

MOOSE POST-FIRE PROJECT

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Flathead National Forest
Glacier View Ranger District
Flathead County, Montana

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Lead Agency:

USDA Forest Service

Responsible Official:

Cathy Barbouletos, Forest Supervisor
Flathead National Forest

For Further Information, Contact:

Jimmy DeHerrera, District Ranger
Hungry Horse/Glacier View Ranger Districts
P.O. Box 190340
Hungry Horse, MT 59919
(406) 387-3800

Abstract: The 2001 Moose Fire affected approximately 35,000 acres within the Flathead National Forest. This environmental impact statement 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 the Moose Fire area; recover merchantable wood fiber; and reduce future fire risk in the fire area. Five alternatives were identified and analyzed, including a "no action" alternative (Alternative 1). Four additional alternatives were developed but not given detailed study. The range of alternatives defines the significant issues by highlighting different ways to respond to each issue. 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.

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative. No new activities would be initiated at this time.

Alternative 2 (Proposed Action) - Activities include: salvage of dead and dying trees on 3721 acres, including 483 acres in inventoried roadless areas and 16 acres within the Wild and Scenic River corridor; alternative beetle control (pheromone) treatments on about 330 acres, mostly within riparian areas; fuels treatments on approximately 235 acres along private lands and Forest Service administrative sites; wheeled motorized access restrictions on 21 miles of open road; and 57 miles of road decommissioning. Also, 0.9 miles of temporary road would be built.

Alternative 3 – Activities include: salvage of 3238 acres, excluding inventoried roadless areas but including 16 acres in the Wild and Scenic River corridor (North Fork Flathead River); beetle pheromone treatments on 330 acres; fuels treatments on 235 acres; and wheeled motorized access restrictions on 11 miles of open road; and 56 miles of road decommissioning. This alternative seasonally reopens a part of Big Creek Road #316 previously restricted yearlong to wheeled motorized use, and it seasonally restricts wheeled motorized use on two roads during spring hunting season. All alternatives include safe and useable snowmobile routes on proposed decommissioned roads, but this alternative best accommodates snowmobile use. Also, 0.9 miles of temporary road would be built. This alternative would require Forest Plan site-specific amendments.

Alternative 4 – Activities include: salvage on 2493 acres, excluding inventoried roadless areas and the Wild and Scenic River corridor; beetle pheromone treatments on 330 acres; fuels treatments on 196 acres; and wheeled motorized access restrictions to 25 miles of open road; and 87 miles of road decommissioning. This alternative constructs no temporary roads, seasonally closes almost the entire Big Creek drainage during spring hunting season, increases the number of snags and downed woody material, and allows no winter logging.

Alternative 5 – All salvage, beetle control, and fuels treatments are the same as Alternative 2. Also, 0.9 miles of temporary road would be built. This alternative would restrict wheeled motorized access yearlong on the Hallowat Road #315 and the Moose Lake Road #5207, which allows Road #316 to be open for part of the year. Access to Moose Lake would be converted to a 9.3-mile trail, and the campground would be removed. Approximately 21 miles of open road would be restricted to wheeled motorized access and 56 miles of road would be decommissioned.

Comments on this Draft EIS must be received or postmarked within 45 days of the Environmental Protection Agency's publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register.