes the objection process. The publication of the legal notice is the *exclusive* means for calculating the time to file an objection (36 CFR 218.19(a)). Those wishing to object should not rely upon dates or timeframes provided by any other source. At a minimum, an objection must include the following items (36 CFR 218.7(d)):

- The objector's name and address, with a telephone number if available;
- A signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for Email may be filed with the objection);
- When multiple names are listed on the objection, identifications of the lead objector (verification of the identity of the lead objector will be provided upon request);
- The name of the proposed authorized hazardous fuel reduction project, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the name(s) of the National Forest(s) and/or Ranger District(s) on which the proposed authorized hazardous fuel reduction project will be implemented; and
- Provide sufficient narrative description of those aspects of the project that are objected to, to identify specific issues related to the proposed project and to suggest remedies that resolve the objection (36 CFR 21817(b)).

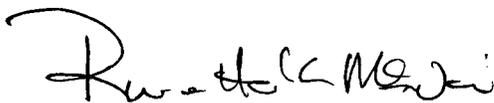
Pursuant to 36 CFR 218.7(c), incorporation of documents by reference will not be allowed in an objection. An objection, including any attachments, must be filed in writing (regular mail, fax, Email, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service) with the Reviewing Officer within 30 days of the date of the legal notice (35 CFR 218.9(a)). The Reviewing Officer for this project is the Northern Regional Forester. Objections may be submitted by mail at: USDA Forest Service, Northern Region, P.O. Box 7669, Missoula, MT 59807; by fax to (406) 329-3411; or by Email to *appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us*. Acceptable formats for submitting an electronic objection are MS Word, Word Perfect or RTF. Please include the name of the project in the Email subject line. Hand-delivered objections will be accepted at the Northern Region office at 200 E. Broadway, Missoula, Montana between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, exclusive of Federal holidays. All objections will be open to public inspection during the objection process (36 CFR 218.7(a)).

I am the Deciding Official for this proposal as Idaho Panhandle Forest Supervisor (Ranotta K. McNair) at 3815 Schreiber Way, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83815; telephone (208) 765-7223. I will make a decision on the project following the objection period. A copy of the decision (Myrtle Creek HFRA Record of Decision) will be mailed to those who request a copy or have otherwise expressed an interest in the project.

Copies of the FEIS are available on compact disc (CD) from the Bonners Ferry Ranger District; and are posted on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests internet site at www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/eco/manage/nepa/index.html. A limited number of printed copies may also be available. Copies of the FEIS may be obtained by writing or calling the Bonners Ferry Ranger District office at: 6286 Main Street, Bonners Ferry, ID 83805. Phone: (208) 267-5561.

I know how valuable your time is, and also, how much our public lands mean to concerned citizens such as you. In that spirit, I want to thank you for your continuing interest and involvement in the management of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, as well as in this project.

Sincerely,



RANOTTA K. MCNAIR
Forest Supervisor