

# Lakeview-Reeder Fuel Reduction Project

*Public Scoping Notice –October 28, 2005*

## *INTRODUCTION*

The US Forest Service is working with the public and other agencies to identify areas with hazardous forest fuel conditions and/or high risk of wildfire, as well as to develop plans for mitigating those risks. As part of that effort, the Priest Lake Ranger District is in the early stages of planning a hazardous fuel reduction project for National Forest System (NFS) lands in the Nordman, Granite Creek, Kalispell Creek, and Reeder Bay areas along the west side of Priest Lake. Hereafter this project will be referred to as the Lakeview-Reeder Fuel Reduction Project. We are sending this notice to you because either you have previously expressed interest in this project and/or other similar projects or you own property in or adjacent to the project area.

This notice is one of our first steps in asking you for your thoughts and suggestions. Your early input for this project will help us determine what issues and potential activities to include in the scope of the project.

Please read over this notice and provide us with your comments. We have tried to provide you with enough information in this notice to allow you to adequately understand the project so that you can provide meaningful comments. We have also strived to avoid inundating you with too much information, and I hope we have attained the right balance.

At the end of this notice, you will find further information about submitting comments to us and about other opportunities in which to be involved. **If we do not hear from you by December 1, 2005, we will remove your name from this project's mailing list in order to reduce waste and improve efficiency.**

This website provides us with the opportunity to share additional color photos which help illustrate current fuel conditions present in the project area, as well as potential management options. This webpage is an expanded version of the Lakeview Reeder Fuels Reduction Project scoping document which was mailed to the public on October 28, 2005.

## *PROJECT LOCATION*

As shown on the [attached map](#), the general area being considered for this fuel reduction project extends from Kalispell Bay, Hanna Flats and the Bismark Mountain area in the south, to Indian Mountain, Granite Mountain and Copper Bay to the north. The community of Nordman, Idaho is located near the center of this project area.

This area, which is a patchwork of both National Forest System (NFS) lands and private property, is one of the more populated areas within the greater Priest Lake area. Residential homes and subdivisions, businesses and important recreational sites are abundant.

## ***PROJECT GOALS***

We are considering conducting hazardous fuel reduction activities on NFS lands within this area in order to respond to the goals and objectives of the National Fire Plan, Healthy Forests Initiative, Healthy Forests Restoration Act and the Bonner County Wildland Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Plan.

Potential management activities proposed for this project will be conducted with the primary purpose of reducing wildfire threat to human lives, private property, and other values within the wildland urban interface (WUI). In addition, we are trying to restore ecosystems which evolved under a more frequent fire regime.

**Wildland Urban Interface:**  
*The line, area or zone in which structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.*

During 2004, Bonner County in collaboration with the Forest Service, other federal and state agencies, rural fire districts, and private landowners developed a plan to mitigate fire risks in the county. In this plan, hazardous fuels treatments were identified as needed activities to create defensible space and fuel breaks around and near homes and businesses. The objective of this work is to reduce the risk to life and property, increase firefighter and public safety, as well as to reduce fire suppression cost. The County Plan's implementation strategy includes reducing the physical threat of wildfire through the use of hazardous fuels treatment projects.

**Bonner County Definition of Wildland Urban Interface:**  
*The zone within which modification of forest fuels would reinforce defensible space around homes and businesses. The perimeter or boundary around this zone is two miles outside places of human habitation and/or the infrastructure that serves these points of habitation, or to nearby topographic "anchor" points.*

By reducing the quantity and spatial arrangement of forest fuels, the behavior of potential wildfires could be altered. Potential spread rates and fire intensities could be lowered, effectively reducing the risks to life, property, and natural resources. This project is one part of a larger strategy that is being implemented on the District, as well as on private lands within Bonner County, to reduce these risks.

Some of the NFS lands within the project area currently contain large quantities of hazardous forest fuels. High tree densities, large amounts of ground fuels and substantial ladder fuels (those fuels which could carry fuels from the ground level up into the tree canopies) exist over a significant percentage of the project area. Forest insects, diseases and other disturbances (such as snow and wind storms) are continuing to kill additional trees in the area, increasing the already large amounts of accumulating combustible forest fuels. If a fire were to start on NFS lands, it could spread to private land. Likewise, the potential also exists for a fire originating on private land to spread to NFS lands, where it could intensify and become more difficult to control.

