



Brush Creek Mushroom Project

Purpose of the Project and Proposed Action
February 15, 2008

Introduction

This document presents information about the Brush Creek Wildland Fire and a proposal to allow commercial and personal mushroom harvesting within the Flathead National Forest portion of the Brush Creek Fire.

The Brush Creek fire burned a total of approximately 30,000 acres on the Flathead and Kootenai National Forests, Plum Creek Timber Company lands, and a small amount of other private property. A lightning storm on July 26, 2007 ignited the fire which steadily grew in size for several weeks, finally being declared contained on August 26. Approximately 24,700 acres of the fire burned on lands administered by the Tally Lake Ranger District, Flathead National Forest. The majority of these acres burned in the upper reaches of the Sheppard Creek drainage (approximately 18,000). Other drainages affected by the fire were Good Creek and Griffin Creek. A small portion of this fire reburned areas affected by the Little Wolf Wildland Fire of 1994. Please refer to Figure 1 for the location of the fire area.

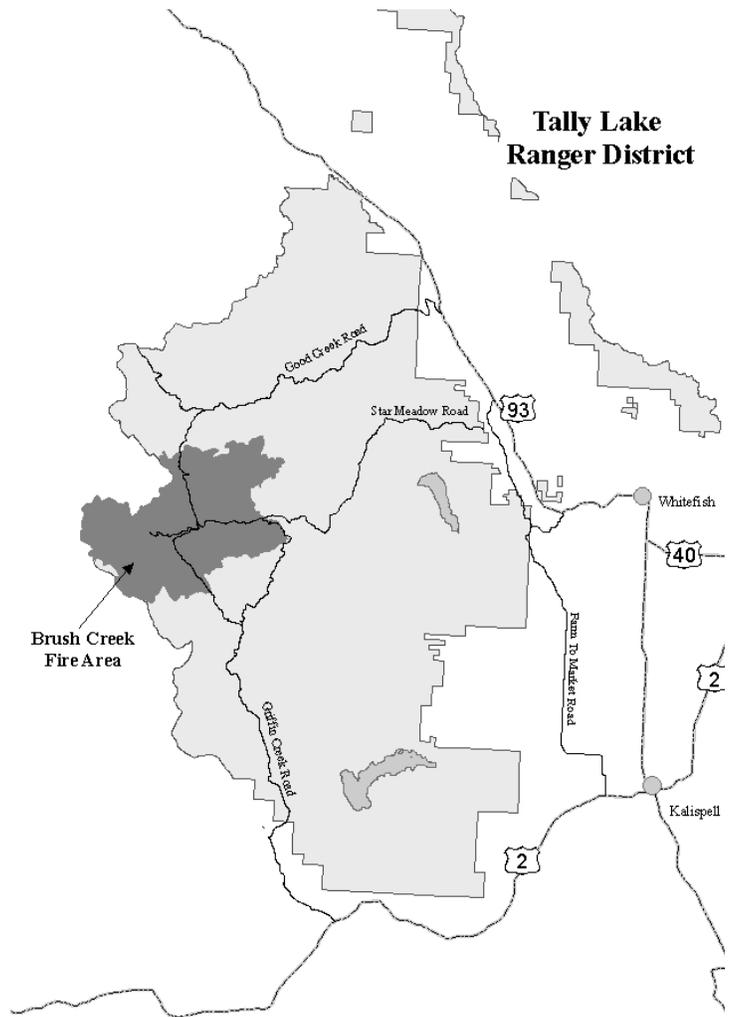


Figure 1. Vicinity of the Brush Creek Fire to Whitefish and Kalispell

The Forest Service is proposing to allow commercial and personal mushroom harvesting in the Flathead National Forest portion of the Brush Creek fire.

All proposed activities are located within the perimeter of the Brush Creek fire. The center of this area is approximately 20 air miles due west of Whitefish, Montana. The legal township locations for project activities include T30N, R25W; T30N, R26W; T31N, R25W; and T31N, R26W; Principal Montana Meridian, Lincoln and Flathead Counties, Montana.

Table 1: Estimates of vegetation burn severity (low, moderate, and high) within the Brush Creek fire area.

Vegetation Burn Severity	Percent of Burn Severity	Description of Mortality from Fire
Low or No Fire	16%	<30% of the trees were killed
Moderate	20%	30 to 80% of the trees were killed
High	64%	>80% of the trees were killed

Purpose of this Project

In 2007, approximately 24,700 acres burned on the Brush Creek Fire, Tally Lake Ranger District, Flathead National Forest. The Forest Service's experience with past fires has indicated that the general public and commercial harvesters will come to recently burned sites to gather mushrooms. Commercial harvest of wild mushrooms began in earnest in the 1980s including the development of foreign markets. Based on past experiences with other large fires on the Flathead National Forest (fires of 2003, etc) we expect an influx of up to several thousand people seeking to harvest mushrooms. Based on these past experiences the Forest has identified that there is potential for some impacts. These potential impacts may include increased needs for law enforcement, sanitation concerns and conflicts between commercial and personal use harvesters.

