



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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File Code: 1950

Date: October 25, 2002

Dear Interested Individual,

Enclosed please find the summary for the Moose Post-Fire Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Along with the summary document are maps specific to each of the alternatives discussed in the summary. If you read the summary and decide you would like the entire final EIS (close to 750 pages long), please contact us and we will send it to you.

Some of you asked us to send the summary by CD. If so, you will find it in this format as requested, rather than as a hard copy. If you find that your computer cannot handle the size of the document, please contact us and we will mail you a hard copy. Also, the document was formatted on the CD in Adobe Acrobat Reader to accommodate most types of word processing software. If you have an older machine, you may have trouble reading our document with older versions of Adobe Acrobat software. You can obtain free updated versions by going to the Adobe Acrobat web site at: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>. Follow the instructions on the screen for your computer (platform).

You may also view the final EIS on the Flathead National Forest web site at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/flathead/nepa/moose/index.htm> or view a hard copy at the Flathead County Library branches in Columbia Falls, Whitefish, or Kalispell reference desks. Copies of the final EIS are also available from the Flathead National Forest Supervisor's Office (1935 3rd Avenue East, Kalispell, MT 59901) or at the Hungry Horse Ranger Station (address is located in the letterhead above).

The final EIS discloses the environmental effects of various activities proposed:

- to decrease potential mortality from bark beetles to remaining live Douglas-fir and spruce trees within and outside of the Moose Fire area;
- to recover merchantable wood fiber; and
- to reduce future fuel accumulations caused by the Moose Fire on specific sites adjacent to private property or administrative sites.

Five alternatives were identified and analyzed, including a "no action" alternative. Five additional alternatives were developed but not given detailed study. Activities in each alternative include salvage harvest, beetle controls, and fuels treatments. Also, each alternative includes road management changes to help address Flathead National Forest Plan standards.

The Final EIS discloses Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative. This alternative includes:

- 2266 acres of salvage harvest (excluding inventoried roadless areas and including 15 acres within the Wild and Scenic River corridor)
- 1086 acres of tree planting



- 208 acres of fuels treatments
- Spruce and Douglas-fir beetle control methods that do not include removing trees
- Decommissioning 56 miles of road
- Yearlong wheeled motorized access restrictions on 11 miles of open road
- Meeting Forest Plan grizzly bear standards for open road density, total road density, and security core in the Lower Big Creek Grizzly Bear Subunit and meeting the total road density standard in the Werner Creek Grizzly Bear Subunit.

This alternative also reopens seasonally part of the Big Creek Road 316 behind Big Mountain. Implementing this alternative requires two project-specific amendments to the Flathead Forest Plan. One project-specific amendment temporarily amends the open road density and security core ten-year standards in the Werner Creek Grizzly Bear Subunit. The other amendment allows ten specific stream-aligned culverts to remain in place on several roads while still considering these roads as “reclaimed” or “decommissioned” under the Forest Plan.

To expedite the removal of bark beetle infested trees, the Regional Forester has submitted a request to the Chief of the Forest Service asking him to determine that an emergency situation exists in the Moose Fire area. If he makes this determination, certain timber salvage and road maintenance activities would not be subject to stay on appeal, and sale advertisement and award could commence immediately following approval of the Record of Decision. We have asked the Chief to exempt salvage activities in 52 harvest units totaling about 2050 acres in three salvage sales. We anticipate that the timber harvest and removal portions of the contract for areas covered by the requested exemption could be completed within the administrative appeal resolution period (approximately 105 days).

We intend to sign the Record of Decision (ROD) in late November to provide a 30-day period between the release of the final EIS and the ROD as specified under FSH 1909.15 Chapter 27.21(10)(b).

Thanks for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

JIMMY J. DEHERRERA
District Ranger

Enclosure