Treating hazardous fuels could also improve the safety of area emergency routes in the event of a wildfire. Roads used for emergency routes such as the Reeder Bay, Reeder Creek and Kalispell Creek roads serve many residents in the area. Portions of these routes traverse dense, overstocked forest stands with high fuel hazard, which could restrict their use as emergency egress routes. Treating forest fuels adjacent to the roads could alter fire behavior and reduce the probability of the route becoming unusable during a wildfire emergency.

In addition to proposed hazardous fuels reduction on NFS land in this area, there are also opportunities for private landowners to reduce hazardous forest fuels on their land. "Community Fire Protection" grant-funding is available through the National Fire Plan, to private landowners adjacent to NFS fuel

reduction projects. The State of Idaho is coordinating grant applications and fund distributions to areas identified as having high risk of wildland fire. Applications are available through the Bonner County “BonFire” office. Fuel reduction coordination among private, state and federal entities is imperative in order to successfully reduce the detrimental effects of catastrophic wildfire.

### ***PROJECT AREA FIRE HISTORY***

As with most areas in the Priest Lake basin, this project area has had a significant history of both natural and human-caused wildfires. In the late 1800’s and again in 1926, a large percentage of this project area burned over in hot, fast moving fires that eventually became tens of thousands of acres in size. The 1926 wildfire reached approximately 100,000 acres in size. Since 1926, the project area has not experienced any large fires. Rather, fire suppression efforts have successfully kept fires relatively small.

Since the 1950’s (when good fire record keeping began) dozens of natural and human-caused fires have occurred within the project area. By putting these small fires out, forest fuels have continued to accumulate in many forest stands in the area and are now at high levels. Without treating some of the fuels, we believe that the probability of successfully suppressing future fires is decreasing. In addition, more development and public use is taking place in the project area than ever before. Therefore, the number of human-caused wildfires will likely increase in coming years.

### ***EXISTING FUEL CONDITIONS AND MANAGEMENT OPTIONS***

During the last two years, the District has spent time investigating fuel conditions in the project area in order to understand the current stand conditions, and whether or not hazardous conditions exist. There are three primary components in determining hazardous forest fuel conditions: surface fuels, canopy fuels (and their ability to sustain a crown fire), and ladder fuels. Some of the more common fuel conditions that are present in the project area are discussed below.

#### **Condition 1- Dense forest stands with heavy surface fuels, ladder fuels and canopy fuels.**

Forest stands that contain large amounts of all three of these types of fuels are generally the most hazardous. In these stands, there is both vertical and horizontal continuity of fuels. Intense, fast moving surface or crown fires can burn in these stands under dry conditions and fires can be difficult or impossible to suppress. An example of this type of forest stand is depicted below.

Stands similar to the one depicted here occur over large areas of NFS lands on the north side of Lakeview Mountain, at the foot of Nickelplate Mountain (west of Nordman), and on the west side of Bismark Meadows in the Indian and Reeder Creek drainages. In addition, smaller, less contiguous areas with similar fuel conditions are scattered throughout the project area.

Many stands fit into this category which regenerated after the 1926 wildfire and grew into dense, overcrowded stands. In crowded stands, trees tend to grow tall and “spindly”, which makes them very susceptible to breakage from snow or windstorms. In addition, many of these stands are multi-layered.



This particular stand, located near the west side of Bismark Meadows, contains large quantities of ground fuels, ladder fuels, and has a dense overstory component.

Faster growing species such as larch or lodgepole pine often grow over top the shorter, grand fir, hemlock or cedar trees. This dense, multi-layered condition creates very hazardous conditions in which fires can easily travel from the forest floor up into the tree crowns and rapidly spread even with fairly mild winds. A sizable number of these stands contain lodgepole pine trees (about 80 years old) in the overstory and other shade tolerant species in the understory. Lodgepole pine is a short-lived tree species and, in many circumstances, these trees have started dying and accumulating fuels on the forest floor.

In general, the stands that fit into this fuel condition are of the greatest concern. This is especially true where large expanses of these stands exist, and/or if these stands exist near homes, private property, egress routes or other high value areas that are important to protect. In addition, if these stands occur on steep slopes and/or dry, south or west aspects, the hazard is even greater because those factors increase the potential for rapid fire spread.



This photo is an example of fuel condition 1 in a NFS stand adjacent to private property, just north of the Nordman store and post office.



The photo above shows heavy fuel accumulations northwest of Bismark Meadows.

Because of the large quantities of fuels already present, using prescribed fire prior to removing some of the vegetation could initiate high fire intensity and severe fire behavior, making fire control difficult and unsafe. Moreover, most of the trees would likely be killed, including those favored for retention and species usually resistant to low-intensity fires.