Our experience has shown that people will arrive with the expectation of harvesting mushrooms after a fire whether or not we have a permit system in place. Our responsibility is to manage this use by providing reasonable opportunities for both personal and commercial harvest of mushrooms while minimizing the social conflicts and impacts to National Forest resources. A permit system is necessary to protect resources and to reduce social conflicts.

The Proposed Action

The proposed action is to utilize a permit system for mushroom harvesting on the Flathead National Forest in the spring of 2008. The forest proposes to sell permits for commercial mushroom harvesters. No fees would be charged for personal use harvesters. In addition, the forest proposes to require commercial harvesters to camp in designated areas with sanitation and garbage services provided. A camping permit and fee would be required for commercial harvesters to camp in designated camping areas. No heavy equipment would be allowed. Harvest of mushrooms would be limited to hand picking.

The fire areas where mushrooms are expected to grow includes approximately 24,700 acres of national forest land within the Brush Creek Fire, Tally Lake Ranger District, Flathead National Forest. Commercial and personal use mushroom gathering would be allowed on 24,700 acres in the burned area on the Flathead National Forest. A morel mushroom harvest is expected sometime between April and July, 2008. Mushroom

seasons will vary somewhat with local weather conditions and quality of mushrooms growing in other regions.

Commercial mushroom harvesting permits and buyers permit would be sold at the Tally Lake Ranger District, Kalispell, Montana. Personal-use mushroom harvesting would require a permit but no fees would be charged. Personal-use mushroom permits would be available at all Flathead National Forest offices.

Permit Conditions:

Specific conditions attached to each commercial harvesting permit. Translations are available in English, Spanish, Cambodian, Hmong and Laotian, to facilitate communication and understanding of permit conditions.

The terms of the Flathead National Forest Grizzly Bear Food Storage Order would be required at the designated camp sites and within the burned area.

Considerations for Permit Area Selection:

Permit areas for mushroom gathering would be limited to the Brush Creek fire area boundary within the Flathead National Forest. Commercial harvesting would be authorized on approximately 24,700 acres of designated burned areas. The remainder of the Flathead National Forest would be available for personal use. Camping for commercial harvesters would be designated (see attached map).

Commercial Camp Locations

There would be one designated main camp for commercial mushroom harvesters and two overflow areas that may be used for commercial harvesters if the main camp becomes full. Commercial camping permits would be required for anyone over the age of 12 who camps at a commercial use camp area. Commercial harvesters would not be allowed to camp on National Forest lands except in these designated sites listed below.

- Logan Camp would be the main camp and is located in an old gravel pit in Section 34, T31N, R24W, off of Road 313 (Logan Creek Road). About 75 camping units may be available. Portable toilets and bear resistant dumpsters would be provided.
- Dunsire Camp would be the first overflow camp and is located in an old gravel pit in Section 31, T31N, R25W. The camp is located close to Forest Service road #2890. Portable toilets and bear resistant dumpsters would be provided. About 20 camping units may be available.
- Listle Creek Camp would be the second overflow camp and is located in an old gravel pit. Section 5, T30N, R25W. Portable toilets and bear resistant dumpsters would be provided. About 20 camping units may be available. Section 5, T30N, R25W.
- Smoke Creek Camp would be the third overflow camp and is located in an old gravel pit. Portable toilets and bear resistant dumpsters will be provided. About 40 camping units may be available. Section 27, T31N, R24W

Buyer Location Sites

Two sites for mushroom buyers would be provided if they choose to set up a buyers site on National Forest System lands. The buyer must provide self-contained toilet facilities or other approved sanitation methods. The permit holder must remove all garbage, trash, refuse, and litter from the site daily. The buyers fee is \$500 per site.

- Swaney Creek Site: Located at the junction of Star Meadows Road #539 and Sheppard Ck Road # 113
- Star Meadow Site: Locate at the junction of Tally Lake Road #913 and Star Meadow Road #539

Proposed Specifics:

- A harvest permit, whether personal or commercial, would be required for any person over the age of 12.
- Personal use permits would allow holders to harvest a maximum of 5 gallons per day for the entire season. Personal use permit holders would be required to slice harvested mushrooms lengthwise immediately when harvesting mushrooms.
- Information would be issued to all harvesters regarding the terms of the food storage order requirements, dog control in bear country, bear behavior, use of pepper spray, fishing regulations, noxious weed awareness, human sanitation, leave no trace camping and safety in burned areas.
- Law enforcement patrols would increase in the project area for the entire harvest season.
- Commercial camping areas would be patrolled daily, or as often as necessary, to enforce camping regulations.