



File Code: 1950- NEPA
Date: April 18, 2008

SUBJECT: Gold Crown Fuels Reduction Project

Dear Neighbors, Landowners, and Interested Citizens:

I am writing to inform you that our Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) is nearing completion of the analysis for the Gold Crown Fuels Reduction Project. We anticipate that we will have the Environmental Assessment (EA) and draft "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) completed and released next Wednesday, April 23, 2008.

We recognize that not everyone has the time to read our documentation. Therefore, in an effort to improve efficiency and save costs associated with printing and mailing documents, you have three options to view or receive the EA. You may request either a hard copy or compact disc (CD) version of the EA from the Sandpoint Ranger District, or you may view the EA and all the associated reports online at <http://www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/eco/manage/nepa>. Once you are at this website, scroll down to "Sandpoint Ranger District", "Gold Crown Fuels Reduction Project", and select the document you would like to review. Further information regarding the project may also be obtained from the project leader, Jennifer Costich-Thompson at 208-443-6811 or jcostichthompson@fs.fed.us.

As you may recall this project is focused on reducing hazardous forest fuel accumulations on National Forest System (NFS) lands in the area commonly referred to as Gold Hill (between Bottle Bay and Sagle Slough), located approximately 2.5 miles southeast of the City of Sandpoint.

The Gold Crown Fuels Reduction Project has three primary objectives:

- To reduce wildland fuels on NFS lands and lessen the risk of a landscape fire event in the area between Bottle Bay and Sagle Slough;
- To improve the health and resilience of the residual forest stands; and
- To enhance the effectiveness of future fire suppression tactics in the area.

In order to accomplish these objectives, the preferred alternative that the IDT has analyzed consists of fuel reduction treatments totaling approximately 573 acres, as well as 2.2 miles of new, permanent road construction; 0.3 miles of road reconditioning; 0.13 miles of new, temporary road construction; and 8.5 miles of road maintenance on existing NFS roads (necessary to access treatment areas.) Treatments include a combination of thinning, group selection harvests, regeneration harvest and subsequent reforestation, overstory removal and precommercial thinning of the understory, hand slashing and piling, and special treatments for rock outcrop areas. The slash and fuels treatment would vary, depending upon site conditions and stand characteristics. Methods proposed include mechanical piling (grapple-piling) and burning; machine piling of skyline corridors and burning; prescribed broadcast burning; hand piling and burning; or yarding of unmerchantable material, with piling and burning to take place at landings. (See the EA for further details.)

The Gold Crown Fuels Reduction Project is an authorized fuel reduction project as defined by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003, section 101(2), and the Responsible Official for the project is Ranotta McNair, Forest Supervisor of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. This project is subject to the Predecisional Administrative Review Process (referred to as the 'objection process') pursuant to 36 CFR 218, subpart A. This process is not subject to notice, comment, and appeal provisions pursuant to 36 CFR 215 (see 36 CFR 218.3).



Objections must be filed with the Reviewing Officer, in writing. The Reviewing Officer is the next higher level supervisor of the Responsible Official. Objections must be submitted by mail at: USDA Forest Service, Northern Region, P.O. Box 7669, Missoula, MT 59807; by FAX at: (406) 329-3411; or by Email at: appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us. The acceptable formats for submitting an electronic objection are: MS Word, Word Perfect, or RTF. Please type "Gold Crown FRP Objection" in the Email subject line. Hand-delivered objections will be accepted at the Regional Forester's Office, 200 E. Broadway, Missoula, MT, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. All objections shall be open to public inspection during the objection process (36 CFR 218.7(a)).

Objections will be accepted only from those who submitted written comments specific to the proposed project during the 30 day comment period for an environmental assessment (36 CFR 218.6). The publication date of our legal notice in The Coeur d'Alene Press is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection (36 CFR 218.9(a)). Those wishing to object should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. An objection, including any attachments, must be filed (regular mail, fax, Email, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service) as stated above within 30 days of the date of publication of this legal notice for the objection process (36 CFR 218.9(a)). Incorporation of documents by reference shall not be allowed in the objection (36 CFR 218.7(c)).

At a minimum an objection must include the following (36 CFR 218.7(d)): 1) The objector's name and address, with a telephone number, if available; 2) a signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for Email may be filed with the objection); 3) when multiple names are listed on an objection, identification of the lead objector (verification of the identity of the lead objector shall be provided upon request); 4) 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 5) provide sufficient narrative description of those aspects of the project that are objected to (36 CFR 218.7(b)) by identifying specific issues and suggested remedies which would resolve the objection.

If an objection is received regarding this project the Reviewing Officer and objector may meet and/or converse by telephone to discuss issues raised in the objection and potential resolution. The Reviewing Officer has the discretion to determine whether or not adequate time remains in the review period to make a meeting with the objector practical. These meetings would take place soon after the closing date for filing an objection. All meetings are open to the public. If you are interested in attending any resolution discussions, please contact the Responsible Official or monitor the following website for postings about current objections in the Northern Region of the Forest Service: http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/projects/appeal_index.shtml.

Again, if you would like further information regarding this project or would like to receive a hard copy or CD version of the EA, please contact the project leader, Jennifer Costich-Thompson (email: jcostichthompson@fs.fed.us or phone: 208-443-6811). Thank you for your participation as we developed this project and analyzed the potential environmental effects.

Sincerely,

KENT WELLNER
Acting District Ranger