Therefore, mechanical removal of some of the forest fuels is necessary.

In stands that contain a significant number of healthy trees, the stand can be thinned leaving the larger, healthier trees. To adequately reduce the fuels in these stands, it is usually necessary to remove some merchantable trees, also called a “commercial thinning”. Depending upon site conditions and tree species left, the post-harvest slash and residual fuels can either be mechanically-piled and burned, or a low intensity prescribed burn can be implemented.

**Management Options for Stands in Fuel Condition 1**—In order to substantially reduce the fuel hazards in these types of stands, it generally requires some sort of “mechanical treatment” as opposed to a “hand treatment”. These stands usually contain so many trees and so much down fuel that it would be too expensive or physically impractical to hand cut and hand pile all of the fuels. Furthermore, in this fuel condition, stands cannot safely be prescribe-burned (planned, purposeful ignition of controlled fires) without mechanical treatment first.



This photo shows an example of a stand that was commercially thinned using mechanical means, followed by fuel-piling and burning. You may have seen this area as you travel Highway 57. The stand is located along Hwy 57, just south of the Kalispell Bay road intersection and was treated as part of the Lakeface-Lamb Fuel Reduction Project.

In contrast to the example above, some stands with this fuel condition contain only a few healthy trees, so thinning is not a viable option. A thinning that leaves unhealthy or weak trees, may result in a short-term reduction of fire hazard. However, many of those unhealthy, residual trees would continue to die



This photo is an example of a regenerative harvest completed with the Lakeface-Lamb Fuel Reduction Project.

and/or break, quickly reverting the stand back into a hazardous fuel condition. To achieve longer-lasting effects in these unhealthy stand situations, most of the trees in the stand would need to be cut. Contrary to the “commercial thinning” treatment, this treatment is called a “regeneration” treatment. The post-harvest fuels and slash would be mechanically-piled or prescribe burned, and conifer seedlings would be planted. This treatment would not result in a clearcut, but there would be fairly open areas in the resulting stand until regrowth occurs.

**Condition 2- Dense forest stands with light to moderate surface and ladder fuels.**

Forest stands in this condition have a relatively dense (volume and/or quantity) and continuous upper canopy layer. However, unlike those areas with fuel condition 1, these stands do not contain high levels of surface fuels or ladder fuels. Within these stands, a fire may travel along the forest floor, but generally it would not “climb” into the upper tree canopies and become a crown fire unless there were severe winds and/or the fire was burning on a steep slope. The vertical arrangement of the fuels is not very continuous in these stands. Therefore, stands in this condition generally do not burn as severely as those in condition 1, and fires in these types of stands can generally be suppressed. Fires may still “torch” individual trees or small groups of trees, but generally fires would burn on the forest floor and would not tend to travel very fast. Depending upon other factors such as topography, prevailing winds, as well as proximity to homes, private property and likely ignition sources, stands in this condition may or may not present a concern from a fuel hazard perspective. As the photo to the right illustrates, good examples of this type of fuel condition exist in forest stands on Bismark Mountain, the north side of Nickelplate Mountain and on the flats south of Lakeview Mountain.



This is an untreated forest stand on the north side of Nickelplate Mtn.



While some stands with these fuel conditions may not be considered a high hazard now, some areas have rapidly changing fuel conditions. Tree diseases and insects are causing substantial mortality in some stands, which can increase ground fuel accumulations. An example of this is to the west of Copper Bay where root diseases and bark beetles (mostly fir engraver) are killing grand fir and Douglas-fir trees.

The photo to the left depicts a stand within the Granite Creek drainage, in which many grand fir trees were recently killed by fir engraver bark beetles, transitioning the stand from a fuel condition 2, to a more hazardous fuel condition 1.

**Management Options for Stands in Fuel Condition 2**—Some stands with these fuel conditions generally need to be treated in a similar fashion to those in fuel condition 1, mechanically treated with a commercial thinning or regeneration treatment. However, in certain sensitive situations, a third option is available. Hand treatment may be effective in decreasing the fuel hazards for at least a short period of time (5-10 years.) For example, immediately adjacent to cabins, homes or other very visually sensitive areas, it may be desirable to hand cut some of the very small trees (that serve as ladder fuels), hand pile the slash and burn the piles. Although this activity is very expensive (\$1000-\$1500 per acre) and the hazard reduction benefit would not last as long as mechanical treatments, it can be used in certain small areas.



The photo above, taken near summer cabins, illustrates results of hand-pruning and thinning.

**Condition 3- Moderately-open stands with light to moderate surface and/or ladder fuels.**

Some of the stands in the project area have somewhat open upper canopies and only have light to moderate surface and/or ladder fuels. The two photos below show stands with these conditions. Under these fuel conditions, strong wind and/or steep slopes are usually necessary for a wildfire to become very intense or develop into a crown fire.

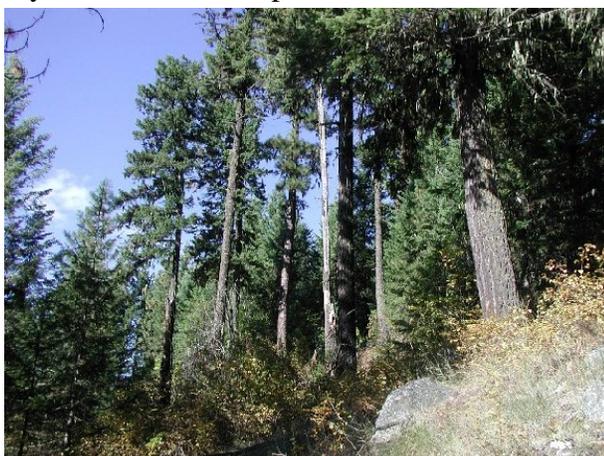


Photo above is from the south side of Lakeview Mountain.



The photo above is on the south side of Nickelplate Mountain.



Most of the stands in this condition occur on semi-dry sites. The upper slopes on the south side of Lakeview and Nickelplate Mountains have numerous stands in this condition. Most of these dry-site stands contain mixtures of ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir and grand fir trees. Historically, low intensity wildfires were fairly common on these sites. Frequent, low intensity fires favored the predominance of long-lived, thick-barked ponderosa pine trees and naturally thinned out some of the smaller diameter and thinner barked trees.

The photo to the left shows a large ponderosa pine tree on Lakeview Mountain with several fire scars from low-intensity wildfires.

Because of the relatively frequent fires that would occur naturally on these dry sites, the stands should be fairly open. However, fire suppression on these sites has led to denser stands with Douglas-fir and grand fir trees becoming more prevalent. The photo to the right illustrates how large, ponderosa pine trees are being shaded by Douglas-fir and true fir trees, causing ladder fuels to develop under them. This situation is increasing the probability that future fires may kill these old trees or that they will become stressed due to moisture competition from the numerous fir trees. In addition, the prolonged drought that has been occurring in northern Idaho has exacerbated the number of trees being attacked and killed by insects and tree diseases.



**Management Options for Stands in Fuel Condition 3**—Fuel reduction treatments for dry-site stands with



these fuel conditions can usually include prescribed burning. Stands that have low crown densities and fairly light surface and ladder fuels may not need any tree cutting prior to prescribed burning. However, to ensure that the prescribed fire can be kept under control, stands with more fuels may need to be commercially thinned prior to conducting the prescribed burn.

The photo to the left shows a low-intensity prescribed fire burning in a dry-site stand following a commercial thinning which favored retention of the largest, healthiest trees.

**Condition 4- Old shrub fields, mixed shrub/forest stands, and aspen clones**

In some portions of the project area, there are fairly large areas dominated by brush species. While some of these areas have scattered conifer and/or hardwood trees, these areas are generally dominated by 5-15' tall brush. The south and eastern portions of Lakeview Mountain, south side of Granite Mountain, and southeast portion of Reeder Mountain contain many old brush fields. After the 1926 wildfire, many of these areas regenerated so heavily to brush that conifer trees were excluded through competition. Since 1926, these brush fields have become old and have accumulated substantial amounts of dead fuels.



These are photos of one of the large brush fields on the south side of Lakeview



Mountain. As the shrub fields become old and decadent, their effectiveness as fuel breaks decreases. Under very dry conditions, older brush fields can burn with higher intensity—especially during high wind events. In addition, these brush fields can “connect” dense timber stands and could (without treatment) carry wildfires from one forest stand to another.

Within the project area, there are also scattered areas of aspen groves or clones, often located on dry, southern slopes. South slopes northeast of Nordman and on Lakeview Mountain are dotted with aspen groves. Aspen groves usually act as effective fuel breaks. However, the majority of the aspen in this area are at least 75-80 years old (having regenerated after the last stand-replacing fire). Because aspen is a short-lived species, many of the groves are slowly dying due to stem decay, and some aspen have started to break or fall initiating a woody ground fuel component. As a result of aspen decline and the subsequent increase in sunlight under these groves, as well as fire suppression, conifer species, like lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir, are beginning to regenerate thickly under the aspen, slowly choking the aspen out, increasing the potential future fire hazard, effectively eliminating fuel breaks and reducing the natural range of aspen in our area.



The photo above, taken on the south slope of a small hill northeast of the community of Nordman, illustrates conifer in-growth in an aspen clone.

Management Options for Stands in Fuel Condition 4— The area's overall fire hazard can be reduced by treating the fuels within these old brush fields and aspen groves with slashing and prescribed burning. No merchantable material would be removed from these stands prior to burning. Prescribed burning not only consumes the larger, drier, woody debris in these shrub fields and aspen groves, but also stimulates regrowth of succulent, young vegetation. That new growth will serve as both an effective fuel break and improved big game browse.

### **Other Miscellaneous Fuel Conditions-**

In addition to the fuel conditions described above, there are other types of fuel/vegetation conditions present in the project area. Meadows, young conifer plantations, riparian areas and areas dominated by hardwood tree species are some examples. Although these areas can burn under certain conditions, they are generally not a hazard and sometimes even function as fuel breaks.

### ***AREAS OF CONCERN***

Based on the inventory of fuel conditions completed so far, we have identified areas on the [attached map](#) that have hazardous forest fuels—fuels which management activities could reduce. We are not proposing to conduct activities in all of the areas shaded on the map. Rather, we are presenting these areas as potential treatment locations to begin our discussions with the public and other agencies. Your suggestions and comments will help us refine our proposal.

In general, the stands delineated on the Lakeview-Reeder Fuels map as having hazardous forest fuels and in close proximity to private lands (private land is illustrated with white), are the highest priority for treatment. By treating those areas, we could decrease the probability that a wildfire starting on NFS land would become intense and move onto private land. Likewise, such treatments would also decrease the probability that a fire starting on private land would burn onto NFS land and become an intense fire. By decreasing fuels, we would decrease the potential fire intensity and increase the odds that suppression efforts would be successful.

Potential treatments located further away from private land would serve a slightly different function. Here, fuel reduction activities would alter potential fire behavior, so that if a large wildfire developed elsewhere and moved into the area, fuel treatments would either slow or help stop the fire's progress.

In essence, we performed an overall fire hazard assessment of the project area. Within each area, we considered many factors including: fuel conditions in stands and fuel matrix (continuity—both vertical and horizontal); proximity to and spatial arrangement of existing fuel breaks; proximity to private property, homes and egress routes; potential ignition sources; historical forest composition and ecology; topography; and prevailing wind patterns. In general, preliminary assessments indicate the following areas are the highest priority for treatment.

- Northside of Lakeview Mountain- This is a large area dominated by stands with a fuel condition 1. This area is generally downwind of the Nordman and Reeder Bay area and some of this area has poor access for fire suppression forces.
- North and west side of Bismark Meadows (including to the northwest of Nordman)- There are numerous homes and private property along the Reeder Creek road and in the Nordman area. Many NFS forest stands in this area are either in a category 1 or 2 fuel condition.
- Southside of Lakeview Mountain- This area is dominated by dense forest stands with fuel conditions 1 and 2. In addition, old brush fields (fuel condition 4) serve to connect the dense forest stands together. Because this area is on a south-facing and fairly steep slope, there is also the potential to burn more intensely and faster than other areas. Furthermore, in this area, there are a number of semi-dry sites with overcrowded ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest stands, predisposing the stands to high mortality. Additionally, access for fire suppression response is inadequate for a large portion of the area.
- Reeder Bay and Copper Bay- Because of the concentration of people in this area as well as other values, this area is a concern. While forest fuels on NFS land are not as hazardous here as in other areas, the potential negative effects of a wildfire are more significant due to the density of homes, people, businesses, infrastructure and high-value recreation sites.

### *POTENTIAL ISSUES*

An Interdisciplinary (ID) Team, comprised of Forest Service employees with different resource specialties, has been assessing fuel conditions in the project area and developing potential strategies for reducing wildfire risks. In addition, this team has begun to identify potential resource issues that may need addressed in the development of a proposal or will be used in determining the environmental, social or economic elements that will be analyzed in the environmental document.

The issues we address in our planning process, as well as the degree to which we address them, is partially dependent upon the input you provide us. Therefore, helping us identify potential issues is one of the most important ways you can become involved in this project.

In an attempt to describe the type of issues we anticipate in conjunction with this project, we have separated the issues into categories called primary, secondary and minor/ insignificant issues. At this point, we believe that the primary issues may be more significant than the secondary issues, especially in relation to development of a proposed action and degree of analysis in the environmental document. Secondary issues are not likely to be as critical in project development, but will likely influence mitigation measures and design criteria for the project. The issues listed as minor are those issues we predict will not be as important for project development, but will still be addressed.

## **Primary Issues -**

Considering our current knowledge of resources within the project area, the potential scope of a proposed action and environmental effects, as well as the public's values and desires, the following issues will likely be significant. Thus, these issues will be addressed in detail during the planning process and subsequent analysis.

### 1) Fire Hazard

Given the primary project objective is to reduce wildfire risk to people, private property or important resources, considerable efforts and analysis will be conducted to determine the most effective hazardous fuel reduction treatment(s), as well as how those treatments can be implemented in conjunction with the issues that arise.

In assessing which areas have hazardous conditions, we will consider how much fuel exists in the stands, fuel loading in adjacent stands, location of likely ignition sources and proximity to values we are trying to protect. In addition, when considering the overall hazard of larger areas we will weigh in other factors such as topography, prevailing winds, existing fuel breaks and accessibility for fire suppression forces. Finally, we will also determine how effectively we can manipulate the forest composition and structure in the long-term to help improve the stand's resistance to future wildfires, insects, diseases and storms.

### 2) Grizzly Bear Habitat

The project area occurs within the designated Selkirk Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone, which was established by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Grizzly bears are known to use portions of the project area. The USFWS established two different grizzly bear management units that overlap portions of the project area – the Kalispell-Granite and Lakeshore units. Within each of these bear management units (BMU), the USFWS has established new standards that limit the amount of open and total road density allowed in these areas. In addition, core habitat (areas without any roads) standards exist that require some of the areas not contain any roads.

Currently one of the bear management units in the area needs more core habitat and fewer roads to meet the new standards. Therefore, during the planning of this project, we will be looking for ways to conduct the fuel reduction activities while also meeting the new bear management standards. In addition, our analysis will also consider how the proposed activities would affect the quality of habitat available to the bears. As we plan the project, we will consult with the USFWS to ensure that the project does not negatively affect the recovery efforts for grizzly bears.

### 3) Water Quality

The primary streams within the project area are Granite Creek, Reeder Creek, Indian Creek and Kalispell Creek. The current status and/or anticipated status of these streams is as follows: Granite Creek- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) has recommended that this stream be listed as a water quality limited stream (WQLS) because of temperature concerns. Reeder Creek is currently listed as a WQLS because of sediment concerns, and IDEQ recommended it be listed for temperature concerns as well. Because Indian Creek is a tributary to Reeder Creek, the same IDEQ guidance will be followed. Lastly, Kalispell Creek is a WQLS for sediment and is recommended for listing for temperature as well. Because of these listings by IDEQ, and in turn the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), activities we propose must be designed so that they do not result in net increases in sediment or stream temperature to those listed streams. This issue will be considered in the

environmental document. The analyses will predict how proposed activities may affect sediment delivery, water yield and overall channel stability.

In addition, some domestic water sources are present in the project area and will be protected. Finally, opportunities exist to simultaneously improve riparian conditions and reduce hazardous fuels. Any project activities recommended by the ID team for riparian areas will be thoroughly analyzed to determine if treatments are needed to enhance riparian conditions and meet riparian management objectives.

4) Access

Currently portions of the project area have a number of open, public roads, while other areas have no or few roads open to the public. The ID Team has already conducted a preliminary analysis of the NFS road system within the area and has made some initial recommendations regarding the management of the roads in the future. This road analysis will be used during the planning process for this project.

We will need to identify how our fuel reduction treatment activities might impact access to NFS land, as well as consider how access affects grizzly bear habitat and aquatic health. In addition, we will consider how the project could influence use of the area by off road vehicles.

5) Scenery

Portions of this project area can be seen from Priest Lake, itself, as well as from popular travelways like Highway 57 and various county roads. In addition, the area can be seen from popular recreational areas and hiking trails. The current IPNF Forest Plan identifies these areas as areas where the quality of the scenery would need to be maintained. Therefore, during project planning we will consider how to blend the fuel treatments into the surrounding landscape in a way to maintain the scenery integrity.

**Secondary Issues-**

At this early stage in the project, we will probably include the following resources and issues in the scope of the environmental document being prepared for this project. However, we do not anticipate the need to conduct as much analysis on these issues as for the primary issues.

1) Other Wildlife Species

In addition to grizzly bears, the project area has habitat for two other species listed as threatened, the Canada lynx and bald eagle.

The Canada lynx was listed as a threatened species in 2000. Habitat for this species occurs within this project area, and there have been past sightings. Four different lynx analysis units (LAUs) overlap portions of the project area. Each of these areas comprise approximately 20-30 square miles and must be managed to maintain a certain percentage of that area in suitable foraging and denning habitat. Currently each of these LAUs meets the required standards, and this project will be designed in such a way as to continue maintenance of those standards.

Bald eagles nest on Kalispell Island and are known to forage for food in portions of the project area. Fuel reduction projects could potentially disturb the eagles or change the habitat of their prey base. Therefore, these effects will be considered in the project design and environmental analysis.

Other species on the regional sensitive species list or within the Forest Plan as management indicator species have habitat in the analysis area. These include species such as flammulated owls, pygmy nuthatch, pileated woodpecker, black-backed woodpecker, goshawk, boreal toad, Townsend bat, fringed myotis bat, fisher, marten and wolverine.

Lastly, a portion of the project area was designated in the Forest Plan as an area in which to emphasize the production of winter forage for big game species. Elk, moose, as well as both whitetail and mule deer exist in the project area, providing abundant hunting and viewing opportunities. Elk and moose commonly use habitat on Watson, Nickelplate, Reeder and Granite Mountains, while the lakeshore is important for whitetail deer.

The analysis conducted for this project will consider how the proposed activities may affect (both positively and negatively) these species.

2) Soil Productivity

Intense wildfires can decrease the productivity of soils by creating hydrophobic conditions, increasing erosion, through the volatilization of nutrients and loss of large woody debris. Some fuel treatment activities can also potentially negatively affect soil productivity—usually through soil compaction, loss of large woody debris or nutrient removal. The environmental document will contain an analysis of how proposed activities may impact soil productivity.

3) Rare plants

Treatment activities should not significantly affect federally-listed threatened, endangered or sensitive plant species. Analysis will include botanical surveys for federally-listed species within proposed treatment areas, as well as mitigation measures and design criteria that could reduce adverse effects to federally-listed plant species.

4) Recreation

Within the project area, there are several developed campgrounds and/or picnic areas on NFS land. The Kalispell and Ledgewood Day-Use areas are used for picnicking and swimming, and the Reeder Bay Campground accommodates overnight campers. Within the project area there are also several hiking trails. Fuel treatments could affect recreation via noise, smoke, changes to scenery, or changes to road or trail access to NFS lands.

5) Smoke

Some of the activities proposed for this project will likely generate short-term smoke during certain times of the year. Prescribed burning of forest fuels can be an effective means to reduce hazardous fuels. However, smoke caused from prescribed burning can affect people by reducing visibility and in extreme cases, even posing a health concern for sensitive individuals. This issue will be considered in the environmental document.

6) Noxious Weeds

The project area contains different species of noxious weeds. The potential effects that the project would have on the spread of noxious weeds will be considered in the environmental document.

## 7) Fisheries

Granite Creek contains habitat for bull trout, a federally-listed species, and several streams in the project area produce westslope cutthroat trout, which is on the regional sensitive species list. Therefore, the environmental analysis will consider how the proposal could affect the habitat for these fish.

### **Minor Issues-**

Based on current knowledge of the project area and the scope of the proposed action that may be developed, the following resources/issues will probably not be analyzed with much detail in the environmental document. Either these resources/issues are not present in the project area or potential impacts to them would likely be inconsequential. These resources/issues include caribou habitat, research natural areas, wilderness and roadless areas, old growth forest stands, cultural resources, economics and social issues.

### ***ANALYSIS REQUIREMENTS***

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to identify and consider the potential environmental impacts of their proposed actions before final decisions are made.

As identified by the National Fire Plan, the project area is part of the wildland urban interface within and adjacent to the at-risk communities of Priest Lake and Nordman, Idaho. Thus, this project meets the criteria for “Authorized Hazardous Fuels Reduction Projects” under Section 102 of the *Healthy Forests Restoration Act*. Because the project will be designed to reduce hazardous forest fuels within and adjacent to those at-risk communities and will utilize treatments described in the Bonner County Wildland Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Plan, we are not required to develop and analyze an alternative to the proposed action, as described in section 104(c) and (d) of the *Healthy Forests Restoration Act*. However, we will evaluate the effects of failing to implement the project.

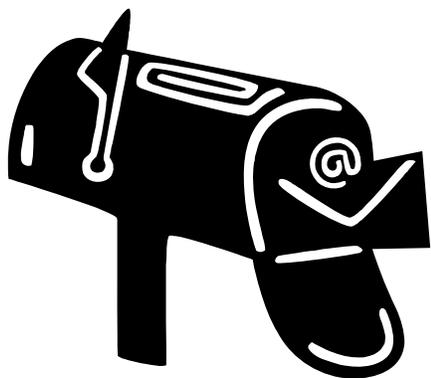
Our initial analysis will determine the need for documenting this project in either an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Public involvement will continue throughout the process and will help us develop and refine our proposed action.

### ***PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES***

To date there have been two limited public scoping efforts on this project. A public meeting was held at the Priest Lake Elementary School on February 2, 2005 to discuss the Bonner County fire mitigation plans. County representatives from the “BonFire” (Bonner County Wildland Urban Interface Fire Mitigation) planning group mentioned this project as one of the projects planned for implementation on NFS lands, and Forest Service staff gave an overview of this and other hazardous fuel reduction projects. A follow-up public meeting was held at the Priest Lake Ranger District on February 17, 2005 for those that expressed interest in this project. At that meeting, one public member did request that the Forest Service consider an additional issue— the effects the potential project may have on off-road motorized use of the area.

As we continue to refine the project’s proposed action, we will have more public meetings and/or other means of public involvement and collaboration. If you request to be kept on our mailing list, you will be informed about future meetings.

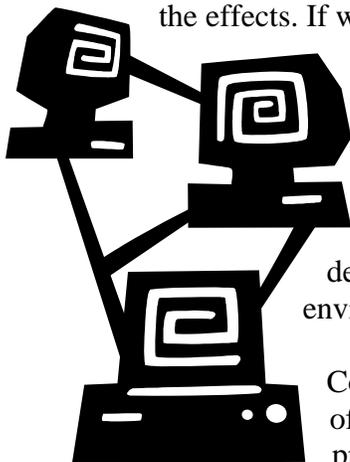
## GIVE US YOUR COMMENTS



After reviewing this information, please take time to give us your feedback. Are there issues you are aware of that we missed? Do you have other ideas about how we could meet the goals and objectives of this project? Simply informing us whether you would support or oppose this type of project is not as useful as questions or suggestions, especially to the IPNF Forest Supervisor (who will ultimately make a decision about how to proceed). However, if you can tell us why you support or oppose this type of

project, you will provide us a much better idea of your issues. We need to be aware of issues vital to the public, because those are the issues that will help us form the proposal and analyze the effects. If we are not aware of your ideas or concerns, we will not be able to

try to incorporate them into our proposal and into the scope of the environmental analysis conducted. Please use the enclosed form, call, stop by or send us an email message. We will consider your comments during the development of a proposed action and a no-action alternative, during the design of resource protection measures, and when we are determining what issues we will analyze in the draft environmental analysis document.



Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments may not have standing to appeal or file objection to the subsequent decision.

In order for us to incorporate your comments and suggestions into the proposed action, **please submit your comments by December 1, 2005.** Submit comments to:

David Cobb  
Lakeview-Reeder Project Leader  
Priest Lake Ranger District  
32203 Highway 57  
Priest River, ID 83856

Phone: 208-443-6854  
E-mail: [dcobb@fs.fed.us](mailto:dcobb@fs.fed.us)



## COMMENT FORM FOR THE LAKEVIEW-REEDER FUEL REDUCTION PROJECT

After reviewing the enclosed information, please take a moment to write down your thoughts, issues, ideas, or any information relevant to this project. Please be as specific as possible, so we can consider ways to incorporate your thoughts into the project plans. If you have any questions about this proposal, please don't hesitate to call, write, e-mail or visit (e-mail address is [dcobb@fs.fed.us](mailto:dcobb@fs.fed.us)). Please return this form or call in your comments no later than December 1, 2005. **Note: If we do not hear from you by December 1, 2005, we will remove your name from the mailing list for this project, and you will not receive future mailings regarding this project.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Fold this flyer in thirds (so that the return address shows), tape and affix postage.

FROM:

TO: Priest Lake Ranger District  
ATTN: David Cobb  
32203 Hwy. 57  
Priest River ID 